Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

June 16 to June 30, 2020

DIVERSITY DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

SCIENCE DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

Nothing for this installment.

LANDS DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Cotterill continued to work on the design of a 'mark-resight for managers' application with Research Biologist Cassirer (IDFG) and Biologist Wik. This included several conference calls and emailing documents around for review. The purpose of this application will be to provide bighorn sheep managers with a simple interface to access mark-resight models and abundance estimates for rams, ewes, and lambs from the logit-normal mark-resight models built into Program Mark. Currently, advanced knowledge of Program Mark

and/or R is required to run these models. Currently, the application design is out for review with collaborators.

On July 18, Biologists Wik and Cotterill recovered a collar from a bighorn sheep ewe that died in late March in the Mountain View population. We used pontoon boats to cross the Grande Ronde and hiked up a steep ridge to locate the collar. We had great weather and found the collar without difficulty.

Biologist Wik at the ewe's resting place. The difficulty of the approach and COVID-related delays meant we were not able to get to the carcass as soon as we would have liked. The remains were too decomposed to determine the cause of death.

The view of the Grande Ronde from the ewe's final resting place

On June 22, WDFW received a report of three bighorn sheep heading towards the town of Asotin. Biologists Wik and Cotterill went out to try to locate, and if necessary, capture the animals, but we were unable to find them. Additional reports have been received about these animals as late as July 1, but all efforts by staff members to locate have failed.

Carnivore: District Biologist Wik retrieved multiple remotely activated cameras that were placed to locate the Tucannon wolf pack's core use area this spring. No new observations were recorded with the cameras.

Waterfowl: Vekasy completed waterfowl brood counts on traditional routes along the Touchet and Walla Walla rivers. Brood counts are always low along these routes, but only one Canada goose brood was detected on the Touchet River and no broods on the Walla Walla.

Golden Eagle: Vekasy checked on golden eagle nest productivity in preparation for marking a fledgling. Unfortunately, the nest was empty and telemetry locations from the marked adult female suggest the site has failed rather than an early fledgling. Earlier in the week, Vekasy, Wik, Research Biologist Watson and wildlife area (WLA) interns successfully tagged a near-fledgling on the George Creek Unit of the Asotin WLA.

District Biologist Wik after tagging with Research Biologist Watson

Pacific Northwest Bumblebee Atlas: Vekasy completed bumblebee surveys in high priority cells, which included locations on the W.T. Wooten WLA. No threatened species were detected, but sites had high diversity with up to five species detected at a single location.

Possible Bombus appositus (white-shouldered bumblebee) and B. centralis (central bumblebee)

W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area Moose: Kari Dingman and Tom Jensen ran into twin yearling bulls on the backside of Spring Lake recently.

One of the yearling bull moose behind Spring Lake on the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Three Year Package: District Biologist Wik solicited ideas from local sportsmen to include in the proposed ideas forwarded to WDFW headquarters. Some of these ideas have caused concern from sportsmen that did not understand that these were ideas that are still going to go through a vetting process and public input. This has resulted in multiple calls from sportsmen and political entities.

Target Shooting: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley performed several site visits to ensure WDFW access signs were still in place and good condition on contracted properties and replaced signs that were faded, missing, and, or vandalized. Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley picked up hundreds of spent shell casings along with miscellaneous items used as targets at one site where there was already a "No Target Shooting" sign posted, which was shot up as well.

Vandalized WDFW access sign that was replaced

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Electric Fencing: Wildlife Biologist Turnock picked up a couple of portable electric fencing setups that were loaned to landowners to prevent future black bear conflicts. Both fences helped prevent anymore conflict. One of the landowners took our advice and worked with the Defenders of Wildlife to cost-share a permanent electric fence. That is awesome!

Columbia County Wolf Interaction: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade responded to a report from a camper in Columbia County who reported that four wolves surrounded his campsite in

the middle of the night. The reporting party (RP) said that the wolves came as close as fifty yards and howled for close to an hour. The reporting party also reported that his dogs appeared to be scared and that he attempted to haze the wolves away. The camper chose to leave the campsite to avoid any further issues.

Black Bear Safety Concern: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb received a call from a producer about a large black bear in a fenced fruit field. According to the producer, the bear did not have a fear of humans or equipment and showed limited reaction to hazing efforts. The producer asked for assistance in removing or relocating the bear for the sake of his workers' safety. Working in consultation with Wade, Law Enforcement Sergeant Fulton, Biologist Wik, and Biologist Vekasy the most viable course of action was to utilize a spring black bear permit holder to safely remove the animal. Due to the availability of a viable food source and the ambient temperature heat index, attempting to trap the bear was not the preferred course of action. The producer was satisfied with the plan and agreed to vacate his workers from the field if a permit holder agreed to hunt. Law Enforcement Sergeant Fulton identified a spring black bear permit holder that had not filled their tag and put the hunter in contact with the producer. Kolb followed up with the producer who informed him the hunter had been successful and harvested the black bear. The producer was very appreciative of WDFW's collaborative efforts to ensure the safety of his employees.

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Noxious Weeds on Blue Mountains Wildlife Areas Lands: Wildlife area staff members are encountering huge infestations of noxious weeds across the WLAs. The situation is utterly hopeless as far as control. Work at home orders and other shutdowns this spring from Covid-19 have hamstrung efforts to properly control weeds. Planned chem-fallow operations on fields at the 4-O Ranch WLA were delayed allowing the growth of weeds that will delay re-seeding efforts by a year. With current shortened work weeks due to furloughs and budget constraints, we are pulling back to where the money is and will be prioritizing weed control work to Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) funded lands and forgoing work on other lands.

Out of control scotch thistle growth in Charley Creek on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area

A field on the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area that was supposed to have been sprayed earlier this spring in preparation for re-seeding. Our efforts to re-seed this field are now delayed a year as we start over with cleaning up the mess and attempting to prepare a seedbed again.

Trespass Livestock on the Asotin Creek WLA: In a story that sounds like a broken record, once again trespass livestock are on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. We anticipate more problems this summer as we have always had. Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice found approximately 20 cows in Charley Creek recently. The cows were pushed off the wildlife area to the county road and left there for the owner to find them. Other escapees from grazing allotments on adjoining United States Forest Service lands were found in upper Lick Creek. With poor boundary fences, there is not much we can do about the situation.

Trespass Livestock in Charley Creek on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area

WDFW Permitted Grazing: The two 4-O Ranch WLA grazing permits are still active with few issues to report at this time. Livestock are utilizing old agricultural fields in the Mountain View area of the east permit. On the west permit area, livestock are in a large field near the west border of the WLA. The east side permittee recently installed a new trough (purchased by WDFW) at a spring near the Hood Field. The west side permittee has done very little recently in the way of making his contribution towards building interior fences. At the Shumaker permit areas, Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice saw evidence of heavy use of riparian zones along the Grande Ronde River. There are no fences along the riparian zones and WDFW is allowing grazing along this corridor.

WDFW permitted grazing in the Grande Ronde River riparian corridor at Shumaker

WDFW land on the right side of the fence

Trough installed by Permittee Doug Jones

Livestock in the McNeil Fields on the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area

Smoothing Iron Water System Problems: Wildlife Area staff members discovered a leak in the old metal pipeline supplying water to the buildings recently. Dave Meisner and Scott McGee walked our mini excavator to the leak and made the repair which thankfully was not on a steep hillside. Dave and Scott also use the excavator to reset a trough near the 27,000-gallon storage tank which is heavily used by elk during summer months. The water system is back on and supplying water to troughs and the buildings.

Technicians Dave Meisner and Scott McGee resetting a trough on railroad ties at Smoothing Iron Ridge where the trough is heavily used by elk

Weatherly Unit Forest Management: Logging is underway at Weatherly Unit and appears to be going well. Hauling will likely begin in the next week and work will continue there over the next few months.

Logging activity on the Weatherly Unit of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area - Photo by Forester Brian Mize

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Hunter Education: Biologist Baarstad spoke at a private hunter education course near Kettle Falls to discuss private lands hunting access opportunities and the principles of wildlife management related to hunting.

Fire Restrictions: Seasonal fire and firearms restrictions signs were posted at Northeast Washington WLAs and access areas on June 30. The effective date is July 1. These limits are needed to reduce the possibility of catastrophic wildfires on public lands. Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Donovan Colvin enlisted Private Lands Biologist Brian Gaston to post Revere Wildlife Area. Thanks, Brian!

Kiosk on the lane to Swanson Lakes WLA with the red and white fire sign on the right

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

New Walla Walla Wildlife Conflict Specialist: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade traveled to Walla Walla and spent one day assisting Region 1's new Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb with getting accounts set up and familiarizing him with their operations. Wade also shared information with Kolb regarding the job duties.

Swanson Lakes Radio Antenna: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch and Natural Resource Technician Donovan Colvin moved the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA) base radio antenna, from the old office to the new one. Private Lands Biologist Todd Baarstad, Natural Resource Technician Richard Fish, and Access Areas Supervisor Daniel Dziekan assisted them.

Swanson Lakes WLA Assistant Manager Mike Finch, supervising the installation of radio antenna at the new SL WLA office. The dead lawn will be replanted to native vegetation.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 2

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 3

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 4

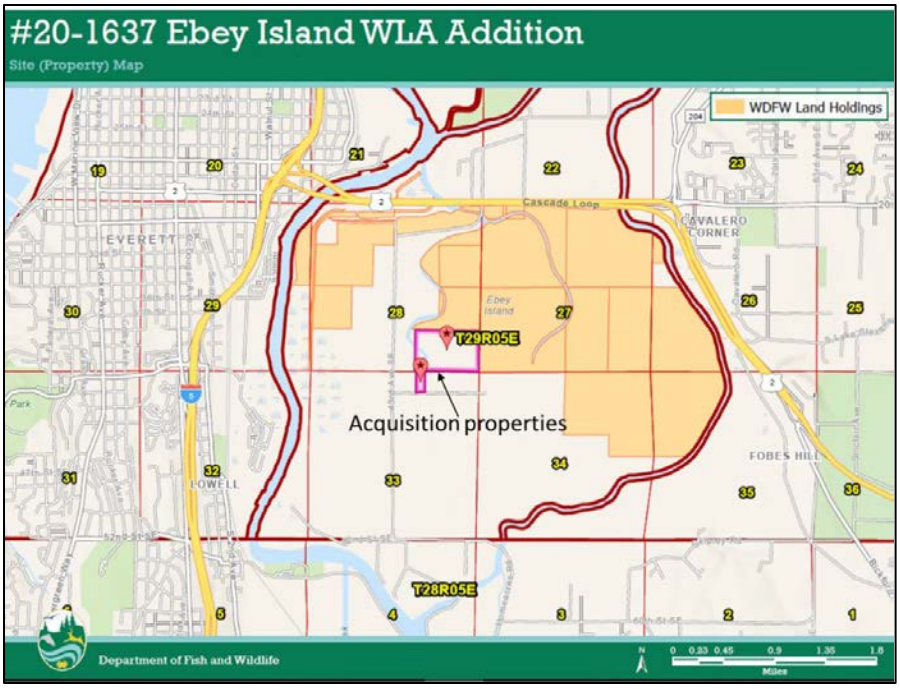
HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Sphagnum Bog Beetle Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Hamer conducted sweep-net surveys in search of Hatch's Click Beetle at two sphagnum bog locations in Snohomish County. Click beetles were collected from both bog habitats. Collected specimens will be examined by an expert to determine if they are the correct species. Beller's Ground Beetles were collected from both sites last year, and so, were not surveyed for this year at these sites but will be surveyed for at other sites.

Lake Dorothy a sphagnum bog habitat in Snohomish County

Ebey Island Acquisition: Projects Coordinator Brokaw gave a presentation for a grant application that proposes acquiring two properties adjacent to the Ebey Island Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. The acquisition would conserve wetland habitat and could also provide an access point that would allow walk-in access of over 300 acres of WDFW that is currently only accessible by boat.



Map of Ebey Island with WDFW land ownership and properties proposed for acquisition

Snapping Turtle: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman responded to the Acme in Whatcom County after a resident who was traveling between Lake Whatcom and Acme observed a snapping turtle in the roadway. The resident recognized the turtle as an invasive species and collected the turtle and reported it to WDFW. The location and information on the turtle were recorded into the invasive species database and it appears to be the first snapping turtle reported in Whatcom County.

Snapping Turtle Located in Whatcom County

Take of State Wildlife: District 12 staff members assisted Seattle Parks and Recreation regarding legalities, management, and permit needs for an osprey pair that has established on a light ballast in a sports field. Seattle desires to exclude and put up a platform. District 12 staff members worked with WDFW Enforcement to examine complaints regarding an osprey nest removal in Interbay, Seattle. The nest has been established for ten years. Reporting parties were concerned as the nest was recently taken down on a weekend and they felt that given one of the birds was constantly at the nest that it was with eggs or chicks. No required permit had been requested. District 12 staff members called the property owner/manager and discussed it. The pair had ripped into the ballast wiring and concern over fire had taken the first seat, understandably. United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Wildlife Services was contracted to remove the nest and place an egg in a surrogate nest.

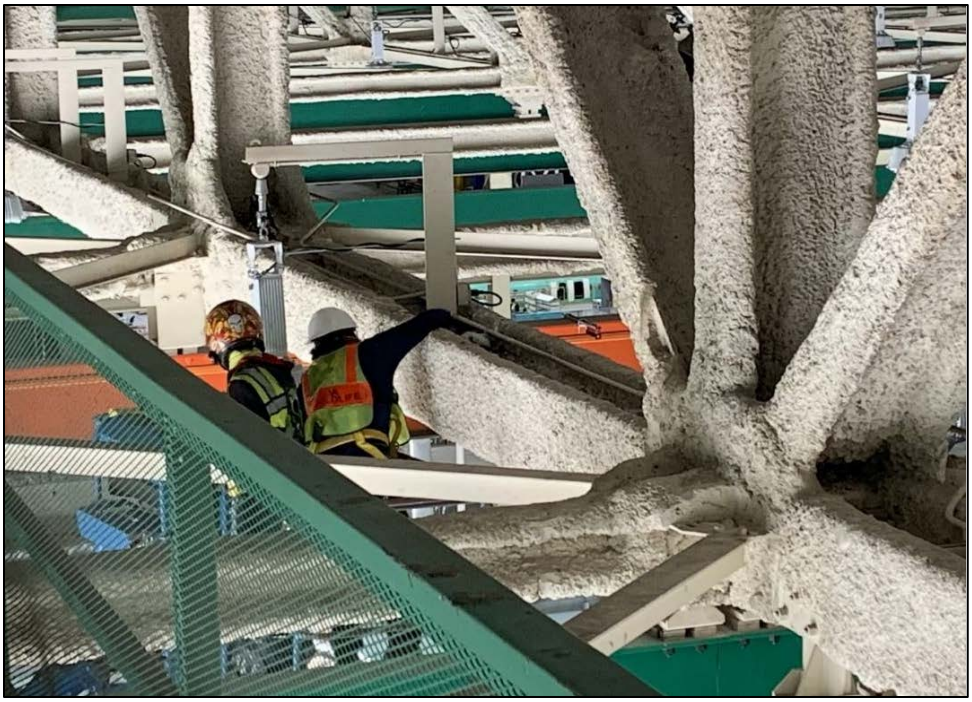
Osprey pair (copulating April 2020) and subject nest removed on Saturday (June 13, 2020) at an Interbay Facility

Peregrine Falcons: District 12 staff members and Olympia personnel worked on two peregrine management needs. The first was a long time coming with WDFW working with Boeing, Falconer's Association, USDA Wildlife Services, and Urban Raptor Conservancy to move into efforts to dissuade a pair from nesting in an area Boeing facility. WDFW desired that the chicks be placed

directly into falconry to avoid any injury, stuck in captive status, complications with release given the nest is inside a building, safety issues with newly fledged chicks in facility operations, and other past happenings that the department wanted to avoid. Four eyasses were successfully taken from the nest and placed with falconers.

USDA Wildlife Services will be harassing the adults while they are still in breeding mode and centered on nest site (as the adults start pre-breeding courtship and pair-bonding). The hope is after a few seasons of "human-induced" nest failure and shock-and-awe harassment the adults will move outside of the factory building. Nest scrape boxes have been donated outside by the Urban Raptor Conservancy. Thanks to Patricia Thompson for her work with falconers in this effort. A big thanks to Boeing in being open for this as past trapping of adults did not work. Hopefully using nest failure and behavioral response of that, paired with aversive conditioning via harassment, will push mom and dad falcon to choose an alternate nest site, outside of the factory.

Falcon chicks being removed from their nest in the beam infrastructure inside a factory. Note helmets. Chicks were placed with falconers. This avoids safety issues both for humans within the factory but also for the fledging chicks who have broken wings and other injuries due to poor navigation of the factory environment in the past. Birds unharmed and get to hunt in the wild. - Photo by Boeing



Photos by Boeing

The second falcon management need was with the West Seattle Bridge. District 12 staff members and Olympia Diversity personnel drafted a state take authorization permit to provide Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) with the ability to work around any falcons as they are in the nest or fledging and in clumsy learn to fly mode. SDOT has been very collaborative, even pushing some of their work back a bit, given the young were about to fledge with a catwalk and other construction work proposed to be built and implemented right in front of the nest. It is highly likely all young would have jumped too soon in that situation given their age and the closeness of the quite novel work. All are keeping an eye on the "newbie" flying young and a game plan is in place if they find a bird where they don't want it and need to take case-specific actions. See the news release here.

One of the bridge eyasses that just fledged last week – hung out on the ground under the bridge, then flew haphazardly to a built structure, and then haphazardly (but with intent and excitement) to the nest. Practice makes perfect - Photo by West Seattle Blog

Carnivore Trail Cameras: District Wildlife Biologist Waddell checked two cameras in Skagit Valley that were placed to monitor for different carnivores. One camera was ultimately removed because the location was not ideal. The cameras yielded lots of photos of anglers and several black bears and coyotes.

A black bear sow and her cub pass in front of a WDFW camera in Skagit County

Bog Beetle Survey Beller's Ground Beetle and Hatch's Click Beetle: District 12 staff members surveyed two historic sites for Beller's ground beetle and Hatch's click beetle. Ground beetles appear to have been found in decent numbers at both sites. One specimen of a click beetle will be sent in for the determination of Hatch's or other. Another historic site was scoped but the portion of the bog habitat that needs access will need discussions with private land ownership. Similar habitat of all the above historic sites is known by district staff members and will be opportunistically surveyed for these species when appropriate.

Sundew with an insect trapped and a Beller's ground beetle in net

District 12 staff members infield at a bog – Photos by C. Anderson WDFW

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Monitoring: District 12 staff members retained a cottontail tor testing. The individual went from fine to sudden fit of seizures for an hour proceeding to mortality.

North American Bat Monitoring (NABat): District 12 staff members also connected with public and private ownership to gain permissions for access and survey later this month and in early July.

Island Marble Butterfly Survey: Assistant District Biologist Hamer joined Insect Specialist Potter on San Juan Island for two days to survey Island Marble Butterflies and their habitat. On the first day, the two searched *Lepidium* in the Third Lagoon area for eggs and larvae. Unfortunately, no eggs or larvae were observed at Third Lagoon. The following day Biologist Hamer and Specialist Potter surveyed *Sisymbrium* habitat on the Department of Natural Resource (DNR) land along with Mount Finlayson. Island marble eggs and winged adults were observed in the area.

Biologist Hamer searches Lepidium for Island Marble Butterfly eggs and larvae

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Region 4 Private Lands Access Program Waterfowl Access and Habitat: Region 4 Private Lands Access Program staff members met with multiple landowners about their planting plans and how to fit waterfowl forage production into the spring planting season, including several sites that are too wet for production agriculture this year, but will be excellent waterfowl forage sites. WDFW partners with private landowners to plant barley for migratory birds to feed on over the winter. Funding for these efforts comes from the Washington State Migratory Bird Stamp. Multiple contacts were made with other partner landowners regarding hunting plans for the upcoming season.

Region 4 Private Lands Access Program Spring Bear Hunt: The North Skagit Bear hunt finished with more successful hunters; eleven bears were harvested this season. Region 4 Private Lands Access Program staff members continue to observe bear peeling damage on trees and have sent update emails to hunters about where tree damage is occurring.

Freshly peeled trees in the North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt unit. Black Bears peel the bark off the base of the trees and scrap the sap from the outer wood, this girdles, and kills the tree. This bear peeling damage can be severe in locations with the right age class of trees.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Ebey Island Planning Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, WLA Manager Boehm, and Habitat Biologist Desmul met with the stakeholder outreach facilitator for the project and developed a schedule, goals for outreach, and other administrative tasks. The project intends to gather input from stakeholders and collect technical information regarding the Ebey Island Unit to develop a plan for the future of the site.

Leque Island Habitat Survey: Projects Coordinator Brokaw walked the perimeter of the restoration area to observe new vegetation colonizing the site and new channels developing. It has been approximately seven months since the tides were reintroduced to the site and intertidal marsh plants are already growing and new channels developing.

Some areas of the site are rapidly colonized by a native sedge

A new channel forming in the foreground with new marsh vegetation in the background

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Leque Island Kiosk Sign Installation: Habitat Biologist Lindsey Desmul, Skagit WLA Manager Rotton, and Project Coordinator Brokaw installed an informational sign a Leque Island that explains the restoration project. While installing the sign, several recreators were photographing birds and going for a walk on the new trail on top of the berm.

New sign at Leque Island

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 5

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Conflict Specialist Jacobsen collecting hair from a bear station

Black Bear Population Monitoring: Biologists Stephens and Holman along with Biologist Wickhem, Jacobsen, and Regional Director Lee checked bear hair collection sites set-up earlier this month in the Toutle and Coweeman GMUs. This effort was round two out of what will be four total, and hairs were collected at 17 of 36 sites. A reporter from King 5 news joined the crew for one day and he will be reporting on the work we are doing.

A mother bear and two cubs visiting a collection station

Elk in a clear cut observed while driving between bear hair snare stations

Bobcat visiting a bear station

North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat): Biologists Stephens and Holman along with coordination from Bat Specialist Tobin participated in a continent-wide bat monitoring effort called NABat. The effort is an international program designed to monitor bat distributions and abundances and provide trend data. The goal of NABat is to provide natural resource managers with information required to manage bat populations effectively, detect early warning signs of population decline, and estimate extinction risk. The survey took place near the town of Ryderwood and involved setting up four devices in different locations to detect and records bat calls over the course of one night. Results on species detected are pending.

Microphone and detector set-up at a pond near Ryderwood

Bat Emergence Count and White-Nose Syndrome Monitoring: Biologists Wickhem and Bergh visited a property in Klickitat County that had reported bats roosting within the log beams of their home. White-Nose Syndrome Coordinator Tobin had visited the same residence a month earlier to put out guano collection trays below two known roosting areas so "fresh" guano could be collected and tested for the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome (*Pseudogymnoascus destructans* or *Pd)*. The bats had graciously made generous deposits into the collection trays over the last month, leaving plenty of pellets for collection. Wickhem and Bergh also sampled areas near the roosting spots with sterile swabs to look for evidence of *Pd.* After collecting samples, the pair conducted an emergence count at sunset and set-up an acoustic detector. The acoustic detector recorded echolocation calls that can be analyzed with specialized computer software to determine what species of bats are occupying the house. They counted 56 bats exiting the home from three different exit points. The homeowners are excited to learn more about the bats they share their home with! If you think you've found an active bat roost, group of bats, or find sick or dead bats, please report it to WDFW here.

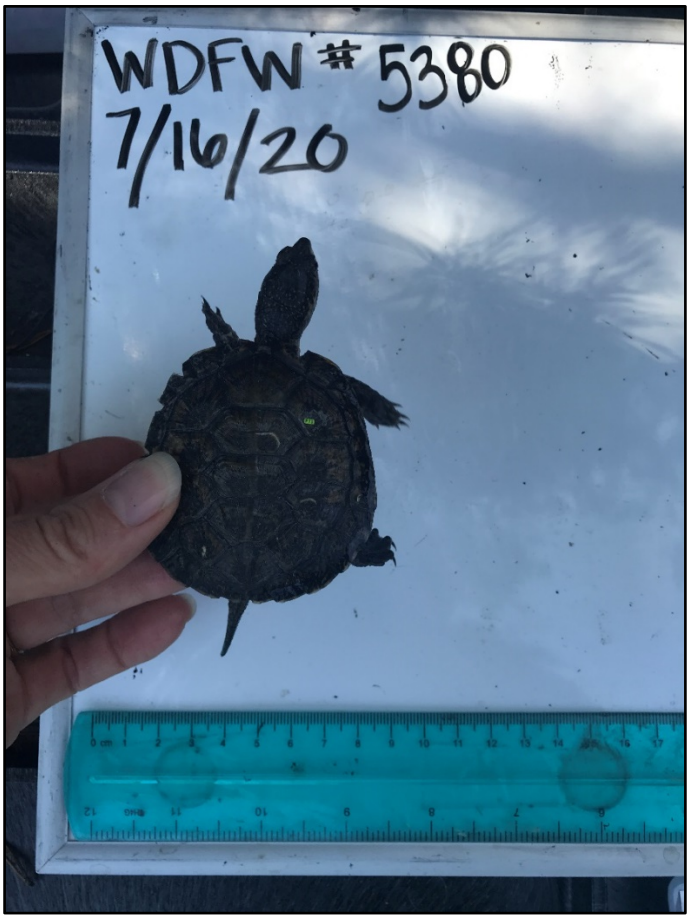
All set-up to count bats as they exit the roof peaks

Peregrine Falcon: Biologist Bergh investigated a possible peregrine falcon eyrie that has not been documented before. She attempted to view the cliff face from the Oregon side of the Columbia River, but could only see the west-facing side of the cliffs and encountered uncooperative rainy weather. The next day she met with a planner from Skamania County who had reported the unknown raptor at the cliffs on the Washington side of the river. Immediately after walking towards the cliffs a peregrine was observed perched on top of a snag. From the Skamania County planner's observations in the past month, it sounded like the peregrines had a

nest on the cliff below the snag. All of this information was forwarded to WDFW's Habitat Program for their review.

Peregrine Falcon Survey: Biologist Bergh completed the final survey of the year for peregrine falcons at the Beacon Rock State Park eyrie. Previous surveys in the past couple months indicated that the pair was tending to a nest, downy nestlings perched on the nest ledge, and lastly no activity at the eyrie indicating that the nestlings had fledged. WDFW assists Washington State Parks with this monitoring every year because one face of the rock is closed to rock climbing during the peregrine falcon breeding season and will be opened based on falcon activity.

Notching Headstart Western Pond Turtles: Biologist Wickhem visited Western pond turtle hatchlings at the Oregon Zoo who are in the Headstart Program. These turtles hatched in the wild last fall and were brought to the zoo where they can grow and spend their most vulnerable days in the safety of their zoo enclosure. They will be released back into their native pond in a few weeks when they will be big enough to better evade predators on their own. On this visit, Biologist Wickhem notched the scutes of each turtle's shell with a triangular file – each scute is given a number, and adding up the scutes that are notched allows us to identify each turtle individually. For more information on the Oregon Zoo's work to help restore Western pond turtle populations, please visit this link.



A juvenile Western pond turtle with fresh identification notches

Band-Tailed Pigeon Surveys: Biologist Wickhem conducted two band-tailed pigeon surveys this week at known mineral sites in both Skamania and Clark counties. Nesting birds congregate at natural mineral springs throughout the summer to consume supplemental minerals, primarily sodium and calcium. The same mineral sites are surveyed each year by WDFW biologists across Western Washington and the results affect the season and bag-limits for band-tailed pigeons each year. At the site in Skamania County, Wickhem counted 126 pigeons, despite several disturbances from people soaking in the mineral springs. At the site in Clark County, 187 pigeons were counted. Both counts were within the limits of previous surveys.

Skamania County Mineral Site

Clark County Mineral Site

2) <u>Providing Recreation Opportunities</u>

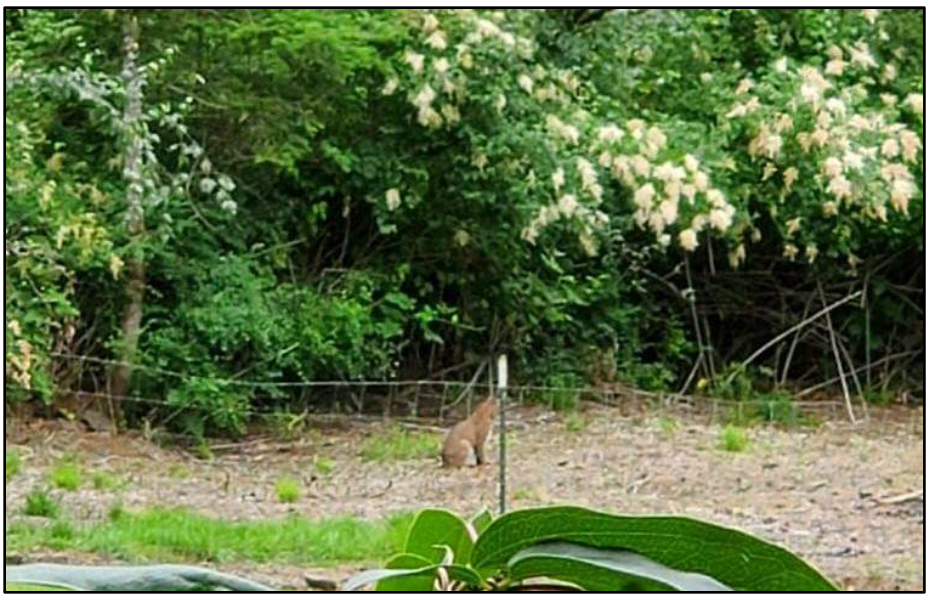
Access Sites: Access Area staff members Rhodes and McKinlay picked up and hauled over 400 pounds of trash from various access sites. Barbers access had 100 plus pounds of trash spread

throughout the parking area. Signs seem to be a hot item now as staff members have been replacing stolen signs for two weeks at many of the sites. Also, three restroom sites were pumped, removing over 1,800 gallons of waste.

Clearing, signing and cleaning Woodland Bottoms and Silver Lake Access Sites

3) <u>Providing Conflict Prevention and Education</u>

Cougar Concerns: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen fielded a report from a concerned citizen of a cougar in the resident's backyard. A photo was submitted for verification. The inspection of the animal in the photo revealed that the visitor was a bobcat, rather than a cougar. Advice was provided to the resident about living in cougar country.



Bobcat visitor to a rural backyard - Photo by reporting party

Captured Bear: Wildlife Conflict Specialist (WCS) Jacobsen, Officer Moats, and Officer Whipple were notified that a bear had been caught in a WDFW bear trap at a residence that had repeatedly been visited by multiple black bears. The bear that was caught in the trap was likely not the main bear that had been causing issues at the residence, and as the bear was a lactating female, she was immobilized, ear-tagged, and released on-site. The bear was hazed with loud noises and beanbag rounds as she fled the trap to discourage her from returning to the residence.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Officer Whipple ear-tagging the immobilized black bear

Captured black bear waking up from immobilization

Bear Concerns: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen fielded multiple reports of bear sightings this week. One landowner reported observing a black bear chasing her goat around the property. Jacobsen responded to the scene. Based on the description of the animal chasing the goat, it was not possible to determine if a bear or some other animal was observed, as the reporting party did not have a clear view of the animal. Advice was given on livestock protection. At another residence, Jacobsen loaned the landowners an electric fence set up and a fox light to keep a small black bear from becoming too familiar with the landowner's chickens. The bear had visited seven or eight times over the last week and had damaged some chicken wire and consumed chicken feed but had not injured or killed any chickens so far.

Stuck Fawn: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Biologist Wickhem responded to a report of a fawn that was stuck in a fence. The reporting party was unable to approach the fawn due to the very protective doe nearby. Jacobsen was able to subdue the fawn while Biologist Wickhem untangled and removed the wire while keeping a watchful eye out for the doe that angrily circled them throughout the ordeal. The uninjured fawn was soon reunited with its concerned mother, and the two promptly left the scene.

Fawn after the wire had been removed from the back leg

Black Bear Timber Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey continued to verify damage to multiple stands of timber from black bears. Fresh, current year damage was verified in the stands.

Columbian White-tailed Deer Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with a landowner experiencing issues with Columbian white-tailed deer preventing the establishment of an orchard/vineyard. Given that the species is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), options on dealing with the damage were more limited than usual. Thanks to some help from Biologist Holman, Aubrey was able to provide the landowner with advice on deterrent methods that don't violate ESA rules, focusing on exclusion and individual plant protection.

Sick Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a report of a Columbian white-tailed deer that looked diseased. The deer was no longer at the residence where the report came from upon arrival. The reporting party was given the contact information for United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff members at the Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge for further sightings and evaluation of the animal.

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with a landowner experiencing elk damage to crops and fences. Advice was given on non-lethal deterrents, and hazing devices were loaned to the landowner for aid in discouraging the elk from visiting the property. The landowner

will be entering into a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) with WDFW and Aubrey will continue to work together with the landowner to reduce damage caused by elk.

Christmas Tree Farm Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with a landowner who experiences damage to his tree farm from deer during the summer/fall months. The landowner already has a DPCA, so plans for the upcoming damage season were discussed, and some hazing supplies were loaned to the landowner to discourage deer use of the tree farm.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

PacifiCorp's Acquisition: Biologist Holman is pleased to announce the acquisition of an additional 640 acres to PacifiCorp's suite of lands. With the completion of this purchase, the utility now owns and manages more than 16,000 acres in the watershed of the North Fork Lewis River for wildlife habitat and non-motorized public recreation. Thanks to PacifiCorps for their exemplary management practices and conservation partners Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Cowlitz Tribe for their roles in this effort. For a news release regarding the accomplishment, please see this link.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

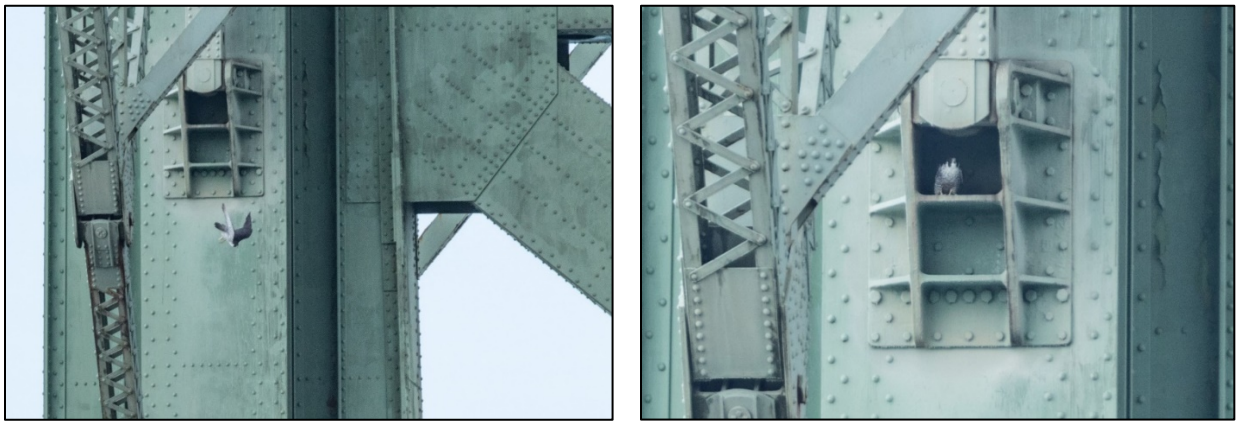
7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations



Peregrine falcons nesting on the Narrows Bridge in Tacoma – Photos by F. Hyke and the Tacoma peregrine volunteers

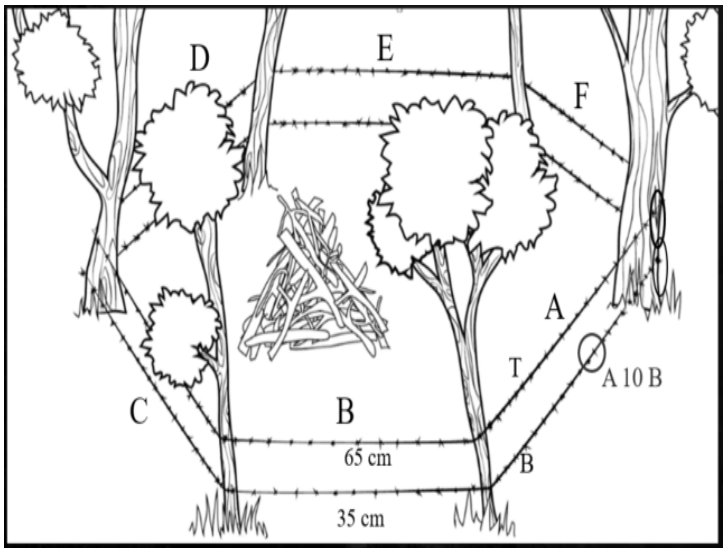
Black Bear Density Monitoring Project (Installment 1): Biologist Tirhi spent considerable time organizing and preparing for a bear study in the game management unit (GMU) 654 of District 11. The project was generously allowed to take place on DNR's Elbe Hills State Forest and Hancock Timber Resource Group property. Tirhi organized for the deployment of 36 monitoring stations over a 324 km^2 study area with each station contained within a 3x3 kilometer cell. It was estimated it took ten days to plan station locations using GIS, create driving routes to stations, and then field check and move stations based on road nonexistence/road closures/snow blocks followed by refining GIS routes/finalizing ArcGIS Collector maps in Ipad (not including Butler time).

The project was organized under the guidance of carnivore specialists Welfelt and Beausoleil. Assistant District Biologist Butler also provided valuable assistance to scouting stations in the Elbe Hills State Forest, organizing equipment, and helping to fill scent lures for deployment. WDFW biologists Tirhi, Butler, Welfelt, Beausoleil, Smith, and Michaelis constructed the 36 stations working in teams of two over a two and a half-day period. Each station contains a barbed-wire enclosure within which a woodpile is created and then "baited" with a scent lure containing a mixture of cow blood and fish oil. The stations are then left to attract bear over a ten to fourteen-day sampling period with four total periods taking place over seven weeks. To enter the station, bears must climb over or under the barbed wire, thereby leaving hair snagged on the barbs. Hair is meticulously collected from each barb, placed in a separate envelope and then the barb and tweezers burned to remove DNA before staff members move to the next barb.

Hair samples are sent to a genetics lab that can differentiate each bear as well as sex. Four hair sampling periods take place before the stations are removed and the study closed.

Approximately 75% of the stations contained hair samples during the first session check-in the District 11 study area with an array of hair colors from brown to black to blond. Three more collection periods will occur until the stations are removed at the end of July. District 11 staff members are eager to understand the density of bears in this area of mixed commercial and public (USFS, DNR) forest bounded by Mount Rainier National Park (refugia) where bears are harvested for damaging timber and during both spring and fall bear hunts. Tirhi is hopeful the findings will aid the District in managing bears under these various scenarios.

Biologist Tirhi pouring scented lure on a black bear hair-snag station



Biologist Michaelis setting a camera at a black bear monitoring station, and station layout design using barbed wire for snagging bear hair and a scented woodpile in the middle as a bear attractant

Black Bear Density Monitoring Project (Installment 2): Biologists Tirhi and Butler completed the fourth and final check of the GMU 654, District 11 black bear density estimate study. Samples were collected at approximately 80% of the stations during each of the four checks with some check days approaching 100%. This translates to a good opportunity to understand the bear density in this GMU for use in managing this local population. Hair samples that were collected will be sent to the lab on Monday and will take several months to process. District 11 personnel would like to thank Washington's DNR Elbe Hills State Forest Manager Reed, Hancock Timber Resource Group biologist Webb, and the various USFS staff members that attempted to allow us onto federal forest (road washouts prevented setting stations on USFS land). District 11 personnel would also like to thank WDFW biologists Welfelt, Beausoleil, Smith, Michaelis, Blankenship, Ament, Novak, Montgomery, and volunteer Terry who assisted with station setup, checks, and removal.

Volunteer Terry preparing to pour the scent lure on the woodpile at a black bear monitoring station

Streaked Horned Lark Surveys: Biologists Tirhi and Butler conducted the last of three lark surveys at the Olympia Airport. Survey conditions were good with a total of 51 individual observations of birds with the majority being male. One banded bird from the Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) research project was recorded and several young of the year. The total number of larks increased in 2020 over 2019 counts, and therefore the Olympia Airport will

not be resurveyed until 2023 (three-year rotation for all sites showing constant or positive trends).

Western Pond Turtle: Biologist Tirhi continues to monitor breeding female western pond turtles at the Pierce County recovery site once per week. No turtles were located out of the ponds and nesting during a recent shift. Tirhi was able to open and count eggs (N=5) in a nest that was laid after dark the preceding evening, as required by the monitoring program.

Mountain Goat Relocation: Biologists Novack and Michaelis have been assisting with the mountain goat relocation efforts in Olympic National Park

Bat Acoustic Surveys: Biologists Michaelis and Novack sampled their assigned grid with a set of four acoustic detectors. These surveys are coordinated across multiple states to identify species presence. The detectors were shipped off to District 16 after their one-day sampling effort. Thanks to the Campbell Group timber company for allowing access onto their lands.

Band Tailed Pigeon Survey: Biologists Michaelis and Novack conducted the annual band-tailed pigeon survey at the Naselle mineral site. These surveys are used for season setting as a long-term index to monitor pigeon numbers. This year a total of 94 pigeons were observed entering and leaving the shore area of the Naselle River. Other species observed included, a family of four river otters, white pelicans, kingfishers, and some large chinook salmon that were surfacing and splashing! Weather conditions were quite favorable.

Streaked Horned lark Survey: Biologists Michaelis conducted the last of two surveys to determine the presence of breeding streaked-horned larks on the Damon Point area. This was an occupancy survey and only two visits are required. We are constantly looking for and waiting for reports by the public for lark sightings in new areas that may lead to surveys designed to estimate abundance.

Wolf Monitoring: Biologist Tirhi deployed one high-speed monitoring camera (video) on private industrial timberland close to a recent possible report of wolves on USFS land near Mount Rainier. This is one of four cameras that were purchased under a grant written by biologist Mueller with Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium (PDZA). PDZA and WDFW are discussing deploying the remaining three cameras in Mount Rainier in partnership with park staff members.

North American Bat Acoustic Monitoring: Biologist Tirhi deployed four acoustic monitors for one night of monitoring as assigned by the headquarters bat specialist Tobin. Tirhi was assigned stations in eastern Pierce County. Three of the stations on private property, one at Electron Hydro, and one northeast at Lake Tanwax. For more information on this monitoring program see this link.


Homeowners that both volunteered to place a bat acoustic monitor station in their pasture but also helped with setup. The station at another private residence set and ready to record bat calls over one evening.

2) <u>Providing Recreation Opportunities</u>

Wildlife Area Maintenance: The Olympic crew has been mowing in the Wynoochee Mitigation working their way towards the Wishkah and will soon be mowing in the Biggs field. With the weekly furlough days and the ongoing closures that come with Covid-19 (the month-long shutdown) progress seems to be slow. Since mowing operations have begun there have been four dead elk found in the fields (two spike elk and two yearling calves) all seem to have been natural deaths. This year also seems to be a bad year for weeds, to include Tansey Ragwort, which must be hand-pulled to prevent the spread.

Staff Changes: As many of you know, the Olympic crew is about to be down to two again. Manager Gerchak is scheduled to retire on July 31. After fifty years with WDFW, he has decided to hang it up. Manager Gerchak will be greatly missed as his experience with and knowledge of WDFW has been very valuable to many, but now will be going with him. Some of us will be leaning on him from time to time for his expertise and old school knowledge. Congratulations Mr. Gerchak and thank you for your 50 years of dedicated service and all you have taught us to keep the wildlife area staff members a productive group. We will make you proud!

The Olympic Wildlife crew will continue with two employees for now. We completed most everything last summer and were finished with major operations by elk season. We hope for the same results this year.

Recreation and Conversation Office Re-developments: Two recent re-developments in Thurston County (Long and Lawrence Lakes) are now open and experiencing heavy use. Most every conversation with the public about these projects has been extremely positive. It has been a pleasure for the Water Access Team to encounter the public with such excitement and positivity regarding the many improvements made to these two sites.

Lawrence Lake ***Long Lake***


Vegetation Management: The Water Access Team experienced the breakdown of a mowing tractor (clutch repair) and two of three weed eaters at the same time. With all equipment repaired, the team is scrambling to catch up, cutting the long and drying field grass to reduce the possible fire hazard at many access sites.

Lake Sutherland Before ***Lake Sutherland After***


Oakland Bay Before ***Oakland Bay After***

Other Work Performed: The Water Access Team picked up and disposed of 1,700 pounds of fireworks, litter, and other debris left on lake and river sites during this time.

3) <u>Providing Conflict Prevention and Education</u>

Nothing for this installment.

4) <u>Conserving Natural Landscapes</u>

Oak Patch Prairie: Biologist Murphie conducted butterfly surveys at Oak Patch Prairie near Belfair this period. Oak Patch Prairie is owned by Washington DNR and is scheduled for habitat restoration work. WDFW has been surveying the prairie to document what butterfly species are present at this site. Although Biologist Murphie did not find the intended species, Sonora Skipper, he did see several other species of butterflies including Puget Sound Fritillary, Silver-Spotted Skipper, and Clodius Parnassian, which are shown in the photos below.

Puget Sound Fritillary

Silver-Spotted Skipper

Clodius Parnassian

Recreation and Conservation Office Application Submittal: Biologist Novack finalized submission for a state lands restoration grant to the Recreation and Conversation Office (RCO). The initial application was reviewed by RCO. The resubmission incorporates some of the grant review committee's comments. The application is for little less than $100,000 to improve habitats that expanded the Elk River unit near Westport. Activities are primarily for the removal of scotch broom and reforestation to native trees to benefit facilitate the creation of Marbled Murrelet habitat. Secondary actions are efforts are directed toward wetland enhancements to reduce reed-canary grass.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Snowy Plover: Biologist Novack created a 60 second Public Service Announcement (PSA) for Snowy Plover protection to be aired on the radio in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties during the July 4 weekend holiday. Normally, these PSA's occur during the Earth day weekend in April which coincides with a razor clam dig. Since beaches were closed in April, the PSA was also canceled. The July 4 weekend was the next best opportunity to reach a large number of people and provide the public a few simple steps for protecting Snowy Plovers during the breeding season. Plovers are most vulnerable to human disturbances between April and August.