

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

Nov. 1 to Nov. 15, 2019

DIVERSITY DIVISION

No report this period.

GAME DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Elk Specialist Garrison, Deer and Elk Section Manager Hoenes, and Game Division Manager Aoude along with other WDFW staff members met with Washington State University (WSU) researchers to discuss proposals investigating the relationship between antler malformation and hoof disease, a social science project about elk hoof disease, and field efforts and logistics for procuring elk for a captive facility. Garrison et al. will continue to work with WSU researchers on data acquisition, sharing, and assisting with field coordination of captures.

Specialist Garrison worked with several regional staff members to collect elk hooves for disease surveillance and research. Many hunters are still afield and reports of possibly TAHD affected elk are common, though most do not require immediate follow up or staff action. WDFW encourages the public to report any observations of limping or lame elk on their [webpage](#).

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Elk Specialist Garrison worked with regional staff members on project proposals for Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Project Advisory Committee (RMEF PAC) evaluation and, hopefully, funding. Current proposals are aimed at improving elk habitat throughout Washington through noxious weed treatment, forest thinning, and prescribed burning.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Elk Specialist Garrison met with an aspiring wildlife biology graduate student to discuss research and management of elk hoof disease. Garrison was happy to spend time discussing the in's-and-

outs of hoof disease, and Garrison is looking forward to following the student's progress in graduate school.

Elk Specialist Garrison presented to a pesticide and herbicide application safety workgroup ([SSB 5550](#)) about elk hoof disease. Chemical-induced causes for elk hoof disease is a commonly touted hypothesis, and the workgroup wanted to hear about the research WDFW and its collaborators have done in the last decade. Treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD), or elk hoof disease for short, is caused by a suite of bacterial pathogens and no chemical cause for this type of disease is known. For more information about TAHD, visit WDFW's [website](#).

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Elk Specialist Garrison attended a workshop on integrated population models (IPMs) in Missoula, Montana. As their name implies, IPMs are a framework for integrating what are usually separated population analyses into a single framework. The approach has potential applicability for game management in Washington because, in some instances, it is a more 'efficient' analytical framework and can lead to a better understanding of population dynamics and factors responsible for population changes.

HUNTER EDUCATION

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Nothing for this installment.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey assisted a senior hunter going to Montana to hunt for the first time. The hunter had not taken hunter education in Washington as he was born before January 1, 1972 but was uncertain of the requirements for Montana. A quick check on the internet and download of the Montana regulations and the hunter's questions were answered. Dazey also advised the hunter that it might be a good idea to contact the Montana Game office to verify that our reading of the regulations was correct.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey activated several end-of-year classes to help meet the demand occasioned by students waiting till the last minute to take hunter education. Class registrations yearlong are about 75 percent of capacity but in November and December the demand goes up and since most instructors are hunters the available classes decrease. This creates long wait lists for the classes that are held. Included in the classes activated was one class taught in Spanish. Dazey completed the pre-service training for two new instructors in Whatcom County. Whatcom County has been under served so it is hoped that with the addition of these new instructors we will better be able to provide hunter education classes in that area.

Region 4 conducted their third class oriented to women hunters this season. These classes have been very popular as they feature an all-female teaching team and a female enforcement officer. The students taking the class often comment on how less intimidating the class is and that they also feel more comfortable asking questions of female instructors in this environment. An added benefit of these classes is that by having a female enforcement officer present the students see that WDFW is a diverse workforce. A big thank you to Sargent Maurstad for her help at these classes.

Region 6 Coordinator Montgomery partnered with Farmer Chris White, Wildlife Area Manager Darric Lowery, Alex Biswas, Tom Ryle and Kelly Riordan of the Marketing Team, and Pheasants Forever to hold a clinic/mentored hunt at the Davis Creek Wildlife Area. Pheasants Forever reimbursed all juvenile hunters \$40.50 cost for licenses. Originally scheduled for 10 youth and 10 new adult hunters we had a smaller number in attendance. Everyone harvested at least one bird and were thankful for the opportunity to participate.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Region 5 Coordinator Elliott and Instructor Advisory Council Member Mills met with a brand-new team in Winlock to deliver supplies, assist in setting up classes in Kalkomey, answer questions, and look over the space where classes/field course will be held. Aside from the meeting, Elliott and Mills also spoke with the chief instructor on several occasions to provide additional support. Both attended one night of the traditional class to observe and assist if needed.

Coordinator Elliott has spoken with several instructors following the inactive instructor notification that went out via postcard a couple weeks ago.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia worked with a father/son hunter education instructor team to setup a new venue and begin offering classes in Benton City.

Coordinator Dazey met with the agency Fiscal Office to finalize arrangements for the upcoming Hunter Education Division range safety officer training being offered to hunter education instructors in Washington. The instructor policy manual requires that when live fire is conducted as part of a hunter education course one certified instructor shall serve as range officer and assume responsibility for supervision of overall range activities and the roles of certified instructors, instructor volunteers, and volunteers. By offering this training the hunter education division is providing the tools for the instructors to safely assume that responsibility.

Coordinator Montgomery held a pre-service training in Puyallup certifying four male and two female new instructors.

7) **Other**

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey met with a contact at Pacific Lutheran University (PLU) to discuss the upcoming visit of a group of international business students to WDFW. The students will learn about the department and the financial return to Washington from hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation activities. Dazey also spoke with the contact on the possibility of partnering with PLU on citizen science opportunities.

LANDS DIVISION

No report this period.

SCIENCE DIVISION

No report this period.

REGION 1

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Bighorn Sheep Research: District Biologist Wik spent much of late-October and early-November working with Idaho Fish and Game and University of Idaho ground capturing bighorn sheep in the Asotin Creek herd as part of a research project. Sixteen ewes were captured, fitted with collars that record locations hourly, and measured body condition using an ultrasound. A Ph.D. student will be starting this fall at the University of Idaho, who will be monitoring habitat use, capturing lambs from these collared animals, and measuring available and used forage over the next three years. An additional ewe and ram were captured in the Black Butte herd to supplement the number of collars in that herd.



*District Biologist Wik and Professor Long
with the final ewe of the capture effort*

Grouse Leks: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch mowed six lek sites at Swanson Lakes, for both sharp-tailed and sage grouse. The goal is to keep the grass height down for the birds before they start dancing in spring, so they can better detect each other and approaching predators. Unfortunately, leks with few birds don't get trampled down as larger leks do, and mowing makes up for that.

Roaming Bighorn Sheep Ram: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice discovered a wandering bighorn sheep ram near Asotin on Nov. 5. The ram was attempting to cross Asotin Creek Road to a small pasture where several domestic sheep are located. Calls to the district biologist for assistance didn't make it through for a few hours and the ram eventually got off the hillside and disappeared into the black berries along Asotin Creek.



*Bighorn sheep ram attempting to cross
the road near Asotin on Nov. 5*

Mule Deer Survival Monitoring: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy plotted the capture locations for four mule deer collars that are no longer transmitting GPS locations, and followed-up with a ground survey of these locations using an omni-directional antenna. Vekasy did not detect any VHF signals from the four missing collars.

Highway 12 Realignment Mitigation: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy completed the installation phase of the ferruginous hawk nest platform project. Vekasy met with the contractor to review installation procedures and any questions on directions to site locations. Vekasy supplied the contractor with hard-copy maps and digital locations for use with a smart phone mapping application. The contractor installed 15 platforms in Walla Walla County, six platforms in Columbia County, five in Benton County, and one in Franklin County. Vekasy inspected the majority of the platforms for quality control and found the contractor had done an excellent job of locating and installing platforms.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Hunting Clinic Preparation: Private Lands Biologist Gaston met with Hunter Coordinator Garcia to discuss plans and begin wrapping up the planning of a hunting clinic in St. John, Washington in December. The clinic has already filled up and will host 30 hunters and 30 mentors.

Pheasants Forever: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley attended a local Pheasants Forever meeting to meet the new Washington national representative and listen to information regarding potential future staffing of Pheasants Forever biologists in Washington.

Hunting Season Recommendations: District Biologists Wik and Vekasy worked on finalizing and submitting 2020 hunting season recommendations. Hunters will continue to see a decline in the number of permits available for elk in the Blue Mountains due to a 25 percent decline in the population over the past three years.

Lake Aeration: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch turned on the aeration system at Z Lake, on the east side of Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. A solar- and wind-powered generator provides winter oxygen for annually planted rainbow trout. This rimrock lake is designated as walk-in only, although disabled anglers may drive there with a temporarily issued key.



Photo by Mike Finch



Gate damage, before repairs - Photo by Randall Osborne

Water Access Sites: After an unknown vehicle rammed the entry gate at the Fourth of July Access Site, Water Access Manager Dziekan borrowed a portable welder from Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area to repair the bent, weakened hinge post. He left the gate itself as is. It's creased but still strong and swings normally. The assembly, while not beautiful, is again functional.

Asotin County Cattleman's Association Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade and Statewide Wolf Coordinator Smith attended an Asotin County Cattlemen's Association meeting this week. Smith gave a presentation on the wolf post-recovery plan and how to provide input. Wade and Smith answered questions from the attendees. The meeting was well attended, and Smith's presentation was appreciated by the audience.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Shrubsteppe Enhancement, Revere Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Mike Finch and Manager Juli Anderson met with volunteers from the Puget Sound chapter of Pheasants Forever, to plant 1800 shrubs at the new addition to Revere Wildlife Area. Private Lands Biologist Todd Baarstad also joined the work crew, mowing the site before planting occurred. The 94-acre parcel was donated to WDFW by Pheasants Forever and provides two benefits: it conserves cover and forage habitat for upland birds and mule deer, and it provides a public land link between Revere Wildlife Area and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Escure Recreation Area. Paul Lubbesmeyer led the Pheasants Forever planting team of 18 members plus one young grandson. The crew planted the stems in about three hours, low on a bench above Rock Creek.



Everyone pitched in with planting!

Shrubsteppe Enhancement, Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Mike Finch hosted a small group of biologists at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area on Nov. 14. The group discussed options for improving habitat quality on virgin shrubsteppe without tilling up the soil. Finch and U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wildlife biologist Jason Lowe also drove the perimeter of two retired farm fields on nearby BLM property, to determine their acreage. Finch will be restoring the fields to shrubsteppe habitat over the next two years, using BLM funds.



Left to right: Dr. Mike Schroeder, WDFW; Dr. Kim Thorburn, WDFW; Jason Lowe, BLM; and Dr. Grant Casady, Whitworth College - Photo by Mike Finch

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Blue Mountains Wildlife Areas Trespass Livestock: Trespass livestock were found on the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area near the Bott place by WDFW personnel. Dave Meisner and Scott McGee herded the cows off the wildlife area and put them back where they belong on adjacent private property. Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice checked nearby adjacent boundary fence high on the hillside and made repairs. Meanwhile at Joseph Creek, approximately 25 cows continue to trespass graze the wildlife area near the headquarters buildings. David Woodall contacted the owner and asked him to remove his animals from the wildlife area.



Damaged boundary stock fence on the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area near Hanson Ridge

4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Lands and Facilities: Technicians McGee and Meisner finished a spring development project at the Stucker Field. They also began work cleaning up and making repairs to the barn at the Bott place. They loaded garbage out of the barn, removed an old corral, burned scrap wood, and dropped scrap metal to recycling. They assisted District Biologist Wik with darting and collaring two wild sheep. Building maintenance work will continue this week with rental of a lift for accessing high spots in need of repair. Biologist Woodall called in a utility search for a site that we would like to dig a couple of holes and place a winter closure gate on Cougar Creek Road.



New water trough at the Stucker Field for the grazing program



The Bott barn cleanup on the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area

Grouse Flats Proposed Land Acquisition: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice looked over a proposed land acquisition at Grouse Flats in Garfield County on Nov. 13. Lot of debris, old buildings, and derelict farm machinery are on the site. There is a small lake about four acres in size with 650-foot-long earthen dam.



Grouse Flats proposed acquisition site



Four-acre pond at proposed Grouse Flats acquisition site

W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area Elk Fence: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman checked the elk fence along Mountain Road. She found and repaired one large hole in the fence.



Blown apart wire where elk have been moving through the elk fence above Tum-a-Lum Creek

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Bighorn Sheep Biologist 2 position: District Biologist Wik continued working on the recruitment for the vacant Bighorn Sheep Biologist 2 position. Our primary candidate was offered another position and did not accept our offer.

2019 Washington State Noxious Weed Conference: Kari Dingman and Wynn Stallcop attended the 2019 Washington State Weed Conference in Wenatchee earlier this month. Kari did an excellent job typing up notes from the conference and sharing them with wildlife area personnel.

Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett attended the Selkirk-Cabinet-Yak IGBC Subcommittee meeting in Coeur d'Alene. Topics that were covered included DNA results, grizzly bear mortality, and grizzly bear-human conflict.

Steven's County Cattleman's Association Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Specialists West and Samsill attended the most recent Steven's County Cattleman's Association meeting. At this meeting, the specialists were able network and to note pressing questions that could be brought back to the district team.

Port of Whitman-U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Land Exchange Evaluation: Private Lands Biologist Gaston finished assisting the team with creation of evaluation criteria for a land exchange between Port of Whitman and USACE. His report was given to Team Leader Schirm who finalized all evaluation criteria from other biologists.

7) Other

Rendering Aid: Conflict Specialist Samsill responded to a report of a roll-over accident on the Boulder Creek highway. Once on scene, Conflict Specialist Samsill made sure the scene was safe and parked his truck in a way to protect the parties involved in the accident and engaged the hazard lights. Upon arrival, both the man and woman involved in the accident had exited the vehicle but were still down in ditch adjacent to their rolled vehicle. The man in the accident appeared to be free of injury however the woman was on her hands and knees writhing from pain to her sternum and leg. She had a hard time catching her breath and could barely talk. Relying on medical training, Conflict Specialist Samsill decided to move the injured woman up onto the road to await an ambulance. With the help of the man in the accident we carried the woman up onto the road and helped her get comfortable. Then Conflict Specialist Samsill helped the injured woman get warm by placing several layers of jackets and clothing on her body to prevent heat loss from shock. Conflict Specialist Samsill determined the woman was not bleeding and had only sustained internal damage that could only be treated in a hospital. While waiting for emergency personnel to arrive Conflict Specialist Samsill directed traffic away from the scene of the accident. Once emergency personnel arrived Conflict Specialist Samsill was able to hand over the situation to the team of medically trained professionals and resume plans for the day.

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Northern Leopard Frogs: Biologists Grabowsky, Rowan, and Dougherty gathered to discuss all things frog-related - past, present, and future. These meetings have been constructive in establishing techniques for frog recovery and habitat management in 2020.

Even though amphibian field season is over in the Columbia Basin, part of WDFW's goal for the recovery of the northern leopard frog is collaboration with other organizations. Biologist Grabowsky shared WDFW's progress with northern leopard frog reintroduction and the steps we've taken to control American bullfrogs at our reintroduction site with the American Bullfrog Action Team (ABAT). ABAT was established to allow western states with invasive bullfrogs to share the status of their wetland systems in regards to bullfrogs, bullfrog control techniques, and goals for bullfrog management. This has allowed interagency collaboration that is essential to controlling a species that is prolific and destructive to our western wetland systems and a threat to native species.

In addition, Biologist Grabowsky has created a habitat assessment worksheet to evaluate potential frog habitat around the Columbia Basin. This worksheet was used to evaluate frog habitat at several sites in the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area, and WDFW plans to perform a similar evaluation for other wetland areas within Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. Several of these wetland sites have not been assessed in any significant way, and a detailed description and analysis of the condition of these ponds could inform management decisions that could positively impact amphibians, water fowl, and even ungulates that frequent the area.

Pygmy Rabbit Semi-Wild Breeding Population Management: Coordinator Gallie has been working with Biologist Hayes on the necessary permits, logistics, and timeline for out of state translocations for pygmy rabbits this coming spring. The goal will be to translocate 15 - 20 adults from at least two states and house them within three mobile breeding enclosures. Their offspring will contribute to the ongoing release efforts to establish populations in the Beezley Hills and Burton Draw Recovery Areas.

Pygmy Rabbit Occupancy Searches at Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area: Coordinator Gallie, with the assistance of Natural Resource Workers Pavelcheck and Till, conducted occupancy searches for pygmy rabbit activity on the wildlife area to better determine their distribution. While most of the known population occurs in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) fields adjacent to the wildlife area, we rarely are able to cover these vast areas with limited snow survey conditions. Breaking the wildlife area into subsections, we are making visits to sections that were previously occupied by pygmy rabbits as well as checking suitable habitat throughout. Our goal will be to document activity clusters on the wildlife area that we can focus more detailed survey work when snow conditions allow.

Annual Sharp-tailed Grouse Working Group Meeting: Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Manager Olson participated in the annual sharp tailed grouse working group meeting in Wenatchee. Olson provided an update on population status, habitat enhancements and the land trade in the works at Scotch Creek. The group also discussed plans for next year's translocations, which will ultimately depend on permits through USFWS and Canada. Other issues presented at the meeting included firebreaks and perch deterrents in Lincoln County, a farm bill update, and ongoing enhancements on the Colville Reservation, as well as Lincoln and Douglas counties.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Mansfield Pond Cleanout: Specialist McPherson coordinated with Quincy Irrigation District (QID) to mobilize equipment to Mansfield Pond. QID was able to clean out sediment that has collected over the years in front of the water control structure. This will allow wildlife area personnel to operate water control structure and manipulate water levels more efficiently.



Irrigation operator cleaning out sediment - Photo by C. McPherson

Winchester Phase 2 Field Meeting: Assistant Manager Cole and Specialist McPherson met with Ducks Unlimited Engineer Heck and Halme contractor on site at north Winchester site. Engineer Heck went over project progress and planned duration of work for the four ponds that are being excavated.



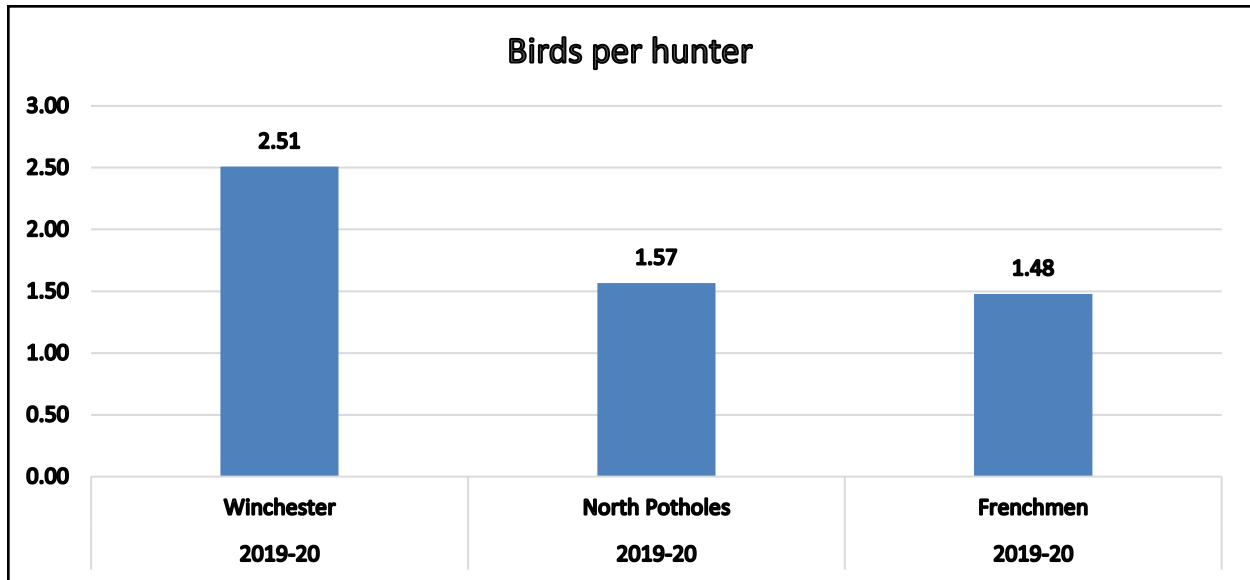
Cat excavating material out of wetland basin - Photo by C. McPherson

Regulated Access Areas: Frenchman, North Potholes, and Winchester Regulated Access Areas all have been getting a good number of hunters and harvest. At the Frenchman birds have been distributed throughout the project allowing hunters good amount of opportunity. Specialist McPherson has seen most hunters and birds using cells two, three, four, and seven and the majority of birds using the project have been mallards, northern pintail, and green-wing teal. So

far this season 164 hunters have used the project and are averaging monthly 1.48 birds/hunter. North Potholes has only had 45 hunters this season probably due to low water levels early in the season. Water will be rising in the project as water levels on Potholes Reservoir increase and with more birds migrating into the area hunting opportunity should improve. Monthly harvest in the North Potholes Regulated Access Area is at 1.57 birds/hunter and comprised of primarily mallards, green-wing teal, and wigeon. Winchester Regulated Access Area with new water delivery system, food plots, and v-ditching has more available wetland habitat for birds and hunters than previous few years. Currently the Winchester has had 118 hunters and monthly harvest is at 2.51 birds/hunter harvest and has been comprised of mainly mallards, northern pintail, and green-wing teal. Hunters can find huntable water in all wetland basins, but birds have primarily been using cells A, B, E, and F.



Ducks swarming Cell A at Winchester Regulated Access Area in early November - Photo by C. McPherson



Methow Valley Trails Collaborative Trails Summit: Last week, Manager Troyer and Land Operations Manager Haug were asked to participate in a round table discussion at the first annual Methow Valley Trails Collaborative Trails Summit. This public event took place at Sun Mountain Lodge and was well attended. During the round table discussion, Haug and Troyer were accompanied by representatives from the USFS, Washington State Parks, and Department on Natural Resources. The summit centered on the theme of sustainable trails today and for the future. This summit provided the platform necessary for WDFW staff members to openly discuss the pros and cons of trails as they relate to native wildlife and ecosystems. The summit also provided an opportunity to discuss one of the biggest recreational threats to WDFW’s mission and the future of trails on our lands; the act of rogue trail building. Rogue trails have persistently plagued public lands in the Methow, but through the collaborative efforts between governmental and non-governmental groups in the valley, the message to halt the practice of user-built, unauthorized trails is finally being heard. Local lands staff members will continue to seek out opportunities to spread the message and educate the public on the importance of working with WDFW to seek out sustainable trail opportunities rather than illegally constructing their own.

Blue Lake – Wannacut Trail Tour: Lands Operations Manager Haug met with a representative from the Pacific Northwest Trail Association to walk the proposed view trail on the Blue Lake water access to determine specifics regarding construction. The hike proved valuable in that the prospect of a loop would be impractical and a pedestrian only approach with narrower trail tread would suffice. These elements will be rolled into construction as project personnel plan for the project.



Near the top of the proposed view trail on the Blue Lake water access site - Photo by Justin Haug

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Turkey Damage: Specialist Heilhecker responded to several reports of turkey damage. The number of turkey complaints has increased compared to previous years. Landowners commonly report turkeys have been in their areas for a few years, but the number of turkeys has increased to the point where it is no longer tolerable, specifically the amount of feces left behind. Landowners have requested WDFW consider a fall turkey season.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Future Thinning: Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Manager Olson spent one day looking at possible areas for forest thinning with Prescribed Fire Manager Eberlein. The goal was to identify areas on Scotch Creek units that the fire team could work on during periods of burn bans or wet weather when burning cannot occur. This work will also

protect these dense thickets of dog hair fir from a complete stand replacing wildfire. We looked at areas on Scotch Creek (Silver Hill) and on the Similkameen – Chopaka units.

Methow Forest Health – Ramsey Creek: With decent weather still gracing the Methow Valley, wildlife area personnel have been able to continue working on forest health related projects. Currently, most work is occurring in the Ramsey Creek drainage in the form of pre-commercial thinning and continued burn pile preparations. The WDFW prescribed (Rx) burn team has graciously continued their hard work on the thinning side of the project while Maintenance Mechanic Wottlin continues to prepare large burn piles for ignition via the installation of fire lines intended to keep the fire from spreading into unintended areas. Soon, with the weather beginning to shift, efforts will be placed on re-seeding portions of the Bear Creek Rx burn that took place in the Spring as well as re-seeding the dozer line that was installed during the approximately 170 acre fire that occurred this year at Little Cub Creek in the Rendezvous.



Reducing fuels via the burning of slash piles that were created during the forest thinning project that occurred in the Ramsey Creek drainage of the Methow Wildlife Area in the spring of 2019 - Photo by Troyer

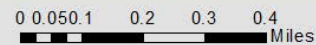
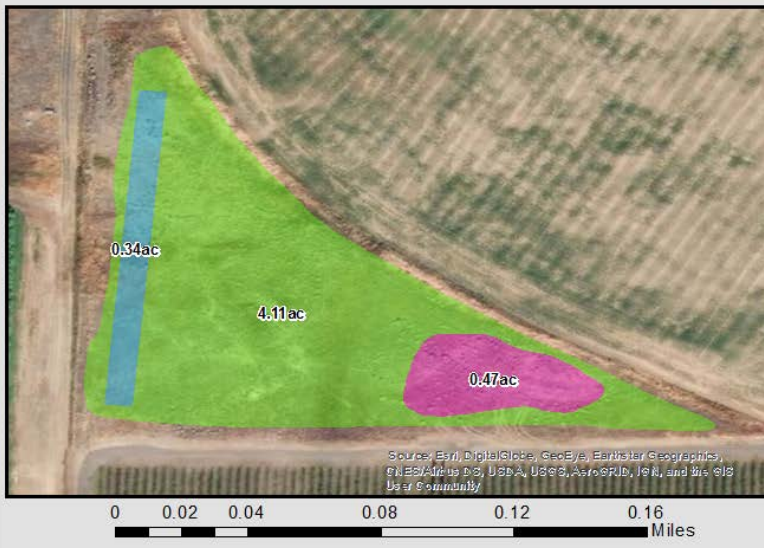
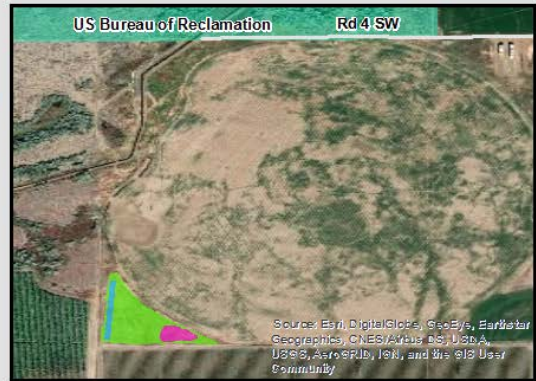
Scotch Creek Lek Site Mowing: Manager Olson mowed sharp tailed grouse lek sites on Silver Hill to encourage use of these sites next spring. A “lek” site is a traditional area where these birds return to every spring for courtship behavior and mating. Since the fires in 2015, these sites have become overgrown with tall and intermediate wheatgrass and have not been active. Sharp-tails prefer short grass sites on ridge tops with good visibility to detect approaching predators. One site that was mowed is a tradition/historic site whereas the other three are potential or likely spots where lekking could occur. We will see next spring if this will entice their use.

Conservation Plan Certification Process: Biologist Hughes is in the process of becoming a certified conservation planner in order to write conservation plans for producers. As part of this process Hughes is drafting a practice conservation plan with assistance/oversight by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Hughes and her NRCS mentor conducted a natural resource inventory on the property that Hughes is developing a conservation plan for. Based on the field inventory and additional information on the field, alternatives were developed that will be presented to the landowner. These alternatives identify practices the landowner can implement on the property to meet his objective of grazing the ground while maintaining and enhancing the wildlife habitat. From the inventory Hughes and her mentor calculated available AUMs (animal unit month). Prescribed grazing is one alternative Hughes will present to the landowner along with improving wildlife habitat by converting an expired CRP field to SAFE-Shrub steppe CRP and by enhancing a draw that has a Russian knapweed infestation.

Douglas County Riparian Habitat Project Planning: Private Lands Biologist Braaten visited possible future restoration project sites on private lands in preparation of a project proposal. Sites were selected for possible future habitat riparian restoration that will benefit sharp-tailed grouse, upland birds, and mule deer. Other locations are also being evaluated.

Private Lands Habitat: Biologist Walker solicited and was assured around \$2,000 in funding from the Columbia Basin Pheasants Forever (CBPF) chapter for a four and a half-acre circle corner restoration adjacent to the Caliche Lake Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. Funding from CBPF will fund the purchase of grass and forb seed, shrubs and mulch as well as provide cost share for a local goat-based targeted grazing surface. The entire project site will be seeded in native grasses (broadcast) while a small area (half-acre) will be sowed with native forbs. Approximately 150 shrubs consisting of native rose species and Rocky Mountain juniper will be planted on the site as well. While WDFW will not receive public hunting access as a result of our restoration efforts, the project is still considered a high priority as it will offer additional upland bird breeding, loafing, and roosting cover – all within a couple hundred meters from public land. This project also offers a proverbial ‘foot-in-the-door’ with local landowners in an area where attitudes toward WDFW has traditionally been lukewarm at best. Additionally, this project offers an opportunity to incorporate goat grazing as both a weed management and seed sowing tool (seed will be broadcasted on site prior to a round of fall grazing for weed management) – a relatively novel approach to restoration within the agency. The site is dominated by sandy and rocky (mostly caliche) soils precluding the use WDFW Private Lands’ new no-till seed drill. Site preparation (i.e. weed management) will begin in the spring of 2020 and the site will be seeded in the fall of 2020. Additional management of grasses, forbs, and weeds will continue through at least 2022 to ensure grass stand success.

WDFW Circle Corner Habitat Plot Grant Co., WA



Legend

- Circle Corner Boundary
- Forb Area
- Shrub Area

WDFW Private Lands upland bird habitat enhancement project area, Grant, County. Project sites proximity to public land (labeled as Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) ownership but managed by WDFW) is shown in the upper right-hand reference map. Credit: B. Walker (WDFW).

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Pygmy Rabbit Outreach: In collaboration with The Nature Conservancy and Foster Creek Conservation District, WDFW (Biologists Hughes and Gallie) hosted an outreach event to explain pygmy rabbit recovery efforts. This event was set up for private landowners within the Pygmy Rabbit Recovery Emphasis Areas (Beezley Hills and Sagebrush Flats). Biologist Gallie explained various aspects of pygmy recovery efforts and touched on mobile enclosure pens, Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit genetics, past and current recovery efforts. Landowners attending ranged from those who have been involved with pygmy rabbit recovery since the beginning to those who are getting enrolled into safe harbor this year and were unaware of recovery efforts. This was a great opportunity to educate landowners on the work WDFW and partnering agencies are doing to help recover pygmy rabbits and to explain the progress past efforts.



Biologist Gallie showing landowners an active burrow site - Photo by Hughes

Wenatchee Weed Conference: Biologist Walker gave a 25-minute presentation to approximately 70 people on wildlife food plot management at the annual Wenatchee Weed Conference. Walker's presentation included general food plot management tips (including weed management), crop and native habitat species recommendations for various game species, food and habitat plot design and placement, and potential food and habitat plot cost share sources for private landowners. The presentation spawned several questions from the audiences and led to follow-up talks with interested audience members. Other weed conference presentations touched on weed identification and management in crop and rangeland systems, pest control in orchards and vineyards; herbicide and pesticide solutions to common weeds and pests, native and introduced plant identification and management, and several other related topics.



Walker in mid-presentation at the Wenatchee Weed Conference where he presented on wildlife food plot management - Photo by J. Harman (WDFW)

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

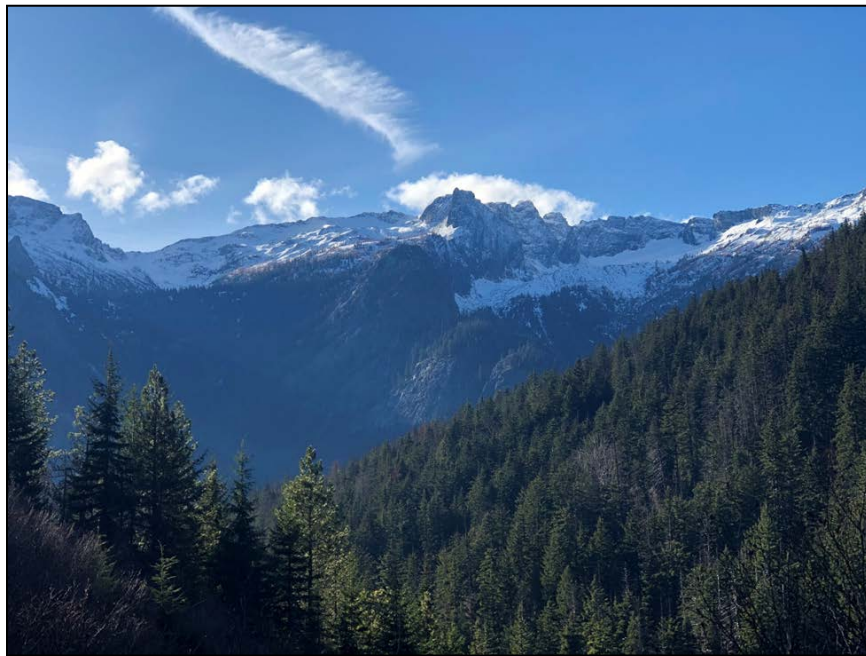
Wolf-Livestock Interactions and Grazing Program Review: Lands Operations Manager Haug traveled to Olympia for a grazing program review and participated in the discussion around wolf-livestock interactions on department lands with other Wildlife Program personnel. Both items extremely germane to managing lands in Okanogan County where the majority of WDFW's grazing permits and a number of confirmed wolf packs reside. The goals of both meetings revolve around determining agency protocol and having a better understanding of grazing on WDFW lands.

Washington State Shared Stewardship Interagency Work Session: Lands Operations Manager Haug met with other agency staff members and representatives from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Forest Service in Wenatchee to discuss shared stewardship following the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the agencies this past May 2019. The different agencies gave their vision of what the MOU represents, how the group can strengthen existing partnerships under the MOU, expanding the scope of shared stewardship and commit to moving forward utilizing work groups to gather support. There were various successful examples throughout the room regarding shared stewardship as it related to forest health and recreation. It will be important to maintain momentum with interagency discussions regarding this MOU and continually consider shared stewardship throughout WDFW project planning and implementation.

Nova Non-Nova Criteria (NNC) Working Group: Lands Operations Manager Finger reviewed, provided comments, and participated in a team work session to review and provide input into draft criteria for prioritizing road grading projects. The vision of this effort is to have a

spreadsheet of road grading projects that protects baseline needs (i.e. the road areas that require annual maintenance and receive a high degree of use) while providing an opportunity to prioritize other projects based on their merits. Those merits, or criteria, and how they are ranked, are what the group is challenged with developing, along with a spatially enabled database to inform decision making such as eligibility, project scale, public value (number of access points).

Shared Stewardship: Lands Operations Manager Finger participated in the first “all hands” meeting with the shared stewardship group. This effort dates back to August 2018 when the “U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a new Shared Steward Investment Strategy along with partners the Western Governors’ Association and the National Association of State Foresters, which outlined plans to work more closely with states to identify landscape-scale priorities for targeted treatments in areas that hold promise to achieve the greatest benefits and shared goals.” From this strategy hatched a MOU (May 2019) between USFS, DNR, and WDFW to “establish a framework to allow the parties to work collaboratively to accomplish mutual goals, further common interests, and effectively respond to the increasing suite of challenges facing the communities, landscapes, natural resources, and cultural resources of the state of Washington.” The meeting was focused on ranking the importance and timing of key principles and themes outlined in the MOU and to identify the approach to begin making progress in those areas. Finger agreed to participate as a sub-team member to try to identify ways to better improve communication and sharing of science related information.



The morning view from Phelps Creek Trailhead, after the fog lifted!



A beautiful fall sunset viewed from the Frazer Creek area within the Methow Unit of the Methow Wildlife Area – Photo by Troyer



Foggy sunrise over the confluence of the Okanogan and Columbia rivers - Photo by Justin Haug



Hay bales on Driscoll Island - Photo by Justin Haug



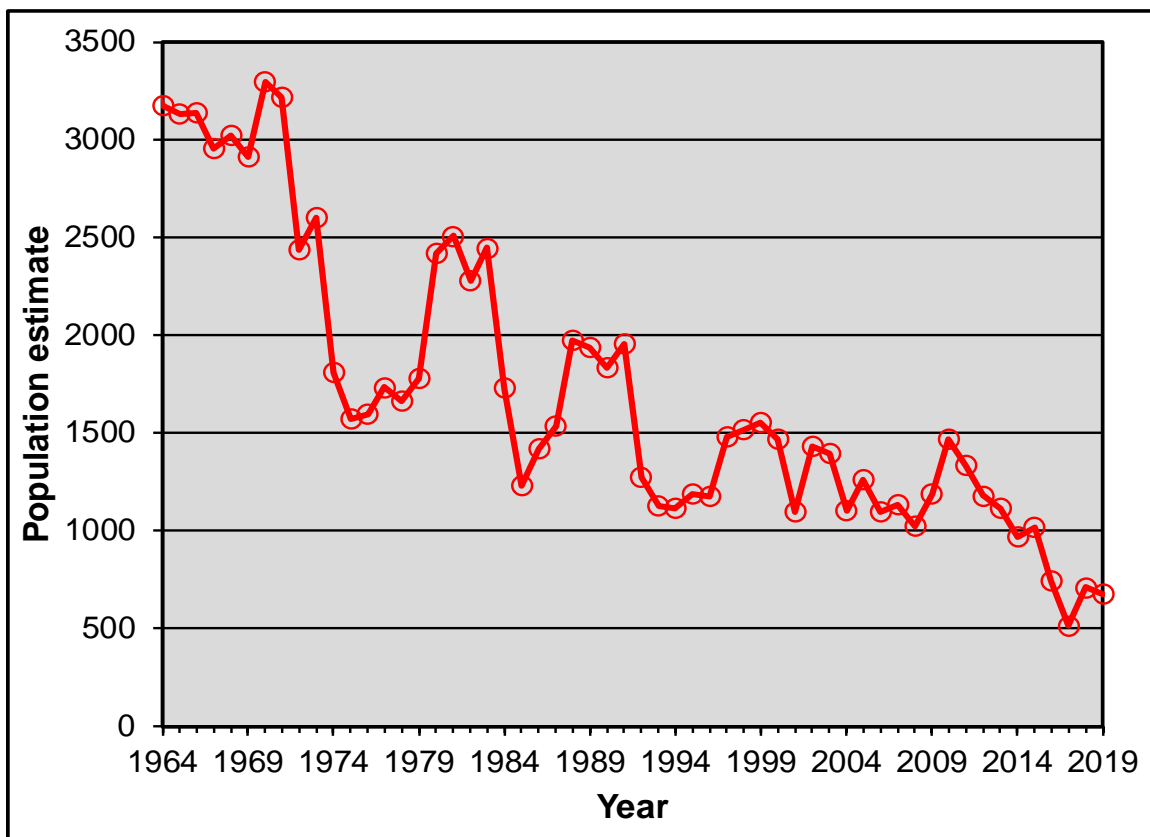
Northern shrike west of Tonasket - Photo by Justin Haug

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

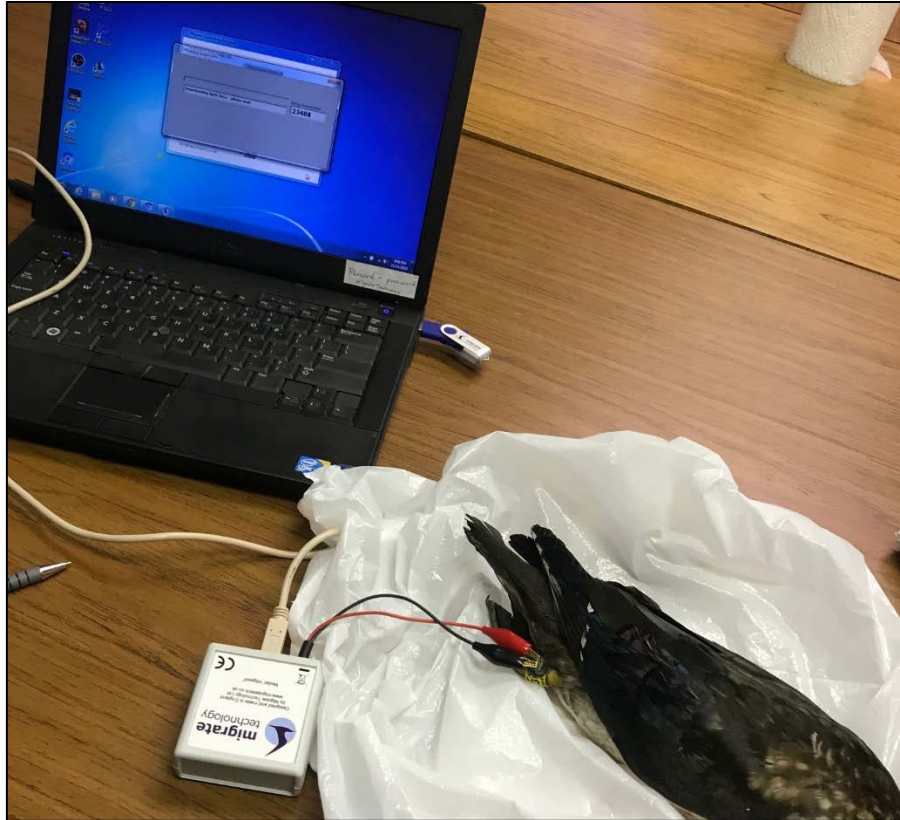
1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Sharp-tailed Grouse Working Group Meeting: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra organized and moderated the Washington Sage Grouse Working Group annual meeting in Wenatchee. The full day event was attended by over 40 partners representing 13 different agencies and non-governmental organizations from around the state and provided a venue for sharing updates and research related to sage grouse in Washington. The statewide population is at a historic low, with a population estimate of 676. Conservation strategies were discussed, with action needed now more than ever.



Breeding population of sage grouse in Washington over time

Miniature Loggers Collect Big Data on Waterfowl: District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra downloaded data from a geolocator recovered from a harvested wood duck. A pilot project placed several geolocators on waterfowl this past spring which record light levels to estimate latitude and longitude. In addition to geographic location, the light sensors can also be used to learn about ecology of the animal as in this case where nesting behavior of this cavity nester was easily observed in the data as the light levels change greatly while the bird was inside a nest cavity.



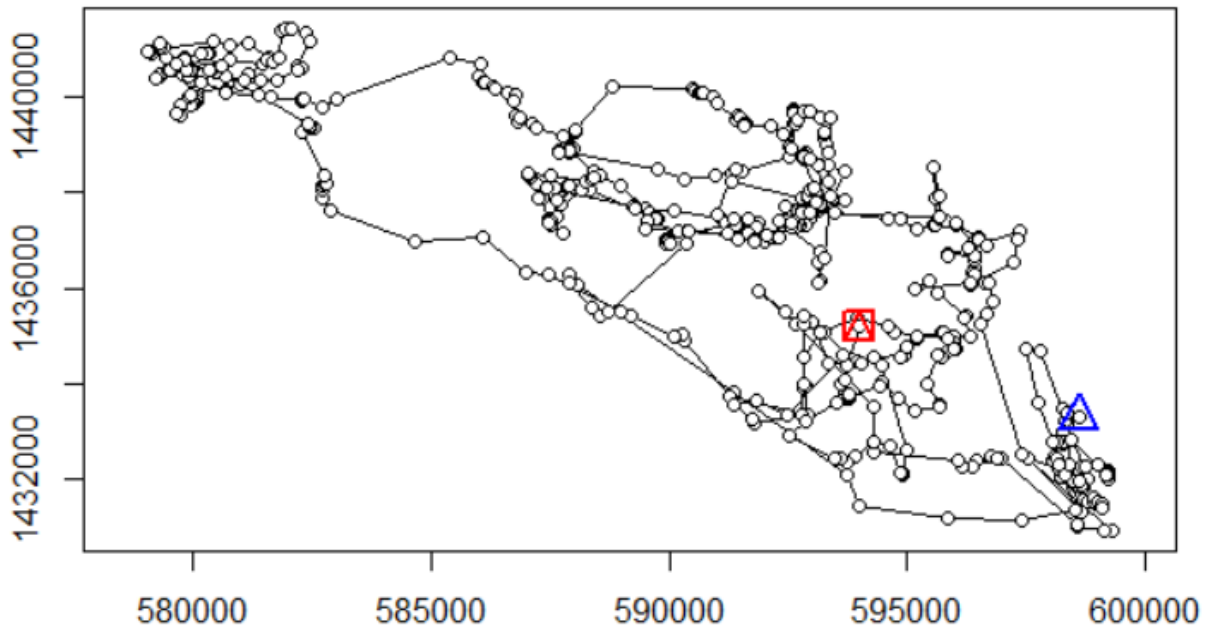
Data downloading from a small geolocator attached to the duck's leg

Nest Platform Project Completed in Hopes of Giving Rare Raptors a New Home: District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra worked with a contractor to install eight nest platform for ferruginous hawks, a state threatened species. The platforms were mostly placed on private land in areas where natural nest substrate (cliffs) was lacking but where suitable habitat for foraging remained. Platforms were prepped with nest materials in order to increase the likeliness that hawks in the future will see the platforms as a suitable nest site.

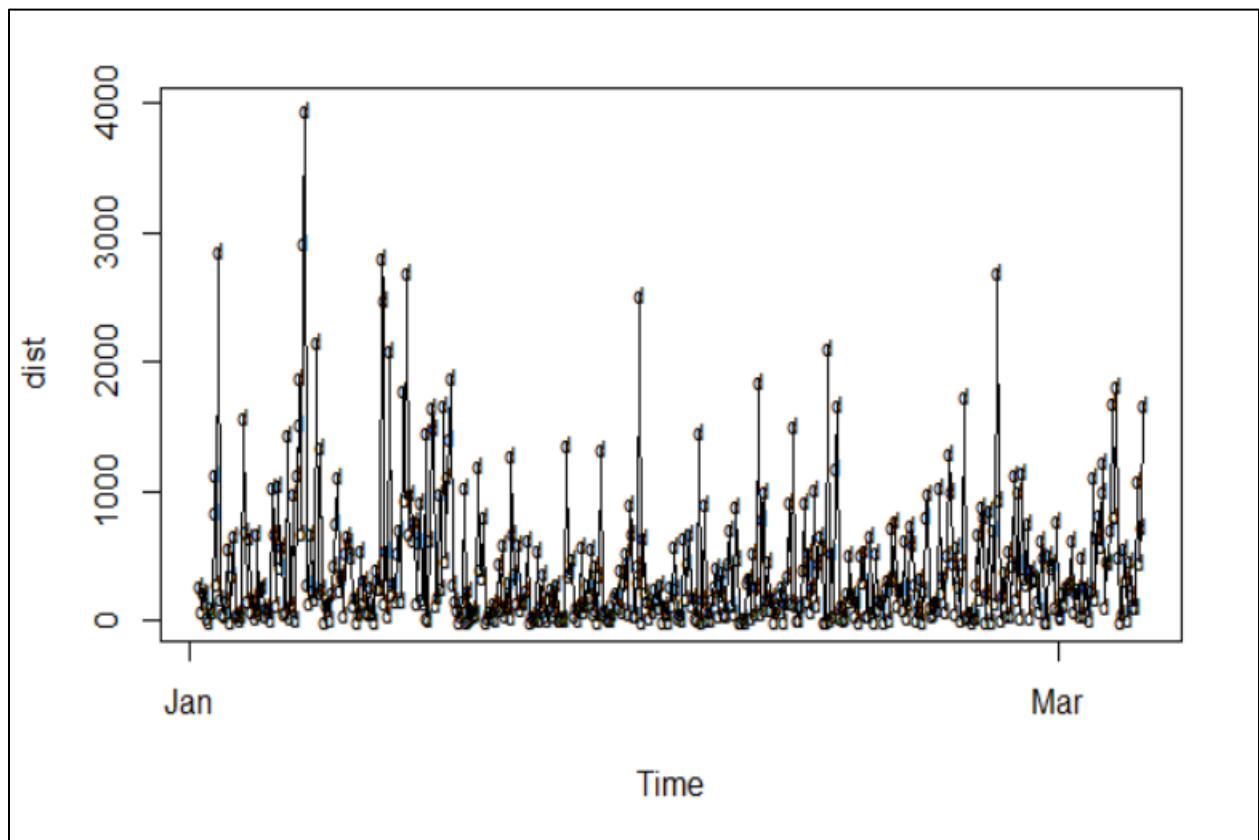


A nest platform with sage nesting materials added, a metal platform prior to sage being added, and the poles which raise the platforms safe from ground predators

District 8 Wildlife Biologist Moore used the AdehabitatLT package in the computer environment R to delineate daily movement distances of radio collared Colockum elk during winter. The functions within AdehabitatLT allowed for quick processing of 99 females and 55 males over multiple winters. The function separates animals by their identification then sequences their telemetry locations into trajectories. Each trajectory between sequential telemetry locations comes with numerous descriptive statistics, one of which is distance. These trajectories can then be cut into bursts allowing for temporal separations if desired. Overall, that average daily winter movements were 583 m and 1,165 m for bull and cows, respectively. These estimates were generated from 6,924 bull and 21,637 cow movement trajectories. The next step is to use these distance calculations to help identify migrations timing for collared Colockum bull elk.



A single animal's winter GPS locations and trajectories



A single animal's summary graph of movement distances between GPS locations separated by three hours

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett prepared Puget Sound Energy (PSE) Wild Horse Wind Farm for the opening of the modern firearm general elk season. Hulett checked and updated all signage around the boundary of the property. The following morning, Hulett attended the hunter's breakfast at the Wild Horse Visitor Center put on by the Kittitas Field and Stream Club. Each day during the modern firearm general elk season PSE allows 50 hunters who have obtained a permit from the Private Lands Access page. Overall 450 permits were given out for the modern firearm general elk season.



Elk herd on the border of PSE windfarm prior to the general firearm elk season

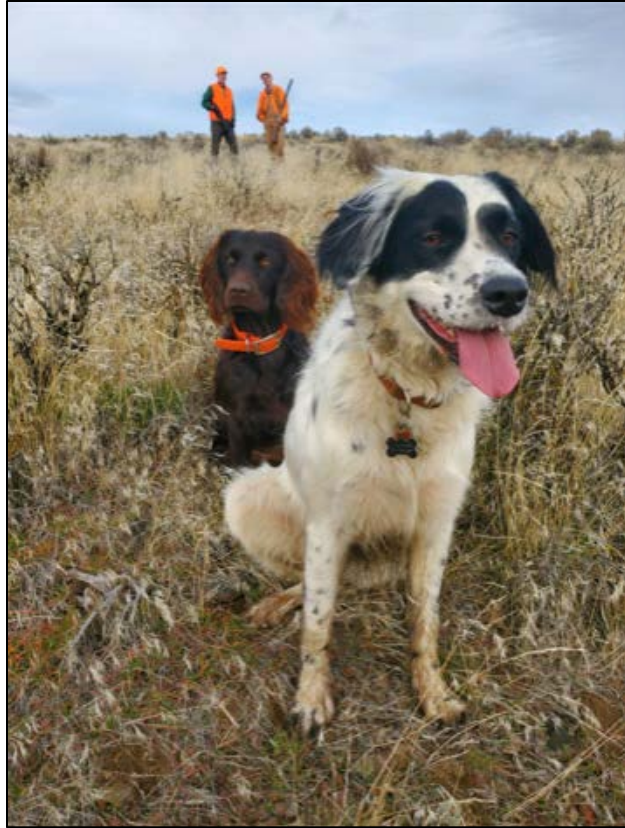
Goose Hunting Opportunities Near the Tri-Cities: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett worked with Ryan Cloud (with DNR) to help them with hunting access on the crop fields east of Pasco. Hulett is waiting for DNR to choose which fields could be available to hunt before moving forward.

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand and Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Rogers completed the first round of general pheasant releases in District 4 for the year. All the birds were of excellent quality and were released at Big Flat, Lost Island, and Toothacre habitat management units (HMUs) as well as Hope Valley.



Sunnyside Assistant Manager Rogers releasing pheasants

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik released 104 pheasants at Green Gate.



A successful day for these pups hunting at Green Gate

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand coordinated multiple youth hunting special permit opportunities at the request of landowners experiencing deer damage impacts. These permit opportunities are very popular with landowners and permit holders.



A youth hunter, her dad and a notched deer tag

An orchard area next to a WDFW elk fence was inspected for elk activity and the return gate was found chained shut. Each year several gates in the area are chained shut, making them unusable for elk on the wrong side of the fence to get back on the right side. The gate was opened and is now functioning properly.



Locked and blocked elk return gate

Elk seasons are wrapping up on the Colockum Wildlife Area, with only a few permit hunts remaining. One of the seasons still going is the Malaga Unit late cow hunt, which runs until Dec. 31. One lucky hunter who bagged his cow this week is pictured below.



Happy Colockum elk hunter

Hunting mature bull elk on the Colockum requires drawing a special permit, which are limited in numbers and coveted by elk hunters. The bull below was seen this week on the Colockum at dusk, skylined on a ridge.



Bull elk on the Colockum Wildlife Area

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin spent several days using the new Roller Chopper attachment on the Marsh Master and cleared out areas at the Office Pond and the disabled hunter blinds on Haystack Pond to facilitate

better duck hunting opportunities. The attachment worked well at cutting cattail stocks at the base and smashing them down.



Cattails cleared out of area in front of disabled hunter blind at Haystack Pond, gaining access to pockets of open water



Cleared out area alongside road at the Office Pond, giving access to open water for waterfowl hunting

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area personnel began removing trash from hunting camps left on the L.T. Murray post season. There seems to be no end in sight as loads of trash are taken to the dump.





Trash left behind at hunting camps on the L.T. Murray

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and responded to a call from a landowner in the Richland area who lost two domestic sheep from a small flock in the past two weeks. Although no necropsy could be completed since the landowner had already buried the carcasses, the landowner was certain the kills are from coyotes. A local expert predator hunter was directed to the property for lethal removals and information was provided to the landowner on steps he could utilize to protect his livestock.

District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by a hay grower in the Umptanum area about large numbers of deer in his new seeding alfalfa. A hazing cannon and fused rope were placed in the three field areas. Morning and evening hazing were also conducted at the location over a period of two weeks. New deer are moving into the general area and after the next hard freeze, the hazing efforts will be discontinued.

Two landowners in Cle Elum reported elk in new seeding alfalfa. Some master hunters and hazing will be used at these locations until the elk move out, which is usually the first snow.

District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel patrolled the Thorp area for elk, which were seen in the Swauk Creek area. One small group of elk moved north after crossing the Yakima River and have not been seen again at that location.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

WDFW forestry and wildlife area personnel have been busy burning the large slash piles left from this summer's Colockum Forest Health Project in the Stemilt Basin. Nearly 300 acres of overstocked forest was thinned to reduce tree density, hopefully resulting in a forest more resilient to disease, insects, and wildfire. In the last few weeks staff members have burned seventeen piles, with twelve left to go. Conditions must be just right to burn, and staff members monitor fuel moisture, air quality, and other factors before lighting up piles. After burning, the sites will be seeded with native plant seeds to restore the areas and prevent weed invasion.



A large logging slash pile being burned on the Colockum Wildlife Area

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Berry and Forester Hartmann assisted the south-central burn team on opening roads and establishing containment line around portions of the Cougar Canyon prescribed burn planned for spring of 2020. The John Deere dozer engine replacement was put to the test and performed flawlessly.



Assistant Manager Berry view of containment line

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Berry, Manager Mackey, and a contractor installed a gate accessing the Cougar Canyon prescribed burn area from Carroll Flats to maintain access to the unit next spring, but also protect wildlife from unnecessary vehicle disturbance this winter. Manager Mackey worked with the DNR region engineer on locating the gate on DNR managed land.



Completed gate installation

Oak Creek Forester Hartmann inspected contractor work on the Oak Creek Forest Health pre-commercial thin project, and additional pre-commercial thinning work up Spring Creek road completed by the south-central burn team. Forester Hartmann also inspected forest inventory plots on the Oak Creek and Wenas wildlife areas.



Pre and post-thin and pile conditions on pre-commercial thinning units at Oak Creek. The stands had over 2000 stems-per-acre in some areas, which has been reduced to an average of 250. The primary leave trees for this unit are ponderosa pine and western larch.



Post-thin, prune and pile conditions on pre-commercial thinning unit at Spring Creek

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area personnel completed a fencing project to exclude cattle from a riparian area in Parke Creek. This was the third permanent cattle enclosure that staff members erected in 2019.



Riparian cattle enclosures along Parke Creek

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager Mackey attended the seasonal kick-off meeting of the Wildlife Education Corp (WEC) volunteers that staff the visitor's center and provide elk viewing tours during winter feeding operations. Two new members were present, and the group went over logistics for the upcoming season.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager Mackey and Assistant Manager Berry conducted ongoing consultation with CAMP engineers for three miles of elk fence replacement in the North Fork Cowiche area planned for spring of 2020. Assistant Manager Berry helped with reconnaissance work.



CAMP engineer ground truthing fence location for replacement

7) Other

On the evening of Nov. 6, the two gates preventing vehicle trespass into the Johnson Wetlands area of the Sunnyside Wildlife Area from the boat launch lot on Highway 241 just north of the Mabton Bridge, were stolen. We believe the incident occurred in order to obtain the two gates themselves, not to gain vehicle entry into the Johnson Unit. The chain securing the two gates and the combination locks were stolen along with the gates.

On Nov. 8, Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin installed a half-inch diameter cable gate with a combination lock and orange flagging to alert drivers to not run into the cable. We deliberately damaged the threading on the eyebolts holding the cable in order to thwart removal of the cable. We will use the cable as a temporary measure until new gates can be installed.



Site of stolen gates, Mabton Bridge boat launch parking lot



Cable gate installed as temporary measure

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

North Cascades Fisher Release: Region 4 Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordinator Dazey along with a representative of the Stillaguamish Tribe and two volunteers assisted the National Park Service in the release of three fishers into the North Cascades.



Fisher release in the North Cascades

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 5

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Dusky Canada Goose Surveys: Biologist Holman conducted a dusky Canada goose survey in Wahkiakum County. The purpose of the surveys is to count dusky geese observed and read alphanumeric codes on any red collared duskies. Wildlife managers survey the geese multiple times across their primary wintering grounds and use the data to generate survival estimates. The dusky geese are collared on their breeding grounds in Alaska every other year. No dusky geese were detected during the survey. Cackling and western Canada geese were located and recorded.

Biologists Holman and Stephens conducted two surveys this month for dusky Canada geese. No duskiess were observed during the surveys. However, other geese observed are also recorded. Several large flocks of cackling Canada geese were counted around Longview, Kalama, and Woodland.



Cackling geese with sandhill cranes in the foreground and a great blue heron in the background

South Cascades Fisher Release: Region 5 Office Manager Varley joined Biologist Holman to attend the release of four fishers at the U.S. Forest Service Cispus Learning Center near Randle. The release adds to fishers first re-introduced into the South Cascades in the fall of 2015. To date, 77 fishers have been released into the South Cascades. For more information on the effort to re-establish fishers back into their native range in Washington's forests, see the WDFW website at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/pekania-pennanti>.

Bobcat Seal: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met a hunter to seal his bobcat pelt. The hunter had opportunistically harvested the bobcat in GMU 672 while elk hunting.

Checks of Hunter Killed Wildlife: Regional wildlife biologists and customer service staff members continued with checks of various species of hunter killed wildlife. Species recently checked have included cougars, bobcats, and big-horned sheep. Various data and biological samples are collected from the different species to aid in management. Thanks to the successful hunters for bringing their animals into WDFW for the various checking requirements and for sharing their photos.



Cougar taken in GMU 560 (Lewis River)



Bighorn sheep taken in the Cleman Mountain hunt area

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Klickitat County Pheasant Release: Wildlife Biologist Wickhem and Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven released pheasants at the three Klickitat County sites this week. Forty pheasants were released at the Hatchery Unit, 32 birds went to the gun club property, and 16 pheasants were placed at the Finn Ridge Road site. The pheasants were feisty and well-feathered, and should give hunters a good test of skills.



Veteran's Day release

Elk Season Patrol: Biologist Bergh joined Officer Nelson to contact hunters during the second weekend of elk season. The pair talked to 8 hunting groups with a total of 31 hunters around the Glenwood and Trout Lake areas. Three hunters with cow elk tags had been successful over the past week, but no one had harvested a bull. While hunters were frustrated with the lack of cold and snow to push the elk around, everyone was enjoying their time out in the woods in the mild weather.

Opening Weekend of Rifle Elk Season with Enforcement: Biologist Holman joined Officers VanVladriken and Hughes on opening weekend of modern firearm elk season. The teams patrolled for elk hunters in the Toutle (556), Washougal (568), and Lewis River (554) Game Management Units. Issues encountered during the effort included; hunting in the Toutle GMU without a Toutle elk permit, hunting on Weyerhaeuser property without a Weyerhaeuser permit, illegal take of an antlerless elk, and fishing in closed waters. Three elk were checked and a set of grouse wings from a roadkill in GMU 560 and an incisor from a black-tailed buck killed in October was opportunistically collected. Thanks to the officers for including Wildlife Program in their work.



Cow elk harvested in GMU 568 (Washougal)



Bull elk harvested in GMU 560 (Lewis River)



Bull elk harvested in GMU 568 (Washougal)

Additionally, Officer Hughes and Biologist Holman were the first responders to a rollover single-vehicle accident on the U.S. Forest Service 90 Road near Cougar. The passenger was not wearing his seat belt, was badly injured in the crash, and trapped in the vehicle. Biologist Holman monitored the injured passenger's vitals and kept him company while Officer Hughes called for additional emergency responders. Officer Moats was the first to arrive and helped as well.



Rollover crash on U.S. Forest Road 90

Late Buck Season: Biologist Stephens rode along with Officer Corey to check hunters during late rifle deer season. They encountered a couple dozen hunters in the Winston, Margaret, and Coweeman GMUs. Most hunters seemed to be enjoying a day out in the woods, but no successful hunters were encountered.

Vancouver Lake Access Site: In the past month, the Vancouver Lake access site has been vandalized three times. Access staff members Rhodes and McKinlay have repeatedly repainted the facilities.



Vancouver Lake Access vandalism

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Cougar Concerns: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen spoke with a landowner who had recently lost some of his fowl and suspected a cougar. The cougar was seen by the landowner on the same day that the fowl disappeared. Advice was given on securing the fowl, and the landowner plans on purchasing a trail camera to monitor the site. Jacobsen will meet with the landowner next week to deploy a Fox Light and to discuss further security measures for the fowl enclosure. Jacobsen also spoke with another landowner in a different area regarding multiple cougar sightings at his residence.

Coyote Concerns: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted multiple times by a landowner who was concerned that coyotes were coming through her barbed wire fence into her yard where her fowl are kept. Advice on securing the fowl was given.

Geese at School: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen provided advice to a school district employee responsible for maintaining the school's playing fields. A large flock of geese had recently begun residing on the field and were causing issues. Several deterrent devices were recommended.

Habituated Bears: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Sergeant. McQuary responded to a complaint of a bear that had "gotten into a neighbor's cooking oil." Upon arriving at the scene and meeting with the landowner with the cooking oil, it was determined that a handful of bears had damaged and consumed 163 containers containing a total of 800 gallons of used cooking oil over the last month. The cooking oil had been used for powering the landowner's pickup truck, but the landowner had been residing in Alaska for the last four months and left the oil containers unsecured around the property. A bear trap was set for the habituated bears, and Jacobsen adamantly "recommended" that all the waste containers be disposed of immediately to rid the property of attractants. The 163 containers were loaded up in the landowner's truck and Jacobsen's truck and taken to the transfer station for recycling. However, the landowner still had approximately 500 gallons of oil still on-site. Jacobsen advised the landowner to find a storage solution for the oil promptly. Not only do the attractants on site cause a public safety situation with habituated bears, but they are also unhealthy sources of food and could possibly lead the bears to delay their hibernation instinct due to the abundant supply of calories.



A handful of the 163 five-gallon oil containers destroyed by bears and distributed around the property



Approximately half of the destroyed oil containers loaded up in Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen's truck for recycling



Additional oil containers strewn throughout the woods on the property

Great-horned Owl Stuck in Netting: Biologist Stephens responded to a residence in Clark County where a great-horned owl had gotten its toe stuck in a protective netting over a chicken coop. With the help of the landowner, the owl's toe was cut free of the netting and it was released uninjured.



Biologist Stephens with great-horned owl ready to be released

Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with a landowner to renew the landowner's Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) for elk damage for another year. Elk damage is currently low on the property, likely due to hunting pressure.

Fencing Cost-Share Contracts: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen finalized two cooperative fencing cost-share contracts with landowners to prevent damage from wildlife. One contract is for a local vineyard experiencing elk damage, and another is for an organic produce farm incurring damage from black-tailed deer. Construction of these fencing projects will begin soon. Jacobsen also met with another vineyard owner interested in participating in the cooperative fencing cost-share program, if funding is still available. The vineyard owner experienced severe damage to his new wine grape starts over the summer and is planning on planting another large block of grapes this upcoming year.



New block of wine grapes planted this summer and severely damaged by elk. The landowner installed his own fencing around the block after the damage occurred.

Cougar Concern: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey contacted a landowner who had observed a cougar in his neighbor's pasture earlier in the day. The individual was concerned because he and his neighbor both have livestock on their property, including goats and sheep. The individual already practices proper livestock husbandry, including bringing his animals into a barn at night. Other deterrents and hazing methods were discussed with the landowner.

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met a landowner who has had elk damage to a recently planted field. The landowner has experienced elk problems in the past and was looking to continue some of the solutions previously used, as well as potentially exploring new ideas. Aubrey will continue to work with the landowner to alleviate elk damage.

Possible Depredation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met a landowner concerned that he had a missing calf due to a cougar predation. Aubrey was not able to locate any sign of a cougar on the property during the visit, nor was a carcass ever located. While there, a calf was noticed with a hind leg injury limping in the field. Aubrey said this was indicative of a coyote attack and gave advice on ways to deal with coyotes. Aubrey also lent two Fox Light and two Critter Gitters to the landowner to place around his livestock at night to deter any coyote activity.

Chicken Depredation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey contacted a homeowner who had three chickens "brutally" killed. Two of the chicken carcasses were still located on the property and were partially fed on. Given the circumstances, Aubrey determined it was likely a coyote. The homeowner did not have any other livestock, but advice was given on the best practices if the individual wanted to have chickens in the future.

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Cowlitz Wildlife Area Swafford Pond Trail Footbridge Construction: Cowlitz Wildlife Area Manager Vanderlip worked with Mr. Elliot from the Lewis County Youth Probation Court to provide a project so youth who were court ordered to provide community service could meet that requirement. Their assignment to this project was entirely voluntary and none of the youth were required to work on the project. The project entailed building a footbridge along the Swafford Pond trail. This was the first time the wildlife area had utilized a youth work crew and they exceeded expectations. The age of the crewmembers ranged from 12 to 17 so there were limits to what they could do (i.e., utilize power tools). However, the youth learned some new skills, built something they could be proud of, and had some fun.



Cedar rounds were used for the footings



Youth crew decking the new footbridge

Controlled Burning at Shillapoo: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald along with a Washington Department of Natural Resource wildland fire crew conducted a controlled burn in the South Unit of Shillapoo to remove blackberry thickets that were sprayed earlier this year. This was the third attempt to burn the areas, given the previous two times the brush was too wet and there was not enough of the fuel on the ground to keep the fire going. The week prior to the burning this time, Manager Hauswald drove over the blackberry thickets with a dozer to get the brush onto the ground to burn better. The drier weather and crushing of the brush worked as the areas burned readily on the third attempt. The brush was ignited using drip torches, and approximately five acres were burned. The goal of these burns is to remove the unwanted brush, along with sterilizing the weed seeds that are present by having intense heat on them for a short period of time. This will hopefully reduce the need for future herbicide treatments on the areas. Wildlife area personnel and DNR staff members may attempt to burn another couple of acres this winter on the wildlife area as conditions allow. The burned areas will be seeded in the spring with a pasture grass mix, to help get beneficial forage and cover onto the site.



DNR crew igniting blackberry thicket



Burned area

Klickitat Wildlife Area Simcoe Fence Project: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven, CAMP Project Manager Mosberger, and Archeologist Kelly met with cultural resources staff members from the Yakama Nation for an onsite visit to a sensitive area within the proposed fencing project. After discussion of a range of issues, the group settled on a decision to move the fence off the property line in order to avoid construction through the area of concern. Approximately 200 feet of fence will be placed 40 or 50 feet inside of the actual property line. Staff members also looked at other points of interest along the project route and considered possible issues and solutions.

East Cascades Oak Partnership: Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven, District Biologist Bergh, and Habitat Biologist Johnson, attended a full-day meeting in Hood River to help prioritize the future efforts and direction of the East Cascades Oak Partnership's activities. A guest speaker gave an excellent and inspiring talk about work being done in the Willamette Valley to encourage farmers to maintain and restore oak woodlands and associated plant communities.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Cowlitz Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Meeting: The 2019 Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) meeting was held at the Cowlitz Wildlife Area office. WAAC meetings are important and integral to the management of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area as it brings public input, ideas, and concerns into the management and planning process for the wildlife area. It is essential to understand all aspects of a proposed action to recognize the concerns of the public, consider other ideas, and address potential impacts. The wildlife area update was reviewed and discussed as well as additional current management actions.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

District Team Meeting: The District 9 team conducted a field trip to a grazing lease area that occurs on the Soda Springs Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area. Agency Range Ecologist Burnham and the two lessees also attended the field trip. After a brief history of the lands involved in the grazing permit and explanation of the original rationale for developing the permit, the group headed out for a tour of the area. The group looked at the two enclosure study plots on the lease area which have adjacent areas that exclude no animals, cattle, and both cattle and deer. The purpose of the enclosures is to look for any large differences in plant composition, cover, and density. The group also looked at two tire trough water structures and one other watering area. Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Range Ecologist Burnham talked about how the grazing activity is monitored during the season, discussed the strengths and weaknesses of each water source, shared stories of how adjacent landowners and public recreation sometimes impact operations, and pointed out a known granary tree used by acorn woodpeckers near the Sheep Canyon Road. The lessees added supporting information and suggestions for ways to improve water sources and distribution of cattle on the permit area, thereby achieving more uniform utilization of the range and allowing livestock to be on the range the full duration of the grazing period. Ideas and input were exchanged on possible improvements to the water structures and area. The Ecosystems Standards Assessment and the grazing lease plan will be reviewed by some of the members of the district team in the next year. The rest of the meeting was spent discussing updates to current projects as well as new projects.



District team meeting field trip to visit a grazing lease on the Klickitat Wildlife Area

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Trumpeter Swan Monitoring: A meeting was held on Oct. 23 at the Dungeness River Audubon Center with volunteers who will assist with monitoring trumpeter swans in the Dungeness Valley during the 2019 – 2020 season. There was overwhelming support from the local Audubon group to continue with the survey effort. Participants showed enough interest to continue with weekly surveys with two teams of observers. Survey protocols were outlined. Past data was reviewed, and some improvements were made to the survey form. Two dedicated volunteers that led the monitoring last season are assisting once again. Survey schedules have been prepared and surveys started the last week of October. A lone swan and a group of eight swans were observed this past week. Since Biologist Ament will be on leave, she has instructed the volunteers on the protocols when dead or sick/injured swans are observed. All data forms and maps from last season were sent to Terry Johnson for Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) documentation.

Taylor's Checkerspot Captive Rearing: Biologist Randolph met with Biologist Linders via Skype to review this season's Taylor's checkerspot distance sampling database to select datasets conducted under protocol survey conditions for further analysis. These data were processed by Randolph for Research Scientist Olsen, who will analyze datasets by site to produce daily estimates of abundance with appropriate confidence intervals. This information is vital to understanding population parameters and helps land managers conduct site appropriate restoration plans to aid in their recovery. Randolph collated this year's random checkerspot sightings outside of known population centers, collected by in-house crews and conservation partners at Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM) and Center for Natural Lands (CNLM). These

data add significantly to our knowledge of areas recently utilized by checkerspots and may reveal sites of potential colonization. Randolph compiled and delivered all 2019 Taylor’s checkerspot related datasets to JBLM partners to fulfill annual contract requirements.

Tenalquot Prairie Habitat Enhancement: Biologist Randolph coordinated with Thurston County Program Manager Freed from CNLM to perform habitat enhancements at Tenalquot Prairie in preparation for the first anticipated release of Taylor’s checkerspots in spring 2020. Enhancement efforts include 17 acres of prescribed fire followed by herbicide treatments designed to target weedy vegetation and clean the slate for planting. Over 7500 native plant plugs and 1,975 grams of native seed representing 13 species were strategically planted to help maintain native prairie composition, provide forage for checkerspot larvae and nectar/roosting sites for adult butterflies.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Grouse Wing Barrels: Grouse wing barrels were installed at three locations in the district. One barrel located in Clallam County (five and a half miles southwest of Sequim) at the junction of Slab Camp Road and Lost Mountain Road. Another barrel is located on U.S. Forest Service land west of Lake Crescent at the junction of Cooper Ranch Road and USFS Road 29. A final barrel was installed on Oct. 10 on DNR land east of Sequim. This barrel is at the junction of Salmon Creek Road (NF 2850) with NF Road 2906. Unfortunately, DNR is limiting access above this gate due to an active timber harvest. Hunters have deposited some wing/tails to this barrel though. All barrels were checked for wings/tails in the past few weeks.

District 16 Grouse Wing Barrel Collections	Date	Slab Camp Road	Cooper Ranch Road	Salmon Creek	District 16 Total
	Set-up August 31	-	-		-
	Sept 1 to Sept 9	0	7w		7w
	To Sept 19	0	0	-	0
	To Sept 26	No check	0	-	0
	To Oct 15	2w, 2t	7w, 3t	-	9w, 5t
	To Oct 31	2w, 2t	1w, 1t	4w, 3t	7w, 6t
	To Nov 13	0	11w, 5t	1w, 1t	12w, 6t
	Total Collected	4w, 4t	26w, 9t	5w, 4t	35w, 17t



Bobcat Sealing: Biologist Ament has sealed two bobcats in the past few weeks. One hunter harvested an adult male bobcat while at work at a rock quarry west of Port Angeles. The bobcat was observed on a large pile of rocks at the site. The other hunter harvested another adult male on his property near Joyce. Both hunters had proper small game licenses.

Hunter Adam Waddell with the bobcat he harvested off a rock pile while at work

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Scatter Creek South Wildlife Area Prairie Restoration: Under the direction of former DFW Biologist Hays, Biologists Cook, Gill, Cox and Randolph gathered and mixed over 140 pounds of native prairie seed consisting of forty species, all of which are locally grown and processed at Violet Prairie Farm. Biologist Hays developed seeding prescriptions for separate burn units based on prairie type (moist versus dry) and by utilizing rapid habitat assessment data to calculate the amount and type of seed needed for each burn unit. For example, areas with relatively low cover of native grasses received higher rates of seeding application compared to areas containing high grass cover – a focused use for limited seed! Seed mixes were broadcast by hand across 35 acres of prairie habitat. Preparations are underway to carry out a similar seeding strategy at West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area.



Kiddy pool containing 34 pounds of mixed seed composed of 35 native prairie species - to be broadcast over a 3.4 acre burn unit

Identification of Bald Hill Balds: Balds are unique landscape features in our region. They are small openings within forested landscapes, located on steep slopes, typically with a southern or western aspect. They are characterized by shallow soils and a distinct assembly of grassland vegetation making this habitat type extremely biodiverse and important for conservation. Up until the early 2000s many of these balds supported small populations of Taylor's checkerspots. Under the direction of Biologist Potter, Biologist Randolph used GIS software to digitize the perimeter of current bald openings within the Bald hills, southeast of Yelm. This information will be used to examine changes in habitat as a result of recent intensive restoration to facilitate statewide recovery planning for Taylor's checkerspots.

Wildlife Area Fertilizing: The Olympic Wildlife crew was down to one, that being Assistant Manager Gallegos. Gallegos single handedly finished the fall fertilizing while the rest of the crew was gone.

Illegal Dump Sights: The Olympic Wildlife crew has been working on blocking illegal access and picking up illegal dumping sites. They have been in contact with WDFW Enforcement and have turned over evidence uncovered in one pile of trash.



Oleary Creek dump site

Equipment Upgrade: The Olympic crew also took possession of a new ten-foot mower to replace their aging and broken HX-10 mower.

Johns River: The Ducks Unlimited project of replacing the rear water control structure at Johns River is complete and the Olympic crew has begun to raise the water level to enable flooding to produce sheet water for waterfowl habitat, which in turn provides for optimal waterfowl hunting opportunities.



Notice bag hanging: Beaver deterrent provided by Wildlife Conflict Program

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this installment.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Assistance with Roadkill Deer: While returning home from meeting a hunter to seal a bobcat on Nov. 1, Biologist Ament encountered a spike buck, black-tailed deer that was laying in her lane after being in a vehicle collision. The deer was on Highway 101 in Port Angeles, just west of the Black Diamond Road Bridge that goes over the highway. Another motorist stopped very briefly to help move the deer off the road and then left. The buck was still alive and trying to get up. She was concerned about all the early evening traffic and quickly used Gorilla tape to hobble the struggling deer. Just as the buck died, a young couple stopped on the opposite side of the highway. They offered to help Biologist Ament load the deer in her truck. She explained the agency's new roadkill policy and asked if they would like to take the deer home for meat. They were very excited and grateful. They had apparently gotten a previous road killed doe in the past and were familiar with the information that needed to be provided on the website. Biologist Ament gave them her card, got their contact information, and helped them load the buck into their truck.



Road killed buck....It's what's for Thanksgiving for a young, kind couple