

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

May 16 to May 31, 2019

DIVERSITY DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Connectivity Project in Southwestern Washington: Natural Resource Scientist Buchanan evaluated spreadsheet data on focal species associated with southwestern Washington and made recommendations as to whether certain taxa should be included in the project.

Red Knot Migration: Natural Resource Scientist Buchanan, Biologists Salzer and Michaelis, and partners with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) made several visits to Grays Harbor during the month of May to assess our ability to effectively scan roosting flocks of red knots for coded leg flags.

Spotted Owl Conservation: Natural Resource Scientist Buchanan continued working with members of the model team to outline and draft sections of a manuscript that will be submitted to a journal. The manuscript will describe the process and results of a model that identifies specific areas that would provide the greatest habitat benefit to spotted owls under a voluntary incentives program.

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation: Biologist Hallock participated in the USFWS Columbia River Systems Operations FWCA Wetlands Workshop on May 20 and 21 in Burbank, Washington. FWCA stands for the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. This Act was established in 1934 to protect fish and wildlife when federal actions result in the control or modification of a natural stream or body of water. The act gives USFWS authority to evaluate impacts to fish and wildlife from proposed resource development projects. Participants shared their expert opinions on how potential modifications to existing conditions related to water quality and quantity could potentially impact fish, wildlife, and priority landscapes and compiled a list of potential actions to conserve, protect and enhance these resources. Biologist Hallock is the amphibian and reptile specialist for the Wildlife Program.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this reporting period.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this reporting period.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this reporting period.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this reporting period.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this reporting period.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this reporting period.

GAME DIVISION

Nothing for this reporting period.

HUNTER EDUCATION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nothing for this reporting period.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Hunter Education Deferrals: In May, the Hunter Education Program administrative assistant processed 44 deferrals, 40 of which were for new hunters between the ages of 10 and 15. The hunter education deferral is a once in a lifetime, one year deferral from the hunter education requirement, and allows a new hunter into the field as long as they are accompanied by a qualified, experienced hunter. The idea is that after a season hunting on a deferral (try it before you buy it) the new hunter will complete hunter education and join the hunting community.

Law Enforcement Officer and Military Exemptions: The Hunter Education Program administrative assistant processed 46 military and three peace officer exemptions in May. This program allows qualifying active and retired peace officers and military personnel to obtain an exemption from the field skills portion of any hunter education course is completed online.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this reporting period.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this reporting period.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Region 5 Coordinator Elliott met with a new instructor and indoor shooting range manager to set up a monthly online class. This is a new venue in a city that did not previously have a hunter education team. The business is looking forward to partnering with us and is happy to give back by letting us use their classroom and range facilities at little to no cost. Three classes were scheduled (July, August, and September) and registration for the first class is already at capacity.

Coordinator Elliott met with an instructor in a rural area to get his team re-engaged and replenish supplies. The team had decided to quit teaching last summer but after several discussions on how they would like to proceed and some extra support getting materials and other necessities, this group is active again. They held a class with 20 students this week and plan to hold at least two more before hunting season.

Coordinator Elliott visited a local class and presented three service awards to instructors: two five-year and one 15-year.

Region 6 Coordinator Montgomery held an in service training in Sequim for 29 attendees. The trainings are always well received by the instructors, even if they have a different opinion on the topics. This year's topics included WDFW lands history and management, hunter incident investigations, hunter recruitment, retention, reactivation, and relevancy (R3/R4) efforts at both state and national level, statewide wolf management, instructor tips and tricks, and instructor service awards. Thank you to the presenters Regional Program Manager Calkins, Wolf Specialist Maletzke, and Enforcement Officer Cilk.

Coordinator Montgomery with help from Program Manager Whipple and Region 4 Coordinator Dazey met with a Tacoma team to discuss how they were going to transition to do online classes. They have a hard time filling traditional classes and were leery about online classes. They were given statistics on numbers of classes since the online launch in 2012 versus traditional classes, and hunting incidents. After addressing their concerns, a plan was made to give it a try. Montgomery will assist the team as needed.

Coordinator Montgomery also has been visiting classes and delivering supplies to teaching teams along with evaluating the classes.

He is still working with conservation organizations and logistics for National Hunting and Fishing Day, most recently with Safari Club International, who, consistent with their mission, will be giving every attendee a fishing rod and reel combination.

Region 1 Coordinator Whorton and Region 3 Coordinator Garcia held an instructor in-service training in Selah for 23 hunter education instructors.

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey attended and evaluated four teaching teams one in Custer, one at Hannagin, and two teams that use the Issaquah Sportsman Club. All four teams are doing a great job teaching hunter education.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Master Hunter Advisory Group Meeting: Program Specialist Thorson and Field Coordinators Elliott, Dazey, and Garcia attended the second quarter Master Hunter Advisory Group meeting. Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil gave a presentation on cougar populations and trends. Advisory group members also discussed the current agency budget challenges, the 2019 annual report, and National Hunting and Fishing Day 2019. The next meeting is scheduled for August 23 in Ellensburg.

7) Other

Region 4 coordinator Dazey attended the agency awards ceremony in Olympia where Region 4 Instructor Palmer was recognized as the Terry Hoffer Memorial Firearm Safety Award recipient. Also recognized were master hunter volunteers, the Ness brothers, who were recognized as the citizen volunteers of the year for their work building the 46 goat crates being used by the department to transport mountain goats from the Olympics to the Cascades. Their volunteer work designing and building the crates saved the department thousands of dollars.

LANDS DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Nothing for this reporting period.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Patricia Jatzak participated in Recreation and Conservation Office's (RCO) consultation with WDFW personnel on the Recreational Assets of Statewide Significance (RASS) study. Other participants were Cynthia Wilkerson, Jason Wettstein, Mark (Fish Program), and Tom Ryle (Licensing). We provided information to RCO about WDFW recreational assets, challenges, and needs.

Shane Belson finalized the draft 2019 WSFR-DJ Boating Access grant for review and processing by Wildlife Program and Technology and Financial Management.

Shane Belson completed facilities inventory data entry for all boating and fishing facilities in Regions 3 and 5, and reconciled, with Real Estate Services, all access area naming discrepancies between the water access and LIS databases.

Shane Belson and Elyse Woodruff submitted to the department’s assistant attorney general an updated assessment of WDFW streambank public fishing easements, including key issues on which legal guidance is being requested.

Shane Belson submitted to Land Stewardship and Operations and Region 6 a summary of water access lands in the South Puget Sound and Scatter Creek wildlife areas planning area that would be incorporated into the these wildlife areas as part of ongoing integration efforts.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this reporting period.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

2019 Spring Prescribe Burn Season: The prescribed burn teams have been burning on WDFW lands since April 22 on the Sinlahekin, Sherman Creek, and L.T. Murray wildlife areas. To date, over 1,150 acres have been burned. Burning restores forest health and decreases the risk of catastrophic wildfire.



Prescribed fire on the Methow Wildlife Area

Ramsey Forest Restoration Thinning Project: The Ramsey Creek timber sale area just outside of Winthrop contains many beautiful, larger-diameter ponderosa pine and some larger Douglas-fir “leave” trees (marked with orange) that will not be harvested, as well as scattered aspen pockets and lodgepole pine. Smaller-diameter, often suppressed, ponderosa pine and Douglas fir make up the majority of the project’s “cut” trees to be harvested. The treatment will release leave trees and produce generally more open, fire-, disease-, and insect-resistant forest conditions. Foresters Ruggirello and Mize performed the first round of timber harvest compliance reviews for the Ramsey Creek Restoration Thinning Project and oversaw the unloading of a bridge that is to be installed across a stream in the project area.

Forester Mize is the lead contract administrator for harvesting services. Harvest work will continue through the spring and early summer. At this time, the contractor has felled approximately 80 acres, and is delivering an average of eight to ten loads per day. All work is progressing well, and Forester Mize has met onsite with Methow Wildlife Area Manager Brandon Troyer to assess the post-harvest condition of the stand. Overall, Manager Troyer appeared satisfied with the progress and expressed his appreciation for all the work that goes into making these projects occur on the ground. Forester Mize scheduled a meeting for June 10 with Manager Troyer and Prescribed Burn Team Leader Matt Eberlein to discuss road closure issues post-harvest and how that might impact the planned prescribed burn for these units.



The removal of small-diameter trees will release larger individuals, mainly ponderosa pine, to grow larger more quickly

Stemilt Harvester Selection and Log Auction: Foresters Matt Ruggirello and Rod Pfeifle selected the successful harvester bidder for the project. This company will be responsible for removing un-marked trees from the project area (trees to remain post-harvested are marked with orange paint) and for working with log-truck drivers to deliver wood to mills. The project will return 270 acres of the forest on the Colockum Wildlife Area south of Wenatchee to a more resilient condition, enhance browse habitat for elk and deer, and increase snags for cavity nesting birds. Water cycling will also be improved and fire risk reduced. Representatives from mills from around the region were invited to Ellensburg on May 21 to bid for the logs coming off the timber sale. Different “sorts,” or groupings, of logs were sold to different mills. With the harvesting contractor in place and the timber sold, work should begin on the project once the written portion of its cultural resource survey is completed in early June.

Forb Plug Survival Monitored: Vegetation Ecologist Merg made another of his regular monitoring visits to the forb plug trial on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Survival of the plugs is impressively high, and so far, stable. Dozens of the 300 plus marked plugs have already produced flowers, which are attracting visits from pollinating insects. Ample precipitation has fallen this winter and spring, so growing conditions have been favorable. Merg is hopeful the plugs will be able to withstand the both the dry, warm weather that is coming and the competition from other plants, native and nonnative, some of which are now beginning to grow rapidly.



Penstemon plug in peak flower (left) and native lupines regenerating after prescribed fire (right)

Vancouver Lake: Statewide Weed Coordinator Heimer attended a meeting with the Friends of Vancouver Lake (FoVL), Terry McNabb (AquaTechnex), Jenifer Parsons (Ecology), Kevin Tyler (Clark County Public Works), and Clark County Noxious Weed Control Board to coordinate upcoming survey work. The group talked about the options for sampling the lake for vegetation and how that could fit in to what the FoVL are doing in relation to their preparation for treating the lake. GIS Specialist Trewella provided an excellent map with a sampling grid pattern to help determine the sampling effort. Heimer provided information to Colleen Keltz (Ecology) who was fielding questions about the project from the Columbian newspaper.

USFWS Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Non-Traditional Grants Submitted: The agency submitted two U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF) grants. The recovery land acquisition proposal for the Violet Prairie Project located in Thurston County includes 1,000 acres to be matched with Recreation Conservation Office's Critical Habitat grant submitted last year. The project includes high quality South Sound prairie habitat for the recovery of Mazama pocket gopher and Taylor's checkerspot butterfly. The property has a rare combination of Puget lowland prairie, wet prairie, oak woodland, wetlands, riparian areas and conifer forest. Central Ferry Canyon Habitat Conservation Plan land acquisition is the second project located in Douglas County, which builds on the Douglas County Multi-species General Conservation Plan. It includes 2,185 acres of shrubsteppe habitat for the protection of the pygmy rabbit, greater sage grouse, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, and Washington ground squirrel.

4-0 Ranch USFWS Section 6 Plan: Patricia Jatczak delivered the final draft of the 4-0 Ranch Section 6 Plan to the USFWS for final review. The final draft included responses to USFWS comments and suggestions. Jeff Burnham, Jeremy Trump, Kurt Merg, and David Woodall helped answer questions and provide clarity to the plan. If USFWS has no further comments, the plan will be finalized.

Blue Mountains Wildlife Areas Management Plan: Patricia Jatzak delivered the final draft of the Blue Mountains Wildlife Areas Management Plan to Public Affairs for final review. Once Public Affairs comments are addressed, the plan goes to the Director. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) comments have been finalized and posted.

Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area Management Plan: Patricia Jatzak sent the pre-public review draft to division managers for their review and input. Once those comments are addressed, the plan will go to the public for 30-day SEPA review. A public meeting will be scheduled during the review time. The wildlife area manager has taken another job, so wildlife area managers are filling in until the position is filled.

Heart of Cascades USFWS Section 6 Plan: A Section 6 plan is due to the USFWS by the end of June. Patricia Jatzak is the lead planner, and has a rough draft of the plan produced.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this reporting period.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Wildlife Area USFWS PR Contract: Section Manager Dahmer and Budget Manager Nelson completed and submitted materials for the fiscal year 2020 federal aid contract providing funds for operations and maintenance of 21 wildlife areas, wildlife winter feeding operations, wildlife area planning, and technical support from foresters, archaeologists, and both a range ecologist and vegetation ecologist.

7) Other

Central Washington Interagency Fire Training Academy – Firefighter II Training:

Forester Ruggirello participated in a five-day wildland firefighter training course outside of Yakima. Much of the work of our WDFW foresters is shaped by fire behavior in central and eastern Washington. Firefighter training provides foresters with knowledge and training essential to planning informed forest restoration prescriptions. Additionally, foresters are often involved in WDFW's prescribed fire program, participating in controlled understory burns while also helping to plan and select locations appropriate for the use of controlled fire. The Firefighter II training course involved a mix of classroom and fieldwork. Classroom and field activities were designed to give students a better understanding of fire behavior and the tools and techniques involved in suppressing and controlling wildfire and applying prescribed fire. The course culminated in a live-fire field day in which hand-crew teams practiced digging fire line, laying hose, and extinguishing and "mopping up" (the final stage of extinguishing a fire) fire, with fire engines and other emergency equipment on standby for support.



Hundreds of students participated in the inter-agency fire training academy outside of Yakima

SCIENCE DIVISION

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

State of the Science: Seal and Sea Lion Diet and Population Dynamics Workshop:

Penny Becker, Joe Anderson, Steve Jeffries, and Scott Pearson attended a two-day workshop at the University of British Columbia synthesizing the state of the knowledge about population dynamics and diet preferences of seals and sea lions in the Salish Sea. Along with biologists from Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Tribes, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), academics, and others, WDFW staff members shared information on pinniped population estimates and trends, diet reconstruction, and potential impacts of seals and sea lions on chinook and Coho salmon. The goal of the workshop is to produce a white paper summarizing the current state of our knowledge about diet and population dynamics as well as critical knowledge gaps.

Translocation of Sharp-tailed Grouse from British Columbia to Washington: The sharp-tailed grouse was historically an important gamebird in the state of Washington. Following many years of range contractions and population declines, the grouse is now listed by the state as an endangered species. During April 13 through 26 biologists with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) lead an effort to translocate sharp-tailed grouse from the 70-Mile House, British Columbia area to Okanogan County. Participants included Research Scientist Michael Schroeder, Wildlife Biologists Derek Stinson, Jeff Heinlen, Michael Atamian, Scott Fitkin, Carrie Lowe, Sidra Blake, Jim Olson, Bryan Dupont, Ellen Heilhecker and Chris Sato, Veterinarian Dr. Katy Haman, Colville Confederated Tribes Wildlife Biologists Oz Laspa and Jarred Erickson, Douglas County PUD Wildlife Biologist Jason Schilling, Okanogan Conservation District Biologist Allisa Carlson, National Wild Turkey Federation Biologist Dominic Bachman, retired British Columbia Wildlife Biologist Doug Jury, British Columbia Recreational Fisheries and Wildlife Programs Deputy Regional Manager Dave Reedman, and British Columbia Recreational Fisheries, and Wildlife Programs Ecosystems Biologist Shauna Jones. The translocated birds included 19 females and 19 males, with approximately half fitted with radio transmitters. The transmitters included two solar PTT transmitters donated to WDFW by volunteer Leslie Robb. The logistics of the translocation have been improved so that birds can

be released approximately 10 hours after they are captured, despite the extended processing time, long travel distance (300 miles), and international border crossing. Birds will now be monitored for movement, habitat use, productivity, and survival. Translocations such as these are important for augmenting populations and for maintaining genetic diversity.



Week one participants in the sharp-tailed grouse translocation included (from left) Biologist Atamian, Research Scientist Schroeder, Biologist Heinlen, Biologist Lowe, Biologist Blake, Biologist Stinson, PUD Biologist Schilling, Biologist Fitkin, and Biologist Olson – Photo by WDFW



Male sharp-tail displaying at a trapping site (lek) – Photo by S. Fitkin



Female sharp-tail close-up – Photo by S. Fitkin



A translocated male sharp-tail wearing a new high-tech solar transmitter – Photo by M. Schroeder



Scientist Schroeder banding a sharp-tail prior to translocation – Photo by S. Fitkin

Snowy Plover Research and Management Progress Report: Scott Pearson along with Cindy Sundstrom, Anthony Novack, William Ritchie (Willapa National Wildlife Refuge), and Larissa Pfleeger-Ritzman (Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe) produced their annual research and management progress report. Washington now has approximately 87 breeding snowy plovers in the state spread across three sites. Nesting and fledging success was down in 2018 relative to recent years with higher rates of corvid and northern harrier predation.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this reporting period.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this reporting period.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this reporting period.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Native and Introduced Squirrels: Senior Research Scientist Matt Vander Haegen and former University of Washington graduate student Aaron Johnston submitted a paper to the Journal of Wildlife Management titled “*Differential Resource Use between Native and Introduced Gray Squirrels.*” The authors used radio-telemetry data from collared eastern and western gray squirrels along with LIDAR and other remotely sensed data to model resources use by these potentially competing species on Joint Base Lewis-McChord. The study’s findings suggest that habitat partitioning by the two species likely avoids negative interactions. The paper provides recommendations for managing habitat to benefit the state-threatened western gray squirrel.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this reporting period.

7) Other

Nothing for this reporting period.

REGION 1

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Garfield County Pheasant and Habitat Enhancement Board: Private Lands Supervisor Earl was asked to sit on this newly created board for Garfield County. Earl attended the first meeting this week to discuss the future goals of this board and layout focal areas for immediate projects funded by the County.

Wildlife Food Plot: Private Lands Biologist Gaston and Natural Resource Worker Fish visited a food plot on private lands that was recently planted. The landowner said the food plot was receiving heavy use already from turkeys and deer and was concerned about the impacts on the growth of the stand for later use. Private Lands Biologist Gaston let the landowner know the food plot was looking healthy and the recent rain should help bolster its growth.

Habitat Development: Biologist Baarstad began preparation of a habitat plot in central Lincoln County to be seeded this fall, and examined additional sites for future habitat development opportunities.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Kettle River Access Sites: Water Access Manager Daniel Dziekan helped assemble kiosks that will be installed at the new Kettle River access sites north of Curlew. Dziekan and Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer built the kiosks at the Sherman Creek shop. The kiosks will be used for posting regulations at the new access sites.



Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer putting the final touches on the newly built and assembled kiosk

Archaeologists Visit: WDFW Archaeologists Kat Kelly and Mo Major spent two days at the northeast Washington wildlife area complex. On May 28, they worked with Swanson Lakes Assistant Manager Mike Finch and Manager Juli Anderson to dig and inspect sampling holes, at the revised parking site planned for the recent addition to the Reardan Audubon Lake Wildlife Area. Nothing significant was found, and the site will receive cultural clearance shortly. May 29, the archaeologists inspected the Phantom Butte grassland restoration field at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area, with Finch and Anderson. Afterward, the four moved over to the upper Lake Creek drainage north of the old Welch home site, at Swanson Lakes Wildlife area. They inspected a small, fenestrated rock wall built between two basalt outcroppings, and a nearby talus pit. Kelly recommended Anderson and Finch bring an architectural historian out to Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area, to collect detailed information on existing buildings and local knowledge of structures now gone.



Sampling at Audubon Lake Wildlife Area, left to right: Mike Finch, Kat Kelly, and Mo Major

Washington Inland Northwest Wildlife Council (INWC) Volunteers: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman spent the weekend working with INWC volunteers for their annual work weekend. They removed and repaired barbed wire fence along the Maloney Mountain Road and picked up trash along the Tucannon Road.







Volunteer efforts on the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area

W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area, Rainbow Lake: Natural Resources Worker McKeirnan assisted Natural Resource Technician Stallcop in finishing spreading gravel in Campground 3. The interns came down and helped dig up the rest of the mullein growing around Rainbow Lake on the disturbed banks. Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman participated in a conference call to discuss what still needs to be completed on the Rainbow Lake project and what tests need to be run to determine how to get the hatchery the amount of water they had before the lake rehabilitation project.

W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area, Campgrounds and Parking Areas: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman filled in for Access Technician Heimgartner this week replacing toilet paper in the outhouses and picking up trash in the campgrounds. Natural Resources Worker McKeirnan worked with University of Idaho Intern Emma to repair the fence and rock jacks in Campground 11. They also disassembled some illegal fire pits in Campground 10. McKeirnan used the tractor to spread gravel on the driveway through Campground 3. Dingman printed and laminated signs to refresh the kiosks in the campgrounds and parking areas with updated information.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Bothersome Badger: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman talked to a landowner who was concerned about a badger being around their house and other dwellings. Westerman explained to them that badgers are no real threat to humans in most situations, unless backed into a corner. Westerman talked about installing exclusionary devices and the benefit of having them around to help control the ground squirrel and marmot populations.

Cougar Kills Three Sheep: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley met with a sheep farmer regarding three sheep that were killed in her pasture. The area is along Stateline Road in southwestern Walla Walla County. All the neighbors including the reporting party have their fields fenced with woven wire as well as an electric fence. Do to all the fences, domestic cats, and the number of farmhouses we ruled out the use of hounds. We agreed to monitor the area and if the cougar returns. Rasley informed them of what they can do to protect their pets and livestock.

Fox Kills Chickens: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley met with an owner of several dozen chickens regarding the issue that something was able to get into their chicken coup and kill some of their chickens. Rasley was able to determine that a fox was the problem and a den was located not too far away. The owners agreed to strengthen the chicken coup to try to prevent some future losses.

Cost Share Fencing Contract: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade continued to work with Mathews Lumber Company out of Woodinville to finalize the order of cost share fencing supplies for a project in Garfield County after multiple attempts to locate a supplier who carried the needed supplies. Wade will be placing the order and arranging for delivery to the location next week.

United States Forest Service (USFS) Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade met with the USFS Pomeroy District's district ranger, wildlife biologist, and range manager to give them a wolf update prior to cattle being moved onto the USFS grazing allotments. Grazing rotations and allotments were also discussed. Wade also discussed the possibility of giving a short presentation about wildlife interactions and safety during their new employee orientation week.

Nuisance Wildlife Calls: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade received a call regarding a family of foxes that had lost their mother. The reporting party (RP) said that the young foxes appeared to be about half-grown and in good health. Wade directed the RP to monitor the young fox's health and contact him if they appeared to be having an issue without their mother. Wade received a

second call regarding a property owner wanting to know what he could do to remove Eurasian collared doves and European starlings. Wade offered information on removing invasive nonnative species from his property and put the property owner in touch with Officer Sabo for more information. The property owner also informed Wade that he was planting a 20-acre vineyard on a second piece of property that he owns and was concerned about the possibility of deer damage. Wade will be meeting with the property owner once the vineyard is planted to discuss possible options to reduce deer damage.

Bear Concerns in Pend Oreille County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett and WDFW Enforcement addressed three bear concerns throughout the county. Additional follow-ups were conducted.

Bear Concerns in Stevens County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett and WDFW Enforcement addressed four bear concerns throughout the county. Additional follow-ups were conducted.

Garfield County Bear Incident: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade received a second hand report of a mushroom hunter being chased by a black bear in Garfield County. The reporting party (RP) was a family member of the mushroom hunter and reported that the mushroom hunter had fallen while running away from the bear and kicked it in the nose, which deterred the bear. No injuries were sustained and the mushroom hunter declined to file a formal report with WDFW Enforcement. Wade provide the RP with contact information for WDFW Enforcement in case they changed their mind. Wade also reported information regarding the report to Sergeant Mossman.

3D Electric Fence Works: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley has been working with a large apple orchard in western Walla Walla County regarding deer and elk that were coming out of the Boise Tree Farm as they continue to remove all of the trees. After the owners installed several miles of the newly designed electric fence their deer and elk damage came to a screeching halt.



3D electric elk fence in Walla Walla County

Bobcat Kills Four Sheep: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley received a call from a sheep owner on Memorial Day weekend regarding something was killing their sheep almost on a daily basis. Rasley was fishing with his wife so Sergeant Fulton and Officer Johnson responded to the area and was able to investigate the depredations. Trail cameras were also deployed on the remaining dead sheep.

Pumpkin Eating Marmots: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman talked with a producer in the Greenbluff area about marmots eating the new growth in his pumpkin patch. Westerman discussed exclusionary tactics and what legally could be done to help minimize the damage.

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Habitat Development: Biologist Baarstad took advantage of recent rains and continued to seed habitat plots for upland birds in northwest Lincoln County.



Seeding habitat plots for upland game birds in Lincoln County

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP): Natural Resource Worker Fish continued to assist the Palouse-Rock Lake Conservation District with tree and shrub plantings along a riparian area. The property is enrolled in CREP and must maintain a specified number of trees and shrubs along the riparian corridor.



Natural Resource Worker Fish using an auger to make holes for planting

Habitat Project in Walla Walla County: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley performed a site visit at an existing habitat project with the Pheasants Forever habitat chair and walked the field to identify seed grasses and broadleaves as well as identify weed presence and pressure. Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley contacted the chemical company representative to order herbicide; funds were attained from a National Wild Turkey Federation grant, to be applied later to control weeds at the habitat project site.

Habitat Project: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley purchased herbicide at a local chemical company using funds obtained from a National Wild Turkey Federation grant, with the intent to control noxious and invasive weeds previously identified at a habitat project site in Walla Walla County.

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area Weed Control Work: Biologist Woodall spent a couple days working with the interns spraying weeds in the uplands, mowing grass and weed eating at remote facilities.



Spraying scotch thistle in the uplands!



University of Idaho Intern Emma Charlet spraying weeds with David Woodall

Chief Joseph Wildlife Area Weed Control: Technicians Meisner and McGee spent all week performing noxious weed control at the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area. Biologist Woodall and the intern looked at the Stucker Field, which has always been a weedy field, but recent livestock disturbance did not help and there will be a weed explosion coming this year. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grasses and alfalfa are far less prevalent than the amount of annual and biannual broadleaf weeds that are coming. Biologist Woodall spent a day evaluating the increasing leafy spurge. He looked for the two bio-control agents that he had released in the past. He saw one of the bio agents in increasing numbers. Biologist Woodall met with an active wildlife area volunteer that wants to spend a few days on the area spraying weeds. Said volunteer was provided maps and supplies to work the weekend and wildlife area staff members will make contact next week to coordinate and assist. The volunteer is a licensed applicator and very weed knowledgeable. He also assisted an employee with a flat tire change; Grande Ronde River Road is a lonely, lonely road.



Scotch thistle rosettes in the lower Stucker field on the 4-O Wildlife Area



More Stucker field weeds



Apothona spp. on leafy spurge

4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Weed Control Work: A tremendous amount of work has recently been completed on the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area in an effort to control noxious weeds. Nearly 640 acres have been sprayed with a helicopter at a cost of \$26,000. Sulfur cinquefoil, scotch thistle, emerging exotic grasses and many other weeds have been sprayed. Wildlife area personnel sprayed approximately 225 acres in the Mountain View area using ATVs. Many old agricultural fields have turning into a monoculture of sulfur cinquefoil and that is what wildlife area staff members targeted with ATVs. One older ATV has a damaged frame from carrying a spray tank and boom and will require extensive repairs. Left over capital funding from the 4-O acquisitions paid for weed suppression efforts.

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area Elk Fence Repairs: Wildlife area personnel and interns continue to work on checking and making repairs to the elk fence at Weatherly, Baker's Pond, and Wooten wildlife areas. Numerous holes have been repaired and many fallen trees have been sawed off the fence. Staff members have reported the section of fence at Wooten that was rebuilt after the 2005 school fire is having problems with staples, which hold the wire on, working out of the wood posts due to summer heat and winter cold. The Department of Natural Resources fire crews that built the fence didn't use barbed staples. Wildlife area personnel will have to re-hammer all the staples or install new ones with barbs on approximately nine miles of fence soon.

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area Big Game Forage Plantings: Technician Wynn Stallcop continues work on big-game forage plantings at Smoothing Iron Ridge. Elk continue to heavily use emerging wheat, oats, and alfalfa plantings.

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area Cooper Canyon Well: Wildlife area personnel have been wrestling with a malfunctioning pump in the Cooper Canyon well recently. An electrician determined the pump motor is bad and ordered a replacement, which will be installed soon. The well supplies water to the Smoothing Iron buildings and water for several troughs that are traditionally heavily used by summering elk on the wildlife area.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Community Involvement: Biologist Baarstad used a tractor and rototiller to assist the City of Davenport with preparation of a new soccer field at the community sports complex on the north side of town. The Lincoln County Conservation District and the Davenport maintenance manager contacted Baarstad about a month ago to help as no one local had a rototiller available. Thanks Natural Resource Worker Fish and Biologist Gaston for getting the equipment ready.

Discovery Days: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area staff members provided a site for the annual Lake Roosevelt Forum's Discovery Days, as they have done for about twenty years. Two groups of Wilbur Elementary School kids took field trips to Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. Third graders got the regular program, a hike into the wildlife area interior, past the office. Fourth and fifth graders, who had attended the regular field trip in the past, had a different adventure this year. Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch and Manager Juli Anderson rode the bus with the kids down Telford Road. The group checked out some restored wetlands south of Z-Lake and the view from atop an adjacent rock outcrop. The kids also inspected some restored grouse habitat at Swanson Lakes. They saw the avian perch deterrents placed on power poles, and the cameras aimed at some of them to determine how well the deterrents work. Both groups had a visit with Fish and Wildlife Officer Curt Wood, during lunch on the lawn at the office. The field trips ended with a chance for the children to inspect skins, skulls, antlers and horns of regional mammal and bird species.



Officer Wood operating a “robo-deer” for Wilbur Elementary fourth and fifth graders

Kids in the Hills: Biologists Atamian, Lowe, and Kinnick participated in the annual Kids in the Hills event at the Dishman Hills Natural Area, leading classes of fourth through sixth graders on hikes while teaching them about local wildlife biology and ecology. Their instruction also included geology, pond ecology, and forestry lessons with local experts. Kids in the Hills is a grant-funded program organized by the Spokane Conservation District and the Dishman Hills Conservancy and has reached over 400 students in five days this year.

W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area, Camp Wooten Presentation: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman spent a day teaching a class at Camp Wooten Environmental Learning Center for the Dayton/Waitsburg/Touchet sixth graders. She talked about ungulates and predators that are on the wildlife area, and taught the kids about telemetry and had them “find” some hidden quail transmitters. Approximately 60 kids total participated in the classes.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Annual Payments for Habitat and Access: All of the private lands biologists in Region 1 continue diligently working to contact landowners for signatures of A-19 payment vouchers for landowners who maintained habitat and access for their lands. All currently signed A-19s have been sent to Private Lands Program Manager Strickland for processing.

7) Other

Nothing for this reporting period.

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Wolf Management and Research: Biologist Roussin recently captured and radio-collared two adult male wolves in the Lookout Pack territory. This is first time in several years we've had collared animals in this pack. These animals will contribute vital data to the ongoing Predator-Prey Project, as well as assist with routine wolf monitoring and management. Many thanks to Biologist Roussin for successfully locating this recently elusive pack and collaring animals so efficiently.



*Young male Lookout Pack wolf –
Photo by Trent Roussin*

Pygmy Rabbit Kit Release Effort: The newest pygmy rabbit generation has arrived and our team is now in full kit capture and relocate to the wild mode. The goal of this effort is to relocate kits, both from the wild population and breeding enclosures, to release sites within Beezley Hills and Burton Draw recovery areas to establish new populations. Coordinator Gallie, Biologist Zinke, Graduate Student Nerkowski, Intern Beall, Regional Wildlife Program staff members, and volunteers with Nature Conservancy Hunter Stewards and Oregon Zoo have hit the ground running. Our first capture effort was in the Beezley mobile breeding enclosure and we caught and relocated eight kits.

Trapping from the wild population has been more difficult than expected and thus far, after six trap days, we have only captured two wild kits. All kits were relocated to temporary acclimation/release pens in Beezley Hills. The pen fencing will be removed once burrows are established.



A local youth volunteer and future biologist hopeful releases a pygmy rabbit kit

Northern Leopard Frogs: Biologist Grabowsky continued northern leopard frog surveys at Potholes Reservoir using aquatic funnel traps. Tadpoles were captured in multiple ponds where egg mass surveys and adult surveys were unsuccessful. Funnel trapping was also completed at Columbia National Wildlife Refuge (CNWR) with the help of USFWS staff members and Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory. Bullfrogs and Pacific tree frogs were successfully captured from CNWR for use in disease testing before young northern leopard frogs are released in this area this summer. The two diseases most likely to be detrimental to northern leopard frogs (and all WA frogs) are Ranavirus and *Batrachochytrium dedrobatidis* (amphibian chytrid fungus). Both of these diseases are widespread throughout the United States and have led to the decline of amphibians across the country.



Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, future release site for northern leopard frogs - Photo by Emily Grabowsky

Washington Predator Prey Project: Biologist Heinlen investigated a recent radio-collared mule deer mortality. The mortality was confirmed as a fresh cougar kill and cache. A remote camera was placed on site to document cougar activity/identity and possible visits by other carnivores/scavengers. This project seeks to investigate the interactions between large carnivores and the interactions between these same carnivores and their prey.



Radio collared mule deer cached by a cougar – Photo by Jeff Heinlen

Earlier in the month, Biologist Fitkin also investigated a radio-collared mule deer mortality. During the examination, he found multiple nasal bot fly larvae wiggling out of the recently deceased carcass. This is a common parasite that lives in the animal's sinus cavities.



Nasal bot fly larvae emerging from a recently deceased deer carcass – Photo by S. Fitkin

Sharp-tailed Grouse Fitted with Transmitter: Last month, as part of the Sharp-tailed Grouse Translocation Project, a team of biologists captured and translocated 38 Columbian sharp-tailed grouse from the 70-mile house area in British Columbia to the Tunk Valley and Scotch Creek Wildlife Area in Okanogan County. Two of those birds were fitted with a satellite transmitter to allow precise tracking on two of the males. Both of those birds perished after release, but Wildlife Biologist Heinlein discovered and retrieved one of the transmitters. In a last ditch effort to get another bird on the air, Scientist Dr. Schroeder, Wildlife Biologist Atamian, and Wildlife Area Manager Olson set up traps on one lek site on the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area. This is late in the year for this type of capture, since females are mostly nesting while a few males continue to appear on the lek and display their courtship behavior. Although not as aggressive as when females are present, they still present an opportunity to make a capture. The team was successful in capturing two birds on the morning of June 1. One was a recapture of a Canadian bird, while the other was a resident adult male. The grouse was fitted with a satellite transmitter and promptly released. The transmitter immediately began sending location signals, which will allow us to track his seasonal movements. This is the first opportunity for us in Washington to monitor a resident sharp-tailed grouse and we are excited to see what data we will receive. May he live a long and prosperous life.



Attaching solar powered, satellite transmitter on the captured sharp-tail grouse – Photo by Olson

Sharp-tailed Grouse Augmentation: To date several sharp-tailed grouse augmented from British Columbia have stayed near release sites in both Tunk Valley and Scotch Creek, others flew away and haven't been relocated and a few have become mortalities. Biologist Heinlen investigated the mortalities of both sharp-tailed grouse that were fitted with satellite transmitters. One was determined to have been scavenged by coyotes while the other appeared to be predated by a raptor. These transmitters are small, camo collared, and do not have a VHF function to locate them with telemetry making them difficult to find. After much searching Biologist Heinlen determined that coyotes can hide transmitters better than he can find them, but he did locate the transmitter from the raptor predation site.



Sharp-tailed grouse mortality with transmitter (above blue arrow) – Photo by Jeff Heinlen

Bighorn Sheep Management: Biologist Heinlen continued monitoring the Mount Hull herd following pneumonia documentation this past winter. Twenty-nine ewes with 10 lambs of the year were observed along with 15 rams. No signs of pneumonia, nor any new mortalities were observed. Monitoring will continue to document the effects of the pneumonia on the herd, with particular attention paid to lamb survival.

Western Gray Squirrel Survey: Biologist Heinlen reviewed survey protocols, coordinated volunteers and logistics, made maps, and prepped materials for western gray squirrel surveys. Biologist Heinlen and WDFW volunteer Fischer attended survey training conducted by Research Scientist Vanderhaegen to learn changes to this year survey protocol. Volunteer Fischer has deployed eight survey transects to date with more to go. This is the second of a three-year survey effort to gather data to inform the five-year species assessment document.

Washington Ground Squirrel Translocations: Biologist Rowan worked with USFWS biologists to trap and translocate this “state-candidate for listing” species from a Washington Department of Transportation right-of way to an enclosure on the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge where we are trying to re-establish a colony. Only two squirrels were caught and translocated to the refuge.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Volunteer Fence Removal: On a hot, sunny, Saturday afternoon, Manager Troyer teamed up with over 20 members from the Washington Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA) to remove dilapidated fencing on the Methow Wildlife Area. There were also several WDFW master hunters who volunteered to help. In total, there were nearly 30 volunteers and approximately 120 volunteer hours donated to the project. A group of 20 volunteers wrecked out 1.2 miles of barbed and woven wire fencing in the Golden Doe Unit, which is prime wintering mule deer habitat. The woven wire fencing is extremely troublesome to fawns since they have no way to squeeze under or through the fence. There was also a group of 10 volunteers led by USFS Wildlife Biologist Rohrer that wrecked out a half-mile of woven and barbed wire fencing at the Judd Ranch in the Texas Creek Unit. This is the second year in a row that BHA, WDFW master hunters, and the Methow Wildlife Area have teamed up to remove unnecessary woven wire fencing on the wildlife area. Combined, roughly three miles of woven wire fencing has been removed in two years. This project is highly necessary and beneficial to migrating mule deer and other wildlife. A sincere and massive thanks to all the hard working people who came out to support a great cause and a special thanks to BHA member Carmen Vanbianchi for rallying and organizing the troops.



Above - 19 of the 31 volunteers who helped improve migratory wildlife corridors by removing dilapidated woven wire fencing on the Methow Wildlife Area on 6/1/2019. This event was organized by the Washington Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and was also well attended by WDFW master hunters – Photo by Troyer

Riser Lake Volunteer Trail Day: The annual Save-A-Trail project sponsored by the Methow Valley Trails Collaborative (MVTC) took place this June at the Methow Wildlife Area's Riser Lake area. This project dovetails into last year's Lewis Butte trail project, which is over 95 percent complete. On a beautiful Sunday in the Methow, 57 volunteers showed up to begin construction of sustainable trail re-routes on the Riser Lake Loop located in the Rendezvous

Unit. Between Lewis Butte and Riser Lake, there has been approximately 2,500 hours of volunteer labor donated to making our recreational trails more sustainable. Once complete, there will be over 10 miles of looping trails between the interconnected Lewis Butte and Riser Lake trail systems. These statistics speak volumes about the Methow Valley community and their desire to support sustainable, low impact recreation while appreciating and protecting the abundance of biodiversity throughout the Methow Wildlife Area. A sincere thanks to all of the amazing people who turned out on a Sunday to improve recreation on the wildlife area. This work is hard, rugged, and dirty and the massive amount of effort put forth by everyone involved is truly appreciated.



Only a few of the 57 volunteers who helped construct and rehab trails at Riser Lake on the Methow Wildlife Area. A huge thanks to the Methow Valley Trails Collaborative for helping design and organize the event - Photo by Troyer

Leavenworth Site: Access personnel recently constructed a parking lot at the Leavenworth Site on the Wenatchee River. Former manager Graves had been working with Chelan County Public Utility District (CPUD) to provide vehicle containment after CPUD built a road to the osprey pole, so they could get a bucket truck in for maintenance. CPUD provided, and delivered the materials, and WDFW staff members completed the work. The site is not well-known and very low use, but with chronic trespass issues, and road down the middle of the small parcel it was critical to establish vehicle containment to stop the trespass issues, and prevent a fire.



New parking lot at the Leavenworth site - Photo by Josh Harmon

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Grazing Permittee Education: Specialist Heilhecker met with U.S. Forest Service Tonasket Ranger District personnel and a grazing permittee to discuss wolf denning activity. Nonlethal deterrence measures were discussed including suggestions proposed by the livestock producer. No decisions were finalized since cattle are not scheduled for turnout until June 21. Meanwhile Specialist Heilhecker will continue to monitor the pack's activities and notify the livestock producer and Forest Service personnel of any changes.

Calf Injury Investigation: Specialist Heilhecker received a call from a University of Washington graduate student about an injured calf located on Forest Service managed land. Specialist Heilhecker contacted range personnel at the Methow Valley Ranger District to determine ownership. Forest Service staff members contacted the livestock owner. Injuries included a hole in the back with parallel striping on the hide near the back wound. There was also damage to the rear right quarter. The investigation of the calf's injuries were determined to be a couple of days old and likely caused by a bear.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Bear Creek Prescribed Burn: The WDFW burn team and Brothers Firefighting have been hard at work all week on the Bear Creek prescribed burn. The 250-acre Bear Creek burn unit was commercially thinned in the winter of 2016. Prior to the thinning operation, this unit was grossly overstocked and averaged anywhere from 200 to 1,200 stems per acre. In its natural state before fire suppression policy, the historic composition of this unit was 16 to 25 trees per acre. After thinning and once the 200-acre prescribed fire operation is complete, this pine forest should average 20 to 40 trees per acre, which more in line with its historic density and composition. The

result will be a more diverse, nutrient rich, fire adapted, and resilient ecosystem. By the end of this week, the burn team will wrap up firing operations with forecasted rains to follow. The skill, expertise, and hard work put forth by the WDFW Burn Team and the private contractor has been a huge asset to the health and resiliency of many of our forests on department lands, including the Methow Wildlife Area. A big shout out to Matt Eberlein, Greg Saltsman, and their crews for helping the Methow Wildlife Area enhance habitats for our wide array of native wildlife species.



An active prescribed burn on the 250-acre Bear Creek burn unit of the Methow Wildlife Area
– Photo by Troyer

Grant County Pheasant Habitat: Biologist Hughes is partnering with the Columbia Basin Pheasants Forever Chapter and Grant County Conservation District and will soon install two habitat plots, approximately five acres total, to provide upland bird habitat in Grant County. Pheasants Forever and Grant County Conservation District is providing warm season grass mix for these plots. Upon completion of seeding, Pheasants Forever will seek funding for installing shrubs at both sites. The landowner is anxious to get habitat in the ground and has made sure the sites were prepped well prior to Hughes seeding native grasses.

Conserving Natural Areas: Natural Resource Specialist McPherson and Assistant Manager Cole spent two days this month conducting annual Yellowflag Iris survey and treatment work along portions of the Winchester Wasteway. This invasive Class C weed rapidly populates shallow wetlands, shorelines and transitional zones, displacing desirable vegetation. A problematic trait is that once anchored along a shoreline, rapid and dense root development can create floating mats that allow the plant to expand into open water and flowing systems. Though present and spreading around Moses Lake, occurrence appears to be limited in Potholes Reservoir. Identified around 2009 in the Winchester Wasteway, annual treatments noticeably slow the rate of spread and keep the occurrence at a manageable level.



A couple of Class C weeds enjoying a nice Columbia Basin day - Photo by Brian Cole

NRCS-FSA State Acres for Wildlife (SAFE): Biologist Hughes evaluated SAFE shrub-steppe fields throughout Grant County and coordinated with landowners to make sure all fields seeded to native grasses last year were sprayed for broadleaf weeds.



SAFE field seeded last fall that was recently sprayed for broadleaf control - Photo by Hughes

Private Lands Biologist Braaten continues visiting SAFE fields to determine new grass growth size and make broadleaf spray recommendations to Douglas County landowners. Private lands biologist also met with a few landowners concerned about Mid Contract Management (MCM) on their CRP acres.

Biologist Walker surveyed five CRP-SAFE fields all requiring management actions this spring. Most fields were seeded to grass in 2018 and need to be mowed and sprayed for broadleaf weed control prior to planting forbs in 2019. Walker also spoke with seven cooperators who planted forbs into CRP-SAFE fields in fall of 2018 and reminded those cooperators to mow forb plots for weed control as soon as possible. Biologist Walker updated CPA6 contract notes after making contact with cooperators.



CRP-SAFE field in Adams County that was seeded to native grasses in 2018. Young grasses are growing well. However, a canopy of yellow/tumble mustard (*Sisymbrium spp.*) is currently growing over the top of the grasses. While most yellow/tumble mustards are not persistent weed issues on well-established restoration sites after a few years of grass growth, control of yellow/tumble mustards during flowering and prior to seed fill helps preserve critical soil moisture for native plant growth and survival. The mustards in the picture are currently flowering meaning that mowing now would likely kill the plants as well as open up the canopy and give young grasses more sunlight for growth - Photo by R. Walker

Sinlahekin Noxious Weed Treatment: Maintenance Mechanic Boulger and Manager Wehmeyer continued treatment on some of the prescribed burn units that were burned last fall. Their main focus was Saint John's wort, bladder senna, common mullen and houndstongue. They used backpack sprayers to treat approximately 150 acres. They will continue treating other burn units throughout the summer. While hiking through the units to treat weeds they noticed a variety of forbs that were coming up after the burns, especially milkweed in the high burn intensity areas.

Biological Controls: Manager Wehmeyer received four release of *Mecinus janthiniformis* , which is a biological control for Dalmatian toadflax. He was able to release the insects on different sites at the Chiliwist Unit. He observed insects on some of the plants from earlier releases. Manager Wehmeyer also received six releases of *Aulacidea acroptilonica* for Russian knapweed. He released the Russian knapweed insects on different sites on the Horse Spring Coulee Unit and around the Sinlahekin.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Tonasket and Brewster Schools Field Days: Manager Wehmeyer was able to participate in the annual Tonasket fourth grade field trip to the Sinlahekin. He talked to the students about the different plants and animals that are found on the wildlife area. He also spoke about the different management methods that are used to promote the habitat for the different species. Retired WDFW employee Dale Swedberg, Officer Trautman and DNR Andy Townsend also had stations and spoke to the students about a variety of things. This was the first time out to the wildlife area for many of the students. Hopefully we will see some of them out here in the future with their families.

Manager Wehmeyer also took the Brewster sixth grade on their annual hike from Forde Lake to Conners Lake, where he also highlighted some of the activities that can be done on the wildlife area and what they might see. Many of the students had not been on a nature hike before and were quite excited to see the turtles around Forde Lake.



Tonasket fourth graders at Conners Lake - Photo by Wehmeyer

Outreach and Education: Coordinator Gallie spent a day with a reporter and photographer from the High Country News. The article came out online <https://www.hcn.org/issues/51.10/endangered-species-after-nearly-going-extinct-washingtons-pygmy-rabbits-need-room-to-grow>

Okanogan Sixth Grade Camp Progress: Biologist Heinlen spoke about the history and management of bighorn sheep in Okanogan County to 92 Okanogan sixth grade students over multiple days at the Camp Progress Environmental Camp. This has been an annual event for many years and has exposed hundreds of students to the ecology of a variety of local species.

Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goat Outreach: Biologist Comstock co-presented information on local bighorn sheep and mountain goat population monitoring efforts with species specialist Rich Harris, who was invited to present to the Wenatchee Sportsman’s Association on bighorn sheep, mountain goats, pronghorn and moose. Biologist Comstock updated the group on the status of the bighorn sheep captured at Chelan Butte this past winter and the planned aerial surveys for mountain goats on the south shore of Lake Chelan.



Sunset in the area of trapping – Photo by Olson



Western gray squirrel on ponderosa pine – Sinlahekin Wildlife Area – Photo by Haug

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand and WDFW Officer Horn responded to an orchard near Goose Gap where numerous reports of a cougar had been reported. After conducting an extensive search of the area, only small dog or coyote tracks were located. Interviews with farm workers in the area who claimed to have observed the animal were varied and inconclusive.



Coyote tracks

District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra and a volunteer spent a day checking recent nesting sites of Ferruginous Hawks. Five of the five territories they visited continued to have pairs present in Franklin County, most with young nestlings. What the species has not been found in Benton County in recent years outside of the Hanford site.



Ferruginous hawk nesting habitat in the scablands of Franklin County

Burrowing Owl Nest Monitoring Underway Near Tri-Cities: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra worked with volunteers to monitor artificial burrows for nesting burrowing owls and band young and adults as part of a population study partnered with Global Owl Project and United States Fish and Wildlife Service.



District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra and a male burrowing owl adult banded and released near Pasco. Although it looks like Jason is posing for a magazine cover, this is just his normal “I love my job” demeanor.

Biologists Moore and Babik ran two bumble surveys in shrub steppe habitat near the Columbia River. These sites were just past the peak of blooming, therefore numerous flowering resources were available. Although conditions were good, we did not find a single bumblebee during our effort. Another survey will take place at the beginning of June to determine if our timing was off.

On May 13, 2019, Sunnyside Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Rodgers discovered the first hen mallard to occupy one of eight nesting tubes that were installed throughout the

Windmill and Mesa units. The nest tubes continue to be monitored weekly and the hen mallard is still sitting on her six eggs. Brood surveys will be conducted to gather data on waterfowl production throughout the wildlife area.



Natural Resource Technician Rodgers installing a duck nesting tube



Six mallard eggs in a duck nesting tube

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Region 3 Access Manager Garcia and Natural Resource Worker Barbosa worked with a State Parks arborist crew to remove hazardous trees at Fitzsimmons, Teanaway Junction, and Kinghorn Slough. This weeklong project removed previously identified hazard trees, with work concentrated along entrance roads and parking lots. The State Parks crew cut down the trees and our Region 3 Access crew removed them from the roadways and parking lots.



Hazardous trees felled at Fitzsimmons access site



Fitzsimmons access after clean-up



State Parks arborist removing tree limbs at Kinghorn Slough access

Manager Garcia received an email from the public that someone had dumped a truckload of household garbage at Woodhouse loop access. Natural Resource Worker Barbosa picked up the dump site and looked through it for any identifying information to provide to Enforcement. The region received a letter from a user of the site thanking staff for their quick response and through job of cleaning it up.



Dumpsite at Woodhouse Loop

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand coordinated with several landowners and damage permit holders on conducting hunting operations along Hanford's southern border. Six bull elk were harvested since the mid May opener and many elk redirected back to the Hanford Monument.

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to haze problem deer from several wine grape vineyards along the Columbia River. Both LP gas cannons and active hazing with pyrotechnics have provided effective non-lethal techniques.

District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel worked on contracts, materials, and coordination with three large orchard and truck farm operators in Kittitas County to install cost share fencing. Due to the size of the projects, more materials will be needed and storage space will be an issue until the projects can be started. One location will need several cattle guards for access roads.

A landowner in Cle Elum that has filed several crop damage claims called to report elk in his hay field. Hazing materials were provided and a review of fencing options were looked at on the property. Fencing will be difficult at this location due to the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) right of way that extends into the existing hay field. The BOR does not allow fence construction on its right of ways.

Conflict Specialist Wetzel worked on fence repair issues in the Tampico area. Many locations in that area need some form of repair.

A livestock owner in Yakima called to report an aggressive coyote in the city limits of Yakima. The coyote has killed three sheep and appears unafraid of humans. The coyote is easily observed but removing the coyote by shooting is not allowed in the city. No trapper is available to remove the coyote and would not be able to euthanize the coyote on site due to the shooting restriction. The landowner was advised to contact the city to see if any type of waiver could be granted for this situation.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett toured an organic farm in northern Franklin County and inspected a project funded through Natural Resource Conservation Service's EQIP program for "Inadequate Wildlife Habitat." The producer is working with Resource Conservation Riehle on EQIP plantings and is the only applicant for the allotted 2019 Inadequate Wildlife Habitat EQIP in the Snake River Team. Hulett will help with Tree and Shrub selection, Range seed mix, and placement of bird boxes.



Wildlife habitat project funded through the 2014 EQIP program

District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra participated in the Blackrock habitat and fire response meeting with WDFW in Yakima. Needs were brainstormed and prioritized and tasks assigned to help reduce fire frequency in the area as well as restore native habitat in this important area of shrubsteppe connectivity.

Wenas Wildlife Area personnel, with assistance from Oak Creek Wildlife Area staff members, completed a prescribed burn at McCade on a restoration field with years of matted down Russian thistle skeletons. Removal of the weed debris will enable us to more effectively manage weeds on the site.



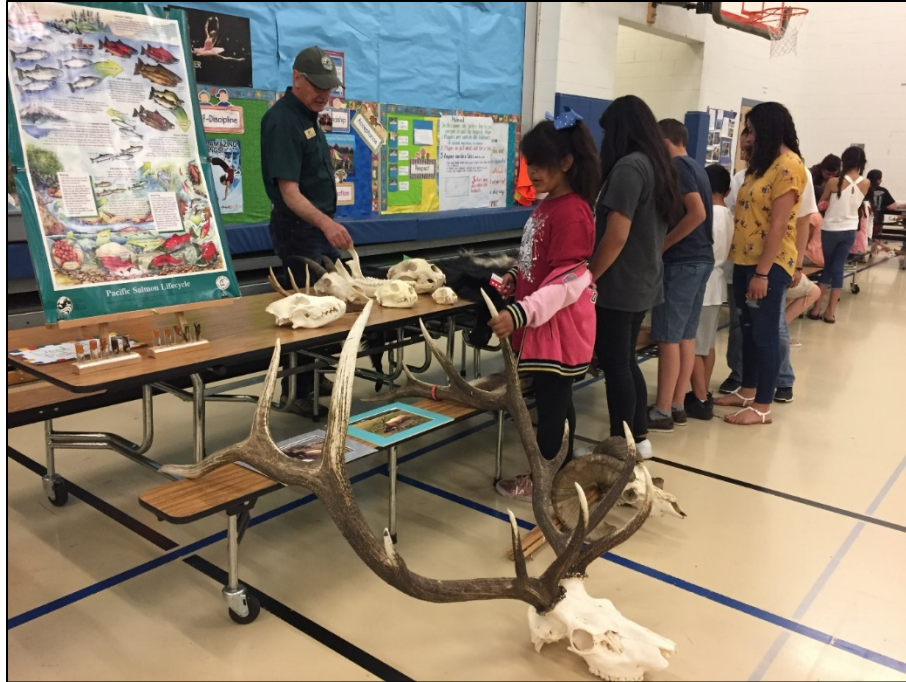
Prescribed burn in field matted down with Russian thistle



Russian thistle mat before and after prescribed burn

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Regional Program Manager McCorquodale attended a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) evening event at Roosevelt Elementary School in Granger. Students and parents were captivated by the skulls, hides, tracks, and other wildlife and fish management information on display. School officials were very appreciative of WDFW's contribution to their event.



Regional Program Manager McCorquodale at Granger STEM event

On May 28, 2019, Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin hosted a field trip of fifth graders from Grandview Elementary. It was a large group (approx. 60 kids) and the trip was proposed last minute, so little preparation was possible. However, Sunnyside Wildlife Area staff took the kids on a two mile nature hike to Giffin Lake and around the west side of the Office Pond, stopping periodically to talk about plants and birds and answered many questions. The students displayed a genuine interest and curiosity in the natural world and brought up many topics, including the ethics of zoo-keeping and marine mammal parks. Overall, the students and staff shared an enjoyable morning.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Bog Beetle Surveys: Biologist Hamer conducted bog beetle surveys at two sphagnum bog habitats in Snohomish County. Unconfirmed Beller's bog beetles were collected at both sites, Dorothy Lake (Snohomish County) and a sphagnum bog outside of Verlot.

Index Town Wall Peregrine Falcons: Biologist Hamer confirmed that the peregrine falcons nesting on the Town Wall at Index, WA were still using the same ledge. The falcon nest site is determined each year and rock climbing routes near the nest ledge are temporarily closed during the nesting season. The falcons are still using the same nest ledge as they were earlier in the year, so the temporary closure is still appropriate.

Island Marble Butterfly Surveys: Biologist Hamer joined Specialist Potter during island marble butterfly surveys on San Juan Island. Surveys were conducted throughout the American Camp and Cattle Point regions of the island. Island marble butterflies seemed to be concentrated near stands of tall tumble mustard (*Sisymbrium altissimum*), one of their host plants. Biologist Hamer is being educated on all things island marble butterfly and will be returning soon to conduct more surveys.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Skagit District Team Meeting: Wildlife biologists from the La Conner office participated in the Skagit district team meeting to learn more about the Samish River Fishery and ongoing projects to improve the hatchery system and surrounding habitat. Discussion also addressed ongoing problems associated with the fishery and how to address the issues so the fishery can proceed into the future.



Skagit district team members at the Samish River fish trap and weir

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this reporting period.

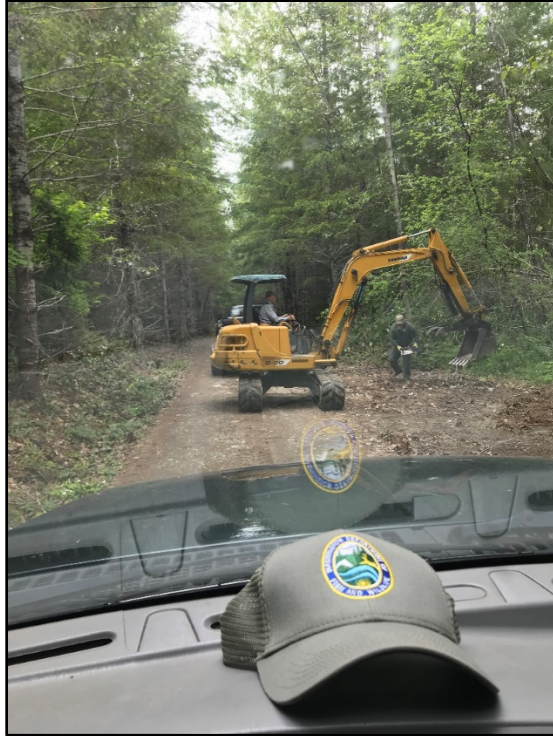
4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Wiley Slough Water Monitoring: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Habitat Planner Baker uploaded data from water level and salinity loggers near the Wiley Slough Restoration Project. The loggers are placed in monitoring wells to record changes in groundwater and in surface water ditches.

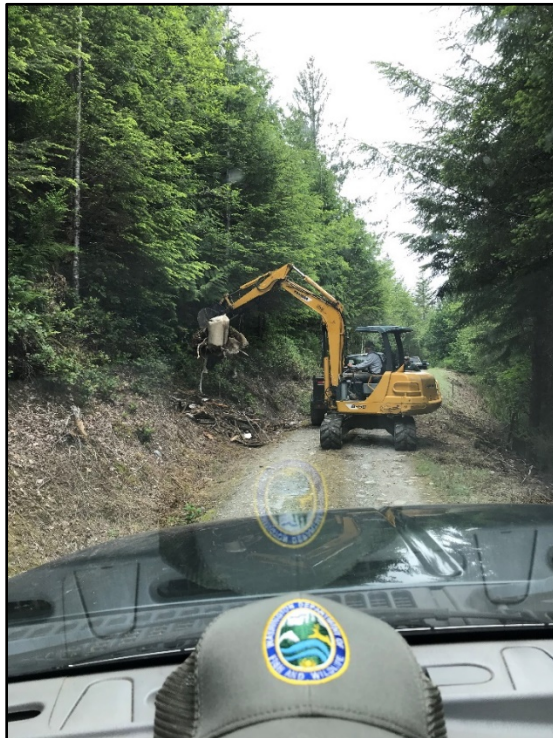


This photo shows data being uploaded onto a computer from a logger that is within a groundwater well

Litter Cleanup and Prevention: Private Lands staff members in Region 4 collaborated again with Sierra Pacific Industries personnel to remove a large garbage dump on their property. Using funding from a Department of Ecology Litter Cleanup and Removal grant, Region 4 Private Lands staff members working with a contractor and Sierra Pacific Industries personnel removed six dumped vehicles and two dump trailers full of garbage from a half-mile road. When all garbage and vehicles were removed, the road was abandoned to prevent future garbage issues at the site.



Cleaning up a dumped garbage site



Removing more dumped garbage from a road that was later abandoned to eliminate garbage dumps

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this reporting period.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Eide Road Right of Way Vacation: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Lands Agent Thomas attended a public hearing with the Snohomish County Council, at which Eide Road was officially vacated to WDFW. This was an important final step that allows the Leque Island Restoration Project to advance.

7) Other

Nothing for this reporting period.

REGION 5

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Sandhill Crane Coordinated Survey: Biologists Bergh and Wickhem joined Volunteers Anderson, J. Jones, C. Jones, and staff members from Conboy National Wildlife Refuge for the annual coordinated survey for sandhill cranes around the Glenwood Valley. The goal of the survey is to identify which territories are occupied, as well as locations of nests, and presence of colts. Greater sandhill cranes only breed in Klickitat and Yakima counties in Washington and are listed as state endangered.



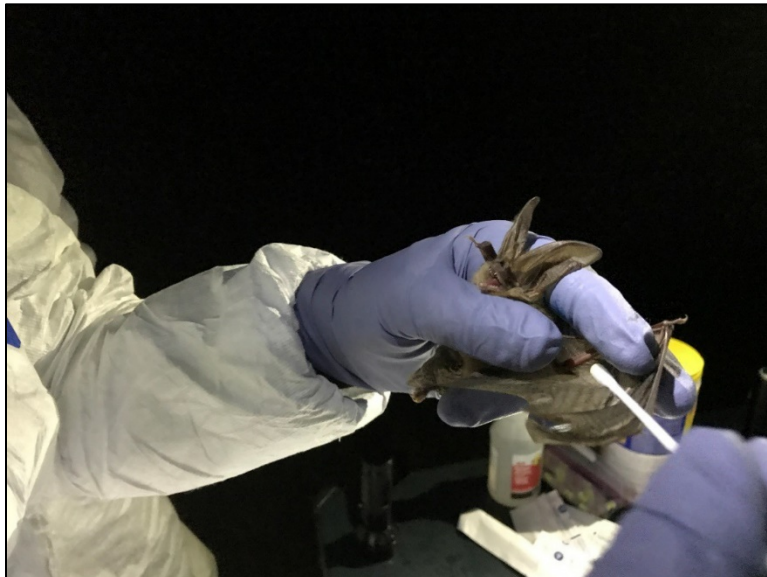
Sandhill crane incubating eggs on a nest at Conboy National Wildlife Refuge

White-Nose Syndrome Monitoring: Biologist Wickhem, White-Nose Syndrome Coordinator Tobin; USFWS Biologists Barnett and Sheffels; and volunteers Hadley, Hoffman, and Reeder set-up mist nets and captured bats at a known roosting site on Conboy Lake National Wildlife

Refuge. Once captured, each bat was inspected for signs of the disease and the face and wings were swabbed, before being released. On this visit, the team caught and sampled four big brown bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*), including two very pregnant females, one little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) and two Townsend's big-eared bats (*Corynorhinus townsendii*). The next morning, Tobin also collected environmental samples from the roosting site. All swabs and samples will be sent to a wildlife disease research lab to be tested for the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*. Surveying hibernacula and common roosting sites throughout the state is a crucial step in tracking the spread of this devastating disease. For more information on white-nose syndrome in Washington, or to report sick or dead bats, please visit: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/diseases/bat-white-nose>.



Mist nets set-up next to the roosting site



*White-Nose Syndrome Coordinator Tobin swabs a Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)*



*Volunteer Hadley checks the wing condition of a big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*)*

Black Bear Population Monitoring in Willapa Hills: Biologist Holman joined Statewide Carnivore Specialists Beausoleil and Welfelt along with Region 6 Biologists Novack, Michaelis, and Murphie to implement black bear population monitoring in GMU 672 (Fall River). The monitoring effort involves constructing 36 barbed wire enclosures each set into a one square kilometer area. The stations are baited with blood and fish oil. When accessing the attractant, the bears leave hair on the wire barbs. Each location will be checked four times over the next 40 days. Bear hair is collected from the barbs and DNA analysis is used to determine the number of individual bears in the area as well as generate a mark re-sight estimate of bear density.



Biologist Novack and Statewide Carnivore Specialists Beausoleil and Welfelt setting Willapa bear station



Statewide Carnivore Specialists Welfelt and Beausoleil sharing their knowledge of black bear monitoring methods and field skills in the Willapa Hills



Biologist Holman adding two liters of blood and one liter of fish oil to a bear study station in the Willapa Hills

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Replacement of Missing Sign: The sign marking the entrance to the Leidl Park campground on the Klickitat Wildlife Area disappeared last winter, so Assistant Manager Steveson constructed a new post structure and it was installed this week. Fortunately, there were a couple of the metal signs for the entrance of the Leidl Park campground in storage and readily available for use as a replacement.



New sign being installed at the entrance to Leidl Park campground

Cowlitz Wildlife Area Swofford Pond and Clevenger Road Trail Maintenance: The trails on the Swofford and Kosmos units were heavily impacted by the snow event that occurred this last winter. The heavy snows caused trees to bend, break, and topple blocking access over much of the trail. A Department of Natural Resources (DNR) inmate crew was utilized to remove the trees and debris from both trails. The crew also brushed back the vegetation and groomed the surface of the trails. The trails are now open for use. The Swofford Pond Trail is a 1 3/4 mile trail that provides walk-in access along the south shore of the lake. Hikers often see elk and deer feeding in the fields adjacent to the lake during the morning and evening hours. The Clevenger Road Trail (2.75 miles) is comprised of two looping trails that wind in and out of fields, upland forests, and streamside riparian habitats. Hikers on this trail may spot a variety of wildlife. Bear, elk, and deer are present on the unit that is found on the east end of Riffe Lake and the area is known as a great place for birders to check the boxes on their bird life list.



DNR inmate crew working on the Swofford Trail

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Bird Feeder Bears: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Wildlife Records Manager Yungdahl responded to a residence in Skamania County where a tenant called to report two bears in the yard. The tenant observed the bears on the patio the night before, and they were there again the next morning. Jacobsen contacted the owner the residence to inquire about attractants on-site. The owner was out of town on vacation and the tenant had vacated the residence that day, so Jacobsen and Yungdahl offered to visit the residence and pull down any bird feeders that were present. A total of 21 bird feeders were found, with most of them severely damaged by the pair of bears. The feeders were locked in the shed and a strong recommendation was given to the landowner to keep the feeders locked away until later in the year.



A small sample of the 21 bird feeders damaged by bears at a Skamania County residence

Bird Feeder Bear 2: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen fielded a call about a bear complaint in Clark County. The bear had been getting into the resident’s birdfeeders. Advice was given to remove the attractants at the site.

Bear Observation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Officer Nelson were contacted about a bear observation in Klickitat County. The landowner had seen a bear earlier in the week near his residence, believed he was missing some feral cats, thought a dog might be missing (though the landowner wasn’t sure which one), and was concerned that the bear was chasing cows in the rangeland across the street because the cows “looked nervous.” Advice was given. Jacobsen also drove by the residence and noticed several dozen bags of trash strewn around the residence. Jacobsen will continue to work with Officer Nelson to monitor the site and attractants.



Trash at a residence where a bear was observed wandering around

Bear Trap: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen worked with WDFW Enforcement officers to set a culvert bear trap at a residence where a young bear has been frequenting and getting into mischief. This is the second time this spring that the trap has been set for this bear at the residence. Hopefully, the bear will take the bait (quite literally) so that it can be relocated to a less-populated area.

Cougar Concerns 1: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Wildlife Records Manager Yungdahl had several conversations with landowners in Skamania and Klickitat counties, including a local town mayor, regarding cougar and deer population concerns. Cougar biology and management was discussed. Jacobsen and Yungdahl also patrolled an urban area where a cougar was reported earlier in the day; however, only deer but no cougars were observed during the patrol.

Cougar Concerns 2: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen discussed a potential depredation on a calf with Officer Martin. The owner of the calf was concerned that it was killed by a cougar. Unfortunately, the landowner had already disposed of the carcass before WDFW could investigate. Based on the photos of the calf and the description of the scene, it is not likely that a cougar killed it. The most plausible scenario was that the calf died of natural causes or was killed by coyotes.

Cougar Depredation 1: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Officer Bolton responded to a residence where a cougar was observed killing chickens in the early morning hours. The landowner claimed to have seen the cougar on his back doorstep, and watched it as it carried chickens from the residence. When Jacobsen and Officer Bolton arrived, the landowner claimed to be missing 60 chickens and 20 ducks. Evidence of an animal getting into two of the coops was observed. Over a dozen cracked and consumed chicken eggs were also observed around the residence. A houndsman was called to the scene, but no cougar was located. Interestingly, only two old chicken carcasses were found in the surrounding woods. It is unclear where the rest of the supposedly missing chickens disappeared. However, it is likely that multiple predator species have been preying on these chickens and free-laid chicken eggs for some time. Advice on securing the fowl was given, and Jacobsen helped the landowner install one of his trail cameras to monitor the residence.



Forced-entry hole into a chicken coop by a predator



One of four chicken/pigeon/duck coops at the residence where some of the fowl disappeared

Cougar Depredation 2: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Officer Bolton responded to a call of a cougar depredation on a sheep. The landowner, who has had issues with cougars killing his sheep in the past, believed that his three remaining sheep were secure in their pen but several weaknesses in the pen were identified by Jacobsen and Officer Bolton. The cougar was actually able to enter the sheep pen with little difficulty. The cougar killed one of the sheep, which weighed approximately 160 pounds, and drug the carcass all around the pen until it found a weak spot to drag the sheep under the fence. The carcass was then drug an extensive distance through blackberry brambles and over downed logs, and eventually cached in a thicket. In all, the carcass was drug an estimated 100 yards over difficult terrain. A houndsman was called to the residence and an adult male cougar weighing over 140 pounds was killed. Analysis of the stomach contents confirmed that this cougar had killed and consumed the sheep during the night. Further advice was given on securing the remaining two sheep and acquiring a livestock guardian dog.



Officer Bolton next to extensive drag marks where the cougar had moved the dead sheep around the pen



Cached and partially consumed sheep carcass from a cougar depredation

Cougar Depredation 3: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to a rural residence where a cougar had been killed by a landowner earlier in the week out of fear for public safety. WDFW officers responded to and investigated the earlier incident, but the landowner was again concerned that another cougar may be in the area. This concern was based on a large number of vultures and crows circling the woods behind the residence.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was able to locate the consumed carcasses of a house cat and a raccoon. Both of these animals were likely killed by a cougar, but it was not possible to determine if they were killed before or after the landowner killed the cougar earlier in the week. Jacobsen had an extensive discussion with the landowners about living and recreating in cougar country. Advice was also given to the landowners to preemptively remove their bird feeders due to the volume of bear complaint calls that have been coming in lately.



Deceased raccoon and house cat from a probable cougar depredation

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Wildlife Records Manager Yungdahl dropped off Bird Banger explosives to a landowner that frequently has elk damage to his hay crop in the spring and summer. This particular herd of elk appears to be easily deterred by these explosives, so hopefully the elk will vacate the area once the explosives are deployed.

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Hoffstadt Unit Gate Maintenance: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Wildermuth and volunteer Bratten welded an additional extension onto a gate leading into the Hoffstadt Unit to deter off-road vehicles from driving around it. A trail had recently been built around the gate that allowed ATV riders to gain access to a non-motorized area of the unit. The area beyond the gate is highly utilized by elk year-round. Not allowing motorized vehicles will decrease harassment and energy demands on the elk. Driving through wetlands and a salmon spawning stream was also a popular activity of those that illegally went around the gate.



Assistant Manager Wildermuth and volunteer Bratten welding

Klickitat Wildlife Area Weed Control: Assistant Manager Steveson treated knapweed, everlasting peas, and sulfur cinquefoil with herbicide at Leidl Park and Stinson Flat campgrounds this week. He found that the weed infestations are shrinking, most noticeably at Leidl Park where sulfur cinquefoil had become well established before it was discovered five years ago. Herbicide treatments are showing positive results.

Grazing Management on Klickitat Wildlife Area Soda Springs Unit: At the beginning of the week, all the cattle that had been on the North Breaks pasture were moved across the Glenwood Highway to the Grayback pasture. Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Steveson removed a plug from the water supply pipe for a trough so it would fill, and monitored the trough to ensure that it was working. The owner of the livestock worked with Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven to set up electric fencing around a wet meadow to protect it from overuse by the cattle. Van Leuven and Steveson checked on the fencing a couple days later and found that it is effective. A few adjustments were made to the arrangement of the fencing to better protect the spot.



Electric fencing set up around a small wet meadow to protect it from overuse by cattle

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Memorial Day Weekend: Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Assistant Manager Steveson talked with anglers and campers on the Klickitat Wildlife Area at the beginning of the weekend. Compliance with the Discover Pass or Vehicle Access Pass requirement was very good among the general public, not so good among the commercial boat excursion companies using the boat ramps. The fishing season for trout, steelhead, and salmon opened May 25 and two very nice fish were landed by anglers who put their boats in at Leidl Park earlier in the day.

Wolf Management Meetings with Wahkiakum and Skamania County Commissioners and Public: Regional Director Lee, Regional Wildlife Program Manager Jonker, Biologists Holman and Bergh, and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen presented information regarding wolf management to Wahkiakum County Commissioners, Skamania County Commissioners, and members of the public in separate meetings. The presentations featured information on wolf biology, current Washington population and distribution, efforts to minimize impacts from wolves to livestock producers, etc. Additionally, information was provided regarding the upcoming update to the Wolf Management Plan and the Periodic Status Review.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Aircraft Safety Training: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen attended Aircraft Safety Training in Olympia with several other staff members from around the state.

7) Other

Dumping on WDFW Land: In the course of other work, Klickitat Wildlife Area personnel discovered that a large quantity of limbs, wood, and leaves had been dumped on the Mineral Springs Unit. The material was fresh. While driving to the intended work site, Manager Van Leuven and Assistant Manager Steveson passed a residence where a large tree of the same species that was dumped had been cut down, and a man was still working to clean up the mess. Van Leuven and Steveson reported the activity to WDFW Officer Bolton, who followed up with a contact with people at the residence. Officer Bolton learned that the man working there had in fact dumped the debris on the Mineral Springs Unit. The man was given the option to remove all the dumped material and dispose of it properly or face a stiff fine.

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Snowy Plovers: Western snowy plover surveys were conducted at numerous sites along the coast of Pacific and Grays Harbor counties, in conjunction with regional survey efforts in Oregon. District 17 wildlife biologists, in collaboration with USFWS Willapa refuge staff members, Shoalwater Tribe, and WDFW headquarters personnel, completed the first of three surveys conducted during May/June to provide annual estimates of the breeding population.



*Graveyard Spit snowy plover survey May 2019 –
Note erosion along the recently constructed sand
berm*



Black Bear: Hair snaring corrals were installed on public and privately owned timberlands in GMU 672 (Fall River). This begins a two-month effort to obtain DNA samples from black bears, which will be used to develop a population density estimate for the unit. Carnivore section staff members Beausoleil and Welfelt brought the materials and expertise needed to install the corrals. Biologists Holman, Novack, Michaelis, Murphy, and Intern Jackson provided the labor. Three teams set-up 16 stations.

Bear survey GMU 672 – WDFW Biologist Novack applying an olfactory lure to a debris pile inside a barbed wire corral installed within GMU 672. The wires will snare hair from bears that enter the corral to investigate the scent lure. DNA derived from those hairs will allow WDFW to estimate the bear population size within the unit.

Western Pond Turtles: Biologist Murphie spent one day checking for nesting, radio-tagged, adult female western pond turtles at a South Puget Sound recovery site. No turtles were on land this day, but it is early in the nesting period and the weather was cool for most of the day. Biologist Tirhi is assisting with monitoring our pond turtle population covering every Thursday shift from 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Elk Calf Collaring (GMU 601): Biologist Murphie assisted the Makah Tribal Wildlife Program in searching for elk calves for a survival study they are conducting. They collared one calf.

Mountain Goat Relocation: Planning continues for the July and August captures including a conference call and emails on this activity. Biologist Murphie spent time planning and scheduling staff members for the Hamma Hamma and Mount Ellinor staging areas.

Streaked Horned Lark: Biologists Tirhi and Butler completed the first of three lark surveys at the Olympia Airport. Surveys would not typically be done this year as WDFW is now on a three-year rotation for lark surveys with the next surveys scheduled for 2020. However, in the case of a decline in population at any occupied breeding site, WDFW has decided to survey annually rather than wait the three year period. This is the situation with Olympia Airport. Survey results are not accessible at this time, due to equipment issues, but are higher than those obtained during the 2018 surveys, which is encouraging. Two more surveys are scheduled thru mid-June.

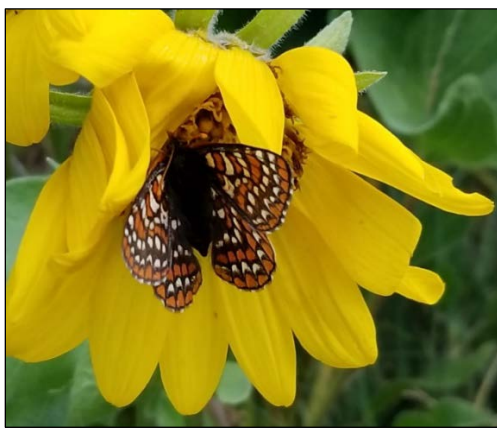
Bog Beetles: Biologist Tirhi and volunteer Terry continue conducting surveys for Beller's ground beetle and Hatch's click beetles in Sphagnum bogs in Pierce and Thurston counties (see last month's reports for overview of project). Tirhi and Terry conducted surveys at a site in Gig Harbor and near Orting during this report period. No beetles were found at the former and thus traps were set which will be collected next week. Beller's were located at the Orting location and are being processed. District 11 has yet to find Hatch's click beetles.

Taylor’s Checkerspot Flight Season Surveys: The end of May brought the Taylor’s checkerspot flight season to a close, with Biologists Linders, Randolph, Cook, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) Biologist Richardson completing distance surveys at six Puget lowlands sites. Checkerspot abundance in the Puget lowlands reached remarkable levels for a second straight year, and this federally-endangered species was noted dispersing in significant numbers across the larger landscape. On JBLM, butterflies were sighted on nearly every prairie, at distances two or more miles from the nearest source site. In addition to maintaining large populations on ranges 50 and 76, they now occupy significant portions of the 7,000-acre Artillery Impact Area (AIA) in which these sites are embedded, albeit at much lower densities. Reports of adult checkerspots in the vicinity of SCS indicates similar movement distances there. A third reintroduction site on JBLM (TA15), where releases were initiated in 2018, is also off to a strong start and is the main focus of current release efforts. On two sites, TA14 on JBLM and Glacial Heritage Preserve, we have failed to establish populations in spite of significant release efforts. Reasons for this are unknown, but potential explanations being explored include inadequate habitat, excessive disturbance, and toxicity from pesticides or other compounds. Overall, the Taylor’s checkerspot reintroduction project has about doubled numbers in the Puget lowlands since the last peak in 2012, and increased overall numbers by a factor of 27 since the all-time low recorded in 2009.

Table. New data in black; data previously presented in gray. Data in () represents observations outside of a formal survey.

Date	SCS1	R50	TA7S	TA15	SCS2	R76
15-Apr	0				0	
17-Apr	(1)		(0)	(3)		
20-Apr		372				302
21-Apr			0	22		
24-Apr	614				8	
26-Apr			5	165		
27-Apr		1498				
29-Apr						2201
30-Apr	1672		8		20	
1-May		1893		237		1893
3-May			12			
4-May	1127				52	
6-May		1267		194		1385
7-May			11			
8-May	676				75	
10-May			18			
11-May		366		55		385
13-May	185				50	
18-May		69		5		55
22-May		(0)				(19)
23-May	27			6	14	
28-May		(0)				
29-May	1					
30-May						0 (1)

To add to the other unusual observations noted so far in 2019, flight season length reached 44 days, the longest recorded to date. An examination of wing wear and sex for 19 checkerspots located at R76 on 22 May, produced one old, faded adult and 18 adults classed as new to very fresh (photo at left below). Of the 16 for which sex could be determined, ten were female and six were male. This suggests a portion of the fifth instar larvae that re-emerged to feed early in the flight season, did in fact go on to become adults. Typically, five weeks into the flight season, only the last few stragglers can be found, with a very low percentage of those being either males (e.g., photo at right below) or moderately fresh females. This is important because it suggests a strategy checkerspots used to take advantage of changing conditions and to increase population size and flight season length when weather conditions were good. Flight season length for Bay checkerspot in California varies considerably by year, but can be two to three months long.



Taylor's Checkerspot Release: On May 17, all remaining adults not needed in captivity were released into the wild at TA15, the new reintroduction site on JBLM. Adults were released under cloudy skies, with some sun breaks and temperatures of about 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Surveys conducted a week following release suggest a good number of these adults persisted, as those already present on site were nearly gone at the time these were released.

Taylor's Checkerspot Distance Point Count Surveys: Two occupied Taylor's checkerspot sites west of the Elwha River are monitored by WDFW using a distance point count method. Biologist McMillan completed several data management tasks such as: entering the data for the surveys she completed, creating the summary table of total counts, editing the list of points and associated measurements, and coordinating data entry of the surveyors. Biologist McMillan created a summary table of the total counts completed by District 16 staff members plus Biologist Murphie and Biologist Bell. The analysis of the collected data will be done by Research Scientist Gail Olson. The completed counts during these surveys were as follows:

Taylor's Checkerspot Surveys	Northern Site TOTAL	Southern West	Southern - Jenny	Southern - Parallel	Southern - Ridge Road TOTAL	Southern - Lower East Road
# Points	89	55	36	20	51	21
25-Apr-19	21					
26-Apr-19			48			
28-Apr-19		162				
29-Apr-19	75			9	14	
30-Apr-19						6
4-May-19			202	22		
6-May-19					20	
7-May-19		338	119	24		
8-May-19						29
9-May-19	223				32	
10-May-19	207					39
May 11-21 weather unsuitable						
22-May-19	36	233			47	
23-May-19		103	62	13		
30-May-19						9
31-May-19					27	
		Count-color indicates surveyor	Gary	Shelly	Bryan	Anita

Taylor's checkerspot survey total counts from sites west of the Elwha River



Southern Taylor's checkerspot habitat site observed from the south

Taylor's Checkerspot – Coordinating with DNR Biologist McPherson Regarding Long-term Habitat Management and Unapproved Trail Systems: Biologist McMillan met with DNR Biologist McPherson at the southern Taylor's checkerspot site west of the Elwha on May 2. Biologist McPherson notified us that she is seeking funding from DNR leases to establish an ongoing source of funding for the ongoing management needs for checkerspot habitat. The focus on Taylor's checkerspot habitat on DNR land has brought with it the awareness of increased

recreational use of the area. Some recreational activity and trail establishment in and adjacent to the critical habitat has not been approved. Biologist McPherson revisited the sites later in May and informed the mountain bike users in the area that they were not allowed to bike through the trail system and insisted they return the way they entered so as not to harm the checkerspot population. Biologist McPherson stated that she had to be careful that day while they walked along the trails and roads because of the basking checkerspots at risk of being stepped on.



Trails frequented by mountain bikers adjacent and within Taylor's checkerspot habitat are not approved by DNR

Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Surveys: Biologist McMillan conducted complete Taylor's checkerspot surveys on May 22 at the northern site and initiated a survey on May 29 at the southern site.

May 22 Northern Site Survey: Total count of 36, much lower than the previous count of 207 on May 10. The period between May 11 and 21 the weather was not conducive for surveys, often being cloudy enough to not have distinct shadows while temperatures remained below 65 degrees Fahrenheit.

May 29 Southern Site Survey attempt: The count was started to determine if the peak flight period was over. The counts were much lower than the previous count on May 23 so the survey was discontinued. The work shifted to collecting seed for the future enhancement projects.

Biologist Ament conducted several Taylor's checkerspot surveys during the past several weeks following the period of unsuitable weather. She conducted a survey on May 22 of a route at the southern site that was last surveyed on May 9. Unlike all other routes, higher numbers from the previous survey were actually counted at this route that has the highest elevation of all routes. Another survey was conducted at this route on May 31 and the checkerspot numbers were close to half as many as the last count. Taylor's checkerspot host and nectar plants were still in bloom and viable at this site. Biologist Ament also conducted a survey at a lower elevation route for the

southern site on May The total Taylor’s checkerspot count was nine which was much lower than the previously count of 39 for the survey conducted on May 10.

Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly Habitat Focus: Biologist McMillan began collecting seed from the Taylor’s checkerspot sites west of the Elwha for habitat projects. Since surveys were completed, staff members have had more opportunity to watch checkerspots and document plants used for nectaring. Biologist Ament spent time on May 29 collecting *Plectritis* seed from a site that Biologist McMillan had previously identified for seed collection. The location was lower in elevation. Many of the plants had already dispersed their seed and died. She spent time exploring areas in the vicinity for future seed collection.



Rockcress blooming during May and seeded Collinsia sites in bloom

Misplaced Marmot: On the evening of May 15, Biologist Ament got a call from a young friend, who was calling from Port Angeles and reported that a marmot was hiding under cars in front of the Corner House Restaurant on First Street. Kat had never seen a marmot but others on scene said it was a marmot. (Side note – this is the same friend that called last fall to report a mountain beaver in the Country Aire Natural Foods parking lot). Biologist Ament requested a possible photo and received a few blurry photos that were sent via cell phone (photos below). Yes indeed.....it was a marmot! Biologist Ament made numerous calls to seek assistance from Enforcement, fellow biologists, rehabbers, and wildlife control operators but was unsuccessful. She was loading her truck with capture items when they called back to report that two off duty park rangers wandered by. They contacted Park Biologist Happe, who manages the marmot population in Olympic National Park. Happe and her husband arrived on scene with a have-a-heart trap she borrowed from the Elwha Biologist Sager-Fradkin. With assistance of others, they were able to capture the misplaced mammal. The marmot was transported and released at Hurricane Ridge where it was believed to come from. Patti was aware of a known colony along the parking lot at the visitor center. The marmot was a yearling, born last year, and was healthy but “just freaked out.” Happe reported that this was not the first time that a marmot hitched a ride down the ridge in a car.



Young marmot that decided to make the journey to the city – safely returned home

Eaglet Rescue: Biologist Ament was heading out west of Port Angeles on May 23 and got a call from local retired wildlife rehabilitator Jaye Moore. Two young eaglets had somehow fallen out of their nest that was located in a tree along Marine Drive in Sequim. The nest site is a mile and a half from Biologist Ament's home office. She has teamed up with Jaye and her husband Gary in the past to return eaglets and hawk chicks to their nests. This particular eagle nest is quite visible from Marine Drive and likely the most watched/photographed eagle nest in Clallam County. It is completely unknown how the three to four week old eaglets ended up in the bushes across the road from their nest tree. Fortunately, Sebastian the cute little Shih Tzu, owned by Andy and Kathy Pitts, had a keen nose and alerted his owners to something in the bushes during his morning walk. Andy called Jaye and reported what Sebastian had encountered. Biologist Ament aborted her plans to conduct a butterfly survey and returned to assist with the project to capture the eaglets and return them to the nest. The eaglets were easily collected from the bushes and taken to Greywolf Veterinary Hospital. Dr. Brittany Rose inspected both eaglets and reported no obvious injuries. She gave full approval for the desired goal of returning the eaglets to their nest as soon as possible. Fortunately, Jaye had a connection with a tree climber named Casey Balch from Pacific Northwest Tree Service. He and his crew member Travis Waddell were quickly on scene after finishing up a job. They worked with Gary Moore to set up rigging to actually zip-line the eaglets to the nest from the road. Casey swiftly climbed the tree to the nest. Wildlife Rehabilitator Sara Penhallegon from the Center Valley Animal Rescue arrived just in time to give each eaglet fluids before they were loaded in a duffle bag for transport. The eaglets got a quick smooth ride to the nest and Casey carefully placed each eaglet in the nest. Both adult eagles were in the vicinity and often flew directly overhead as Casey was at the nest. Biologist Ament and neighbors monitored the nest closely in the days that followed. Biologist Ament has observed an adult eagle feeding the eaglets during a few of her observation visits. The neighbors have continued to report their observations. Hopefully, the young eaglets will continue to grow, stay in the nest, and fledge successfully. This positive outcome project was accomplished due to the gracious efforts of many dedicated individuals that care about the conservation of bald eagles. Thanks to all on behalf of WDFW. See photos below along with a link for a story in the Peninsula Daily News.

<https://www.peninsuladailynews.com/news/baby-eagles-replaced-in-nest-and-watched-over-by-neighbors/>



Sebastian the eaglet finder w/ Andy & Kathy Pitts



Dr. Rose reports no injuries



Eaglets with Travis Waddell and Jaye Moore waiting to be returned to their nest



Sara giving an eaglet some fluids



Gary sending off eaglets in duffle bag



Casey just before returning eaglets to nest



Adult eagle w/ eaglets at nest the next day

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Dump sites: Natural Resource Technician Tupen visited and cleaned up several dump sites this week at private forest lands that allow free public access.



Dump site on private timber company land in Mason County



Off to the dump

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Wolf Internal Group: Biologist Murphie worked on a sub-committee assignment and participated in a conference call related to updating the wolf-livestock interaction protocol.

Beaver Problems: Natural Resource Technician Tupen continues to monitor private timber company lands for any signs of beaver activity. Tupen is using tactics such as hanging bear hide and placing predator attractant in areas of high beaver use.

Graham Elk Damage: Natural Resource Technician Tupen responded to a complaint of a group of elk damaging crops and breaking fences near Graham. Tupen made a site visit to observe the landowner's damage claims. Tupen gathered pictures and has since forwarded them to the Conflict Specialist Blankenship, who was on vacation at the time of the reported damage.

Satsop Christmas Trees: Natural Resource Technician Tupen visited a Christmas tree farm, where significant elk damage has taken place in the past several months. Tupen observed the damage and estimated the timeframe in which it occurred. Overall, there were over 150 Christmas trees that were damaged by bull elk. Biologist Harris and Tupen are working on the next steps.



Damage caused by bull elk scraping trees

Injured Deer: Natural Resource Technician Tupen responded to a report of an injured, yearling black-tailed deer that had been hit by a car and was now laying in someone's yard. Upon visiting the residence, Tupen located the deer and approached it to determine the extent of its injuries. The deer jumped up and trotted off into the forest. It did look to have a little road rash on its side, but it did not appear to have any broken bones and seemed to be moving around fine. Tupen explained this to the landowner and he was thrilled that the deer did not have to be euthanized.

Nuisance raccoon: Natural Resource Technician Tupen responded to a complaint from an Aberdeen resident about a raccoon that has been stealing her cat's food and getting aggressive with some of her cats. Tupen made a site visit and discovered that everyone in the apartment complex has cat food outside, as well as bird feeders and other attractants. Tupen advised that she feed her cats inside, which she was willing to do. Tupen also advised her on the protocol of capturing and removing raccoons.

Aggressive otters: Natural Resource Technician Tupen spoke with a resident in Ocean Shores who has a pair of otters living under his deck. Lately, the otters have been getting aggressive with him and his wife and he wanted to know what his options were for getting rid of the otters. Tupen advised the homeowner that the otters likely have babies under his deck and that they will likely move out as soon as they are capable. Tupen also advised on exclusionary measures to prevent them from getting under the deck and referred the homeowner to the WDFW website, where animal control operators are listed in case removal is needed.

Bear Timber Damage: Biologist Harris provided two cell phone cameras to a small forest landowner to monitor for bear activity. The landowner has been experiencing damage higher than in previous years. With no other tools at his disposal, he is trying to increase disturbance on his property in hopes of getting bears to move on. A master hunter hung the cameras and is volunteering to help visit the property to create a disturbance. Increased target shooting and dog walking are two of the activities. Region 6 conflict personnel will also spend time on the property.



Master hunter installing cameras



Small forest landowner removing brush that is triggering cameras when the wind blows

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Planning: Biologist Murphie participated on a conference call on the Theler Wetland property and attended a meeting in Lakewood related to the new South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Plan.

South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Planning: Biologist Tirhi represented District 11 at the first internal planning meeting for the update of the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Plan. Tirhi prepared a species and habitats list for species on units of the wildlife area within District 11 (namely, South Puget Sound Unit and Nisqually Unit). The meeting consisted of reviewing each of the units in the wildlife area, creating a vision statement for the wildlife area, and crafting objectives and strategies for public and internal recommendations received during the public scoping period and public open house. Several future meetings are planned.

Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Addition: WDFW is attempting to purchase a 148-acre inholding to the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area. This property connects the two units of the wildlife area and has been leased from the owners since the 1960s. Biologist Tirhi successfully applied for and obtained \$600,000 towards this acquisition in 2017 from the USFWS for the recovery of the listed species that inhabit the property. Tirhi is now attempting to obtain the \$200,000 match to that grant and final purchase funds. Tirhi collaborated with Thurston County staff members to submit a Thurston County Conservation Futures grant application for these remaining funds. As part of grant review, Tirhi lead a tour of the property for the grant advisory technical team. The members had great questions and were obviously impressed with the beauty and ecological value of the property during the tour. The blues skies, oaks, and prairie plants in bloom helped plead the case.



Scatter Creek Wildlife Area addition, 2019

5) Providing Education and Outreach

General Wildlife Inquiries: Biologist Murphie responded to inquiries received by phone or email related to raccoon latrine on roof, deer in poor condition (hair-loss), and deer hunting in GMU 627.

Mazama Pocket Gopher Survey Training: Biologist Linders teamed up with personnel from the USFWS again this year to assist with a two-day gopher certification training for Mazama pocket gopher mound identification. The course consists of both classroom and field training, followed by both written and practical exams. In addition to learning about gopher vs. mole mound characteristics, participants learn about the laws and legal implications surrounding gopher surveys for land management purposes. Participants attending the class came from private consulting firms and non-governmental organizations, as well as municipal, state and federal government agencies. All participants engaged in this year's training passed the test, which requires a combined written and practical test score of 90 percent.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Aircraft Safety Training: Biologist Murphie attended Aircraft Safety Training in Lacey with intent to be a future instructor. The next class new instructors are expected to give is fall 2019.

7) Other

Nothing for this reporting period.