

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

September 16 to 30, 2021

LANDS DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Gloyd Seeps Unit Water Project: Property & Acquisition Specialists Woodruff, Buck, and Ramirez assisted Region 2 staff members in avoiding a massive conversion and replacement project at the Gloyd Seeps Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area in Grant County. Regional staff members are working with the Bureau of Reclamation on a water project that will bring water to and through Crab Creek on the unit. The project touches about 20 different parcels that WDFW has purchased over the last 65 years with federal and state funds. Originally, the Bureau wanted WDFW to grant easements, which would have required us to go through the conversion process with all of these funding strings. We convinced the Bureau that it had all it needed in the original patents to homesteaders and railroads from a century ago. Now the project can move forward very soon. The water will create tremendous habitat for waterfowl all throughout the unit.

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Knappton Boat Launch: Property & Acquisition Specialist Beals is working with the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to upgrade the parking area and launch at the Knappton Boat Launch site on the Columbia River in exchange for right of way that WSDOT needs to repair from the highway landslide upriver.

Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility: Property & Acquisition Specialist Carbary has been working with Region 3 staff members, private and county partners to put together the approval documents for the development of improved facilities at this long-time shooting range in Benton County. Coordination with WDFW Archaeologist Kat Kelly has been important for the pre-development studies. We really appreciate Kat's help.

Rocky Ford Overlook: Property & Acquisition Specialist Ramirez is working with the Overlake Fly Fishing Club on a five-year permit to keep the memorial bench at this Rocky Ford access area maintained.



Memorial bench at Rocky Ford access area

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Water Rights Reviews: Program Specialist Knudsen has been assisting the Acquisition Team with their due diligence into the water rights associated with upcoming land acquisitions. She has reviewed two properties in the Methow, two on Ebey Island, and a property in Grays Harbor County.

Conservation Easement Monitoring: Property & Acquisition Specialists Woodruff and Ramirez have revamped the Conservation Easement (CE) monitoring program for the Wildlife Program. Formerly, the monitoring was performed under contracts with land trusts. Then it became an unfunded task for many years. Now that Real Estate Services has experienced lands agents in every region, we are able to all pitch in and get this done. Our first step is a desktop review by Ramirez with the aid of WDFW's Land Information System (LIS) to verify ownerships, boundaries, parcel segregations, and improvements for the CE parcels in Region 2. WDFW plans to provide information and guidance to new owners who were not part of the original transactions. One particular CE is being monitored this fall. Next spring, we will begin the systematic field monitoring of the other CEs as time allows.

Land Management and Opportunities: Property & Acquisition Specialist Beals and Region 6 staff members are working with North Mason School District and Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group to expand management opportunities of the Union River Wildlife Area Unit. Property & Acquisition Specialists Woodruff and Zarzycki along with Region 5 staff members toured the Simcoe Mountains properties evaluating additional lands conservation opportunities. Program Specialist Buck continues to contract appraisal work on multiple properties with potential to conserve for wildlife habitat and public recreation across the state.

Providing Education and Outreach

Citizen Science: Property & Acquisition Specialist Beals wrote a permit to Thurston County Public Works for the installation of measuring devices (they look like rulers) at nine WDFW lake access areas. This county project is part of a NASA program that combines citizen science and satellite data to understand how the volume of water in lakes is changing over time. The project is a partnership between the University of North Carolina, University of Washington, and Tennessee Technological University working with local partners. The county will provide WDFW with an annual summary of the data collected.

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Water Rights Availability in WDFW's Land Information System: Program Specialist Knudsen and Property & Acquisition Specialist Woodruff are working on a project to put WDFW's water rights into LIS. They will be entered on only the data side for now – mapping is a much more complicated task that may require a new data layer.

Lands 20/20: Lands 20/20 Coordinator Coffman conducted the first meeting with the cross-programmatic Land Acquisition Strick Team (LAST) who review revised policy POL-6010 Acquiring and Disposing of Real Property and the new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for “Selecting Conservation and Recreation Lands for Acquisition” (Lands 20/20). Development of this SOP will make future necessary changes simplified.

Other

Lands Agent Recruitments: Lands Division has successfully filled the Region 4 lands agent vacancy at long last. Many thanks to Program Specialist Belson for helping out over the summer. We are so pleased to be adding the Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton to the team as the lands agent. Rotton's extensive wildlife conservation experience and on-the-ground perspective of the issues related to the use of WDFW's land will be a great addition to Real Estate Services.

In addition, on September 1, we welcomed back Program Specialist Ramirez as the Region 2 lands agent. Many thanks to Program Specialist Buck for filling in as the lands agent during the last seven months while Ramirez was working out of state. With his prior experience in the position, Ramirez was able to hit the ground running.

Program Specialist Medlen worked collaboratively with The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grants manager and successfully got all nine acquisition grants under agreement. These acquisition grants were applied for in May 2020 and funded as part of the 21-23 budget.

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Chronic Wasting Disease Training: Biologists Atamian, Lowe, and Turnock attended Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) training given by Research Scientist DeVivo and Wildlife Veterinarian Mansfield. The training provided background information about the disease, WDFW's surveillance plan, and practice collecting samples in preparation for upcoming hunter check stations.



Staff members receiving instruction on how to collect lymph nodes from deer heads for CWD testing

Forest Grouse: Biologists Atamian, Lowe, and Turnock checked barrels set up to collect wings and tails from hunter-harvested forest grouse. This is the sixth year of collection across the state to obtain species, age, and sex data on hunter-harvested birds.



Left to right: Forest grouse wing and tail collection barrel placed at an Inland Empire Paper access gate in Spokane County and ruffed grouse wing and tail collected from hunter

Deer: Biologists Atamian, Lowe, and Turnock finished up road-based deer surveys in Game Management Units 105-142 to count and classify does, fawns, and bucks prior to hunting season.



White-tailed doe grabbing an apple

Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease/Blue Tongue: Staff members in Region 1 continued to respond to numerous and widespread reports of dead and/or dying deer with symptoms of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) and/or blue tongue. The outbreak is causing bighorn sheep mortality in some herds as well. Two bighorn ewes from the Tucannon herd have died from blue-tongue disease. Biologist Turnock performed necropsies on several white-tailed deer collared for the Predator-Prey Project. All the mortalities were likely caused by EHD or blue tongue.



Dead white-tailed deer observed in the Palouse River, a common report during this outbreak

4-O Ranch Wildlife Area: Technician Stallcop has been hauling equipment to the Bucannon Field in preparation for a fall seeding. He has cultivated, picked-rock and sprayed fields. He will be seeding in the coming week. Once established the field will be a good source of forage for the area's elk herd.

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Eastern Washington Pheasant Release: Private Lands Biologist Gaston released pheasants along pheasant release sites in Whitman and Garfield counties. The pheasants were released as part of the Eastern Washington Pheasant Release Program and will provide hunters additional opportunities for the Youth and Senior Pheasant seasons.

Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley released 240 rooster pheasants at designated release sites in Columbia and Walla Walla counties and answered questions from the general public when stopped at the locations.

W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area: The W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area reopened to camping after being only open for day use due to extreme fire danger.

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area: Biologist Woodall had a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation member volunteering time last week clearing trail of downed trees in the wildfire burned footprint.

Public Contacts and Hunting Questions: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade continued to respond to sportsman's questions this week. The topics covered were as follows; elk hunting opportunities, wind power area access, over 65 pheasant hunting, Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease/blue tongue, and area closures.

Private Lands Biologist Gaston received questions from hunters who are looking to hunt for big game and upland gamebirds in Whitman County as well as questions about the Mica Peak Hunt by Reservation property. Private Lands Biologist Gaston provided the hunters with information about the Private Lands Program and how to best plan for their hunts. Many questions have been asked about how to utilize the Hunt by Reservation program which continues to grow in popularity.

Posting Access Properties: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley replaced faded, missing and/or vandalized WDFW access signs on contracted properties as needed. Thorne Hadley picked up and disposed of trash around access signs.

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Moose in Cougar Country: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman assisted Fish and Wildlife officers with darting and relocating a cow moose that had been hanging out in Pullman and causing issues. The students were getting a little too brazen around the moose. The moose was in the city for almost a week.

Wolf Activity: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb discussed on-going wolf activity with a producer who grazes in the Columbia pack territory. The producer is frustrated with the amount of activity around their livestock and has seen and heard wolves in their pasture on multiple occasions. Over the past two weeks, the producer has moved mineral block sites, opportunistically hazed wolves away from occupied livestock pastures, and moved cattle to adjacent pastures further away from a core wolf activity center.

Rendezvous Site Disturbance: WDFW staff members participated in a targeted rendezvous site disturbance in an effort to disrupt patterns of movement within the Columbia pack territory. The pack has been involved in one confirmed injury and one confirmed mortality in the past month. Staff members will monitor telemetry activity to determine what impact, if any, the disturbance effort had.

Dead Steer: WDFW staff members investigated a report of a dead steer in the Columbia pack territory. Based upon tracks, attack signatures, presence of bite and puncture wounds with associated hemorrhaging, eating patterns on the carcass, telemetry, and sightings in the immediate area, a determination of confirmed wolf depredation was made. WDFW staff members assisted the producer with carcass removal from the landscape. The affected producer currently conducts daily or near-daily range riding activities, deploys fox lights around livestock congregation areas (e.g., watering site), delayed turnout of calves until they were 200 pounds, attempts to keep cattle away from wolf activity centers, and will opportunistically haze wolves away from livestock and occupied pastures.

Conflict Prevention: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill responded to a report of several nuisance bears off the Aladdin Road in an old orchard. The bears were reportedly coming close to the reporting party's house during daylight hours and did not seem to be afraid or run away. Given the number of bears and the copious amount of bear sign, Samsill knew trapping was not a long-term solution and offered the reporting party (RP) electric fencing, which was declined. Samsill recommended that the RP allow someone to harvest bears from the property. After walking the property, deploying trail cameras, and watching the orchard with binoculars, at least 11 bears were detected.

Samsill fielded a nuisance bear call in Ione where a bear reportedly broke into a camper trailer and tore a big hole in the side. Since the RP planned to move the trailer from the property that weekend, no action was required. Samsill also fielded a nuisance bear report near Barney's Junction in which a bear was damage some fruit trees to consume fruit. After speaking with this RP, Samsill offered electric fencing and recommended the RP pick as much fruit as possible and to remove dropped fruit from the ground. The RP decided to try to remove all fruit first before accepting the electric fencing offer.

Elk Hazing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb conducted hazing operations on elk near the Stateline area in Walla Walla County. Hazing operations are challenging with the presence of bow hunters in the area, but with commercial crops still on the ground (i.e., corn and sunflower crops), protection of these high value crops is paramount.

Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements and Damage/Kill Permits: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade continued to work with producers to update Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements (DPCAs). Wade also continued to have discussions with producers regarding elk populations and how those effect kill/damage permit issuing and use. Wade also spent an evening checking the Peola area after a producer who has been denied kill permits reported that he had elk damage in a growing winter wheat crop. Wade looked at all crop grounds in the area and determined that all crop grounds were still unseeded.

Conserving Natural Areas

Spokane County Conservation Futures: Biologist Lowe toured and scored the WDFW portion of the evaluation criteria for eight Spokane County Conservation Futures nominated properties. Property nominations are submitted by the landowner, and the program uses a county property tax to purchase, maintain, and enhance the selected lands for public access in perpetuity. It has protected more than 9,000 acres in Spokane County to date.



Touring one of the nominated properties for the Spokane County Conservation Futures program with the landowner

Habitat Projects: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley conducted site visits at two locations for winter habitat projects will be done to access site conditions and to determine preparations and timeframes of those preparations. Thorne Hadley contacted the landowners to discuss access and planting time frames.

Providing Education and Outreach

Moose Presentation: Biologist Lowe gave a moose presentation to the Okanogan Highlands Alliance in Tonasket. Sightings of moose in Okanogan County have increased in recent years as they expand their range. The presentation was drive-in style, with slides projected on a huge inflatable screen and broadcast over FM radio so attendees could listen from their vehicle.

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area: Biologist Woodall attended a U.S. Forest Service (USFS)/Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife post-wildfire coordination meeting webinar. They discussed restoration activities, ideas, working together, and more.

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Basement Deer: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor McCanna responded to a Washington State Patrol email regarding a dead deer in a basement in Colville. McCanna contacted the elderly lady in her eighties who just returned home from a three-week hospital visit. McCanna could smell the dead deer from outside the home. McCanna went downstairs (double masked) and determined he would need help getting it out. McCanna was able to round up Fish Biologist Baker from the Colville district office. McCanna and Baker removed the deer in garbage bags as it fell apart and also removed about ten gallons of maggots. Advice was provided for the local health care office and insurance company for final clean up.

W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area and Asotin Creek Wildlife Area: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman completed her inventory of state items, attended meetings about reopening WDFW-owned lands, and began working on annual herbicide reports.

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area: Biologist Woodall made some edits to the Ledgerwood Temporary Permit before final approval. He dropped off the Ledgerwood's permit for review and signature on their part. Woodall started on equipment inventory, gathering photos of listed equipment, and submitting pictures. This work will continue this week.

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

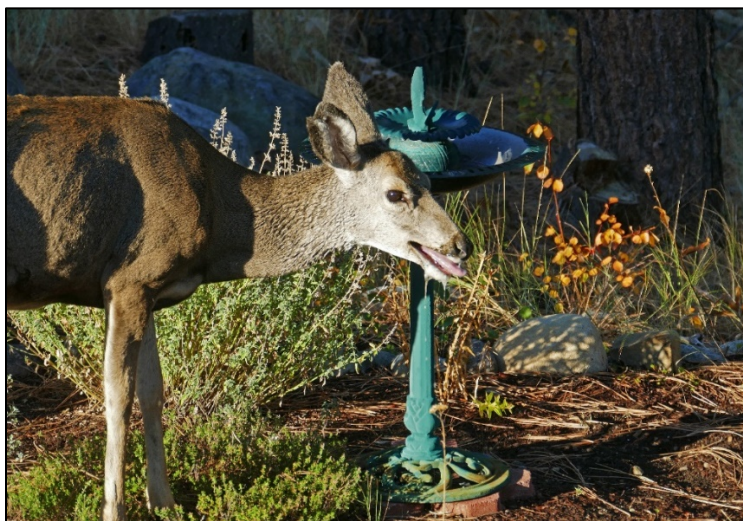
Managing Wildlife Populations

Mount Hull Bighorn Sheep Disease Monitoring: During the month of September 2021, five bighorn sheep from the Mount Hull herd have been found dead. Necropsies were conducted on three and samples were collected to test for *M. ovi* (the causative agent for pneumonia in bighorn sheep), Bluetongue/Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease, and Psoroptes mites. In late August biologists from the Confederated Tribes investigated six of their radio-collared bighorn sheep that had died within the Mount Hull and the Omak Lake herds and tested positive for the Bluetongue virus. As such, it is suspected that Bluetongue is the cause of death for the five mortalities found in September as well. The Bluetongue virus is transmitted through biting midges (*Culicoides spp.*), and the outbreaks generally stop after the first hard frost kills the biting midge host.



Radio-collared Mount Hull Bighorn sheep ram mortality – Photo by J. Heinlen

Deer Disease Management: Biologist Fitkin investigated and collected samples from two deer mortalities in the Methow Watershed that are suspected to have been caused by hemorrhagic diseases (Bluetongue/EHD). The first was a mule deer doe in fair body condition and the second was white-tail buck in otherwise excellent condition. Both died within a few miles of Winthrop. If the tests from these animals come back positive for Bluetongue or EHD it will be the farthest west, we have confirmed the presence of hemorrhagic disease during this outbreak. Biologist Fitkin also responded to a request from a hunter concerned about a potentially diseased animal taken during the high hunt. Veterinarian Mansfield was able to quickly diagnose the suspicious dark lumps as simply hemal lymph nodes and indicated the carcass should be fine for consumption.



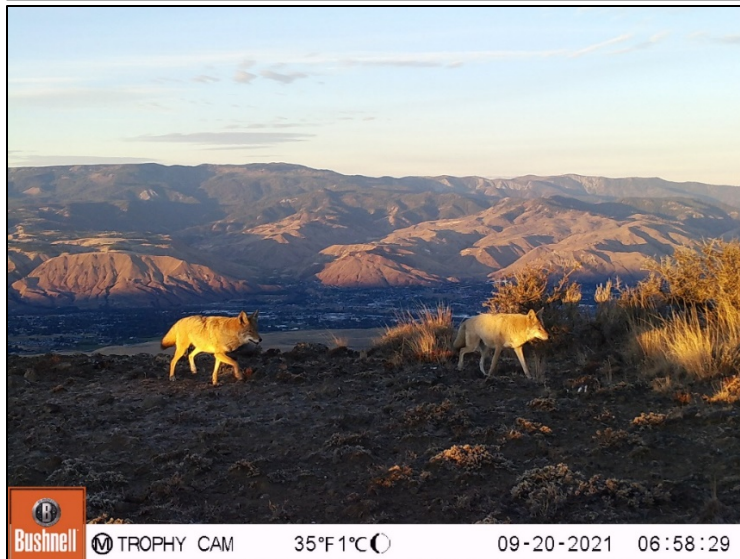


From top: Mule deer exhibiting Bluetongue/EHD symptoms, hemal lymph nodes along the trachea of a harvested mule deer – Photos by S. Fitkin

Biologist Rowan received preliminary test results from veterinary staff members concerning the dead mule deer buck found south of Ritzville a couple weeks ago. The deer tested positive for Bluetongue virus with additional tests being performed. Bluetongue virus is spread between deer through biting gnats, which more easily transmit the virus to deer when they are aggregated around fewer bodies of water during droughts. Domestic livestock are also susceptible to Bluetongue, so owners should be mindful of congregations near water sources.

Pygmy Rabbit Vaccination Effort: The focus of the past couple of weeks has been to address the emerging threat of rabbit hemorrhagic fever (RHDV2). To date, RHDV2 has not been detected yet in Washington, but is present in every other western state, Canada, and Mexico. This disease has the potential to decimate native lagomorph populations. WDFW has in hand the vaccine for this disease and has been vaccinating all the breeding enclosure rabbits and the kits being released into the wild. A bigger challenge has been addressing the vulnerability of the wild pygmy rabbit populations to this disease. Our team conducted two trapping efforts in the Sagebrush Flat and Beezley Hills populations and vaccinate every rabbit captured. Over four days of effort, we captured 20 wild pygmy rabbits, vaccinating 19 of them (one escaped transfer). A WDFW vet technician administered the shot and monitored them for any negative reaction. All rabbits did well and were returned to their burrow of capture. Efforts will continue into the late fall and winter to capture and vaccinate additional rabbits.

Golden Eagles: Biologists Jeffreys and Comstock baited the camera trap in the Badger Mountain area with one more fresh roadkill carcass. This is part of an effort to eventually attach a GPS transmitter to one of the adult golden eagles occupying the breeding territory within the footprint of a proposed solar facility. This particular eagle pair has successfully fledged offspring for multiple years. By attaching a GPS transmitter to one of the adults, biologists hope to gain a better understanding of the eagles' movements throughout their territory and the area proposed for development. One adult golden eagle was captured on camera visiting the carcass during this second monitoring period, but only for about an hour on the first day. Since the eagle didn't return, it may be a migrant passing through the area rather than one of the resident adults. Golden eagles in Washington make short distance migratory movements at this time of year, and given the low eagle activity observed at this site it is likely the resident adults have temporarily moved elsewhere. For this reason, biologists will resume capture efforts in the late winter/early spring when the adults return to their breeding territory.



Top to bottom: An adult/late subadult golden eagle feeds on the bighorn sheep carcass and two coyotes set off the camera at sunrise – Photos by Emily Jeffreys and Devon Comstock

Columbia Basin Waterfowl Management: District staff members wrapped up waterfowl banding efforts with a total of 583 ducks trapped and banded, with 377 being mallards, and the rest consisting of northern pintails, teal, redheads, and wooducks. Staff members spent time removing traps, cleaning equipments, organizing trapping equipment, and organizing data.



View from the rocket net blind – Photo by Sean Dougherty

Bumblebees: Biologist Rowan spent time labeling plant photos and entering data for the two bumblebees surveys that took place earlier in the month. Biologist Dougherty concluded bumblebees surveys this year with success. There were two sites surveys, both of which were surveyed previously with no bumblebees observed. During this round of surveys there were bumblebees observed at both sites, but only captured at one of the sites.



Bumblebee captured during surveys – Photo by Sean Dougherty



American Spanish fly (Lytta vulnerata) observed while surveying for bumblebees – Photo by Sean Dougherty

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Bighorn Sheep: The “any ram” special permit holders for the Swakane and Chelan Butte A hunts have now all successfully harvested rams, and all rams have been sealed by Biologists Comstock and Jeffreys. The Chelan Butte B any ram hunt is next up for District 7 with a starting date of October 11, and the Manson any ram hunt will begin on November 9. In the meantime, juvenile ram and adult ewe hunts will be taking place in Chelan Butte and Swakane.



A successful Chelan Butte permit holder – Photo by Mark Beardemphl

Hunter Access Program: Private Lands Biologist Braaten spent many hours reposting private lands hunter access properties within the Pearl Hill wildfire boundary. Hundreds of signs need to be replaced before hunting seasons begin. Work is ongoing.



Private Lands Biologist Braaten posting private lands Hunter Access Program signs in Douglas County

Hunter Access Corn Stubble Program: Biologist Cook has completed a Hunt by Written Permission agreement in the Benge area of Adams County, that adds additional acres to a property previously available to hunters. Cook has contacted the landowner and begun the process for a Feel Free to Hunt property near Warden. Several hunters contacted Biologist Cook last year and expressed their desire for a return of fields participating in the Corn Stubble program. Cook has contacted a few landowners interested in offering corn fields for waterfowl hunting. Harvested corn fields will be signed under the Waterfowl Habitat and Access Program, which will seem similar to the Corn Stubble program offered in previous years. These fields should offer additional opportunities mainly for geese later in the season. These fields will be offered under the Private Lands Hunt by Reservation online system and will require onsite registration. A few of these sites may be part of the pilot of electronic registration using a cell phone rather than paper cards. The paper cards will be available at these sites as well, as an alternative and backup method.

Pheasant Hunting: Biologist Rowan worked with fellow staff members in District 5 and the WDFW Pheasant Farm to release hundreds of game-farm raised pheasants at our release sites. These birds were released just prior to the youth hunt. Biologist Rowan also spent time responding to hunter inquiries regarding the upcoming hunting seasons and directing them to the many resources found on our WDFW website for most general information. Hunters should check out the “[Hunting](#)” tab on the website, where there is great information on each district, including lands to access, harvest data, and an interactive map tool.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Scotch Creek Riparian Restoration Project and Scope Change: Staff members built and wove four new beaver dam analogs (BDAs) in the Scotch Creek Riparian Restoration Project. In total, 15 BDAs have been constructed in the ½-mile-long project area. Weave material (limbs) for the four BDAs were collected off the Chopaka Unit. The project is grant funded through the Recreation and Conservation Office. Staff members also submitted a scope change to the Recreation and Conservation Office to include a seasonal stream on the Chesaw Wildlife Unit. If the scope change is approved, funds from the Scotch Creek Riparian Restoration project can be used to install instream structures in the seasonal stream to restore riparian function.



Staff members using a mini excavator and compactor plate to set the posts for the instream structures – Photo by Dupont



Left to right: Scotch Creek field pro Medina weaving the Douglas Fir branches through the structure and a finished structure in the creek holding water back, lifting the water table, and providing much better conditions for riparian plantings survive and thrive – Photos by Dupont

Sinlahekin and Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Noxious Weed Control Efforts: Sinlahekin staff members continued to clip seed heads and hand pull various noxious weeds on some of the Sinlahekin Units. The amount of hand pulling need has been reduced in certain areas due to the continued treatment of these noxious weeds. Staff members also continued to clip seed heads and hand pull various noxious weeds on some of the Sinlahekin Units. Staff members found a new infestation of common teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*) on one of the wildlife area units and clipped the seed heads. Next spring, they will go back to the area and do an herbicide treatment. Scotch Creek staff members continued weed control efforts on the Chesaw Unit. In total approximately 1,000 acres of the unit have been covered. Weed densities have been low this year due to drought and previous years control efforts. Approximately 15 gallons of Musk Thistle seed heads have been picked to date, down significantly from previous years. WDFW personnel will continue weed control efforts in coming weeks.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Forb Planting: Staff members completed weed control efforts in Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) forb planting project area. The project area, located northwest of Strawberry Lake, will be the site of planting approximately 1,500 forb plugs to improve big game forage. Planting will be completed in the fall of 2021. This project is funded by RMEF with weed control of the project area used for a match.



Medina planting forbs on the Chesaw Unit – Photo by Dupont

Wetland Forage Seed Biomass Survey: Specialist McPherson collected vegetation samples from wetland basins in the TD-1 project. This will be the fifth year of this sampling effort; it highlights our ability to grow substantial waterfowl forage through moist soil management techniques. Millet was planted later than usual this year so Specialist McPherson could conduct heavy tillage before planting. Just upon visual inspection, McPherson has noticed late planting encourage a good millet response.



Biomass sample of all millet in cell 2 of TD-1 – Photo by C. McPherson

Royal Lakes Wetland Project Aerial: Wildlife Area staff members worked with contractor to treat 150 acres of Phragmites and Russian olives in the Royal Lakes area. This aerial treatment will assist in future removal of target species in areas of application. Russian olives and Phragmites can thrive in wetland areas and treatment of these are typically the first steps of starting any wetland restoration or enhancement project.

Beaver Relocation Facility Inspection: Biologist Jeffreys joined Assistant Furbearer Biologist Behling in completing an inspection of the Wenatchee-Entiat Beaver Project's temporary holding facility at the Leavenworth Fish Hatchery. The Wenatchee-Entiat Beaver Project, a partnership between Trout Unlimited and the Fish and Wildlife Service, focuses on re-establishing beaver populations where appropriate, installing beaver dam analogs to approximate some of the many ecological services of beavers, and working with landowners to trap beavers at conflict areas and relocate them to suitable watersheds where the beavers can thrive. Beavers are highly family-oriented with live-in family units consisting of the parents, young of the year (kits), and sometimes subadults from the previous year's litter. Biologists strive to keep beaver family units together when relocation is necessary, but it may take more than one day to trap all members of the family. A temporary holding facility allows biologists to safely contain beavers during this process, and these facilities must meet strict requirements to ensure adequate shelter, food, security, and cleanliness. The Wenatchee-Entiat Beaver Project's facility at the Leavenworth Fish Hatchery met all requirements, and Biologist Jeffreys observed a newly captured family of beavers that were to be relocated within a few days swimming, grooming, feeding on fresh alder branches, and resting in a sturdy lodge during her inspection.



A beaver kit enters the temporary lodge to join its parents and two siblings – Photo by Emily Jeffreys

Providing Education and Outreach

Jeff Corwin Show: Producers from the Jeff Corwin Show “Conservation Nation” reached out to WDFW and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) about their show filming our work with the pygmy rabbits. We hosted their film crew on September 30 during our capture/vaccination efforts in Beezley Hills. Luckily everything went smoothly; we caught lots of rabbits, had good weather, and the film crew jumped right in to filming our work. If selected, this could be aired nationally next year. While it was a lot of work and stressful, it was a great experience to have the film crew out to highlight our work.



Left to right: What a film production crew looks like behind the scenes and Coordinator Gallie sneaking a photo of Jeff Corwin while discussing the shots

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Methow Wildlife Area Planning Meeting: Lands Operations Manager Haug, Methow Wildlife Area Manager Troyer, and District Wildlife Biologist Fitkin met with WDFW Planner Vigue to discuss the timeline and process for drafting the Methow Wildlife Area Management Plan. They also discussed the Pilot Recreation Plan for the wildlife area and met at the Lewis Butte trailhead where a number of different issues intersect, which made for great conversation about both plans. The internal kickoff event is scheduled for early November and Wildlife Area Advisory Committee meeting to follow in December at public meeting early in 2022.

Other

Elk Rescue: Officer Boyd and Biologist Jeffrey responded to a call from a Malaga landowner reporting a bull elk entangled in a barbed wire fence. The bull was unable to free himself and had almost certainly been struggling for hours given his state of exhaustion and how badly he was entangled. Officer Boyd darted the elk with a tranquilizer, and within seven minutes the bull was fully sedated. Officer Boyd, Biologist Jeffrey, and several neighboring landowners worked to cut away all the wire from the bull's antlers. Fortunately, the barbed wire was only wrapped around the antlers and not the body of the elk, which could have caused grave injury. In addition to the large amount of barbed wire wrapped around its antlers, the elk had been dragging a wooden fence post and many yards of wire still attached to the fence. After all of this was cut off and moved a distance away from the elk, Officer Boyd used another drug to reverse the sedative, and within half an hour the bull was on his feet and walking around. The elk had sustained quite a few minor abrasions to his antlers and body, but no deep cuts or other injuries were observed. The elk soon walked over a hill and out of sight to freedom, hopefully never again to get entangled in one of the many, many miles of wire fence in the area.



Officer Boyd and neighboring landowners work to cut the barbed wire off the elk's antlers –

Photo by Emily Jeffrey



Biologist Jeffreys applies eyedrops to the unconscious elk to keep its eyes moist and free of debris while it is sedated – Photo by Officer Eric Boyd

Other Photos:



*White-tailed Ptarmigan (*Lagopus leucura rainierensis*) in its alpine habitat* – Photo by J. Heinlen



Mormon Metalmark (Apodemia mormo) butterflies in WDFW District 6 – Photo by J. Heinlen



Staff members observed and documented a Great Grey owl, traveling to the working site in the Okanogan Highlands. The owl appeared to be this year young, potentially dispersing from the nest site – Photo by Dupont





Photos above from the Chesaw Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area – Photo by Justin Haug



Mule deer buck in Douglas County



Sandhill Cranes in the Winchester Regulated Access Area – Photo by C. McPherson

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Duck Banding: District Wildlife Biologists Moore and Waddell continued duck banding operations in Whatcom County. Moore believes that the dry summer has really impacted local production, which made trapping ducks early this season very difficult. During the second week of September there was an obvious push of birds from more northern areas that made trapping efforts more successful. Duck banding is an annual project WDFW undertakes to assist the Pacific flyway in reaching a banding quota. Data gained from these efforts is used to inform the annual regulation-setting process for the duck harvest season, which includes allowable season lengths as well as daily and possession bag limits.



Biologist Moore releases a newly banded female mallard in Whatcom County – Photo by R. Waddell

Marbled Murrelets in Whatcom County: District Wildlife Biologist Waddell worked with WDFW Wildlife Biologists Desimone and Bell along with Whatcom County Public Works employee Fox to survey the location of a proposed hiking trail east of Lake Whatcom for suitable nest trees that might be used by state endangered marbled murrelets. The crew located suitable trees along the western boundary of a site that has documented use by murrelets, so the county can make adjustments to the trail's location, as needed, to minimize disturbance to murrelets during the nesting period.



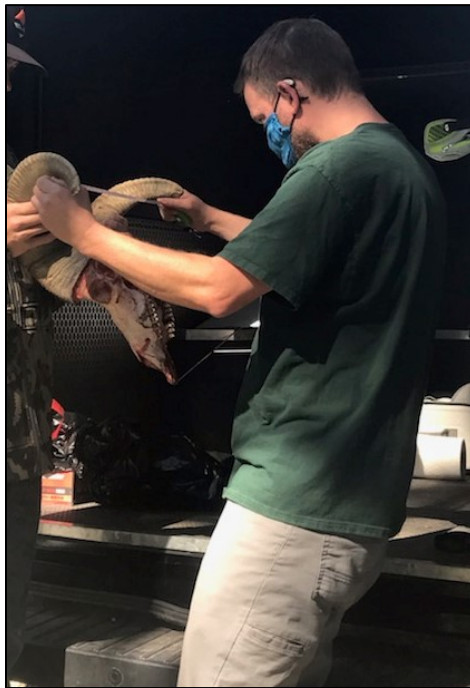
WDFW Biologist Desimone looks for trees suitable for use by nesting marbled murrelets –
Photo by R. Waddell

Forest Grouse Population Index: District 12 put out and have checked the three barrel sites in the district. Across all sites the district is averaging roughly one wing per day from start of September 15 through September 28.

Elk Hoof Disease Monitoring: Biologist Anderson met with Elk Hoof Technician Mortensen to assist in grabbing crate at the Region 4 office and then taking to collection site (DNR parking lot and garage in center of town – 201 E. 2nd Street, North Bend 98045).

Status and Trends Reporting: Biologists Anderson and Smith worked with Ungulate Section, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and District 11 to finalize needs for data updates to North Rainier Elk Herd Status and Trends.

Harvest Inspections: Biologist Anderson pinned a juvenile (2.5-year-old) ram from the Umtanum area. The ram was taken by a youth hunter.



WDFW King County District Biologist Anderson measuring and entering data with hunter assist

Protected Wildlife Management: Biologist Anderson is working with Habitat Program and a couple municipalities regarding planning needs for take in osprey and red-tailed hawk nesting situations in the near future. Anderson also worked with the Wildlife Diversity Division to provide voluntary recommendations to assist in avoidance of any potential take of peregrine falcons at Snoqualmie Falls due to a project that is proposed during the non-breeding season, when interactions are less likely and unpredictable in nature.

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Middle Fork and Pratt Wild and Scenic River Consultation: Biologist Anderson has been in ongoing discussions regarding WDFW input and collaboration in current efforts regarding the draft Comprehensive River Management Plan (CRMP) for the Middle Fork and Pratt Wild and Scenic River area. Anderson has provided input regarding occurrences and habitat; and recommended due diligence management considerations be examined, where appropriate, for state Species of Greatest Conservation Needs. Species and their habitat within this special management area are being examined by USFS to strike a balance of human use overlapping with wildlife use; so as to retain species and overall biodiversity within any given species' sensitive areas/times in relation to increasing recreation and related projects supporting such – river use, wildlife watching, camping, hiking, etc. Hats off to USFS for their very thorough approach in current draft efforts.

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education



Recent West Seattle bald eagle report that ended well – reporting party contacted rehabbers per communication with staff members and partners. Once it fell from tree (where unattainable) the bird was nabbed by rehab volunteer and derelict fishing line and likely crab bat cut off. Bird inspected and let go. Don't let your fishing gear “ghost fish” or entangle wildlife - clean it up. Report derelict gear [here](#)

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Spencer Island Tour: Project Coordinator Brokaw, Habitat Program staff members, Snohomish County and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff members toured Congressman Rick Larsen around the Spencer Island Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. Congressman Larsen is interested in a future project on the unit that will better connect the interior of the island with the surrounding estuary to benefit salmon and other estuarine species.



Congressman Larsen discussing Spencer Island with WDFW and Snohomish County staff members

Providing Education and Outreach

Deer Feeding Brochure: District Biologists Waddell and Moore worked with statewide WDFW Wildlife staff members to develop a downloadable brochure on the impacts of feeding urban and suburban deer. The brochure highlights how feeding deer in your backyard can negatively impact both deer and people. The public can view and download this brochure [here](#).

Impacts of feeding deer in urban and suburban areas

Many well-meaning Washington residents in urban and suburban areas enjoy feeding deer in their yards, especially during winter months. Although some people see this type of feeding as helping these animals, it actually can hurt them and potentially cause illness and death for the animal.

Wildlife adapt to survive winter months without our help

Many people believe that deer lack good natural food sources during winter and therefore need supplemental food to survive. However, these animals have remarkable abilities to survive winter conditions without human help, including:

- Growing insulating guard hairs and underfur
- Storing fat
- Changing their diet to fibrous, woody browse
- Migrating to areas with less snow and better feed
- Lowering their metabolic rates
- Conserving energy by restricting movements during severe weather

Keep deer wild – backyard feeding does more harm than good.

Feeding urban and suburban deer can be harmful

Feeding wildlife can cause serious health issues for the animals and negatively effect you and your neighbors. WDFW discourages feeding deer in urban and suburban areas for several reasons:

- Deer digestive systems are well adapted to handle natural forage. Although these animals will eat feed that humans provide, carbohydrate-rich foods like fruit, grains, and corn aren't normally part of their natural diet, especially during winter, and can cause serious health problems.
- The high amount of sugars in fruit, grain, and corn rapidly ferments in the stomach, causing an over-production of acid and damage to the stomach lining. Acid and bacterial toxins can then leak into the bloodstream, causing a painful death.
- Feeding urban and suburban deer can increase negative human-wildlife interactions and result in unintended consequences for the animal and your community. Specific examples include: increased risk of vehicle collisions; increased aggression towards pets and people; increased risk of disease transmission; increased dependency on humans for food and a loss of normal, wild behavior; increased negative impacts to wildlife diversity and abundance; and increased damage to fences, gardens, and ornamental plants and trees.




Photo credit: Greg Green

- Supplemental feeding may attract carnivores, such as bears, cougars, and coyotes that may prey upon wild animals using a feed site or nearby pets or farm animals. Encounters between humans and large carnivores are typically rare, but feeding deer creates the potential for unnecessary and avoidable conflict between humans and predators. This may cause a dangerous situation for people and result in an animal being euthanized.

Though WDFW may conduct large-scale deer feeding programs in certain areas, primarily in winter, these are only done under very specific conditions. For more information on these programs or to discuss deer feeding in general, please contact your local District Wildlife Biologist or Wildlife Conflict Specialist.

Leque Island Video Shoot: Project Coordinator Brokaw and Habitat Biologist Lindsey Desmul spent a day with video production company Caravan Labs shooting footage to be part of a short documentary about Leque Island. They held interviews with the Leque family, an avid birder on the site, and got footage of the site itself.



The video crew from Caravan Lab along with WDFW staff members Lindsey Desmul and Loren Brokaw – Photo by John Leque

Leque Island Pet Waste Campaign: Staff members from partner group Sound Salmon Solutions cleaned up pet waste and provided education and outreach to people using the Leque Island berm trail in an effort to improve the likelihood of people cleaning up after their pets. This week they found 17 pet waste piles, which is slight improvement from 22 piles found the previous week.



The Sound Salmon Solutions pet waste educators in action at Leque Island

REGION 5

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Game Management Plan Development: Regional Wildlife Program Manager Jonker along with wildlife biologists, conflict specialists, and the private lands biologist consolidated regional input for consideration in development of the Game Management Plan. Game Management Division staff members will review input from all six WDFW Regions and then develop a survey designed to generate public comments and input. The combination of input from WDFW staff members and the public will be used to update the plan and guide the management of all of Washington's hunted species for many years. Watch the WDFW website for opportunities to provide input. The existing Game Management Plan can be found [here](#).

Mule Deer Collar Retrieval: Biologist Wickhem investigated a radio-collared deer mortality that occurred over the weekend. Unfortunately, it took a few days to get permission from the landowner and very little of the carcass remained by the time she arrived. The cause of death could not be determined. The radio-collar was retrieved and will be put out on another deer this coming winter. Between January and March of 2021, 81 mule deer does were radio-collared as part of a project to learn more about mule deer migration, corridors, and wintering areas which is funded by [Secretarial Order 3362](#). Another goal of this project specific to the deer collared in GMUs 388 and 382 is to attempt to determine cause of mortality when we are able to reach the carcass soon enough.



The remains of Mule Deer #440

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Access Sites: Access staff members worked on cleaning up two fallen trees at County Line Access Site. One of the trees fell across a fence and onto private property damaging their fence. Access staff members communicated with the homeowner and with their permission, Access staff members were able to go onto their property to clean and cut up the tree. There was also one tree that was hung up in another tree. The fish management staff members working at County Line volunteered to use their forklift to lift out the hazard tree and within minutes the tree was set down safely. A huge thank you to the staff working at County Line Access for their assistance.



County Line Access

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Grazing Permit Monitoring: Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven visited a grazing permit area on the Fisher Hill Unit to check range condition and confirm that the animals are off the pasture as specified in the permit. No cattle were observed and use of the range was light with most of the forage untouched. This year’s drought may have limited water availability to a point where the cattle were forced to move out early.

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Turtle Pond Water Levels: Two of the main ponds on the Sondino Unit were dry as of September 30. Pond B is usually a perennial pond, but the past two years it has gone dry by the beginning of October. Fortunately Pond C still contains approximately 24 inches of water and Balch Lake has a small pool. Wildlife Area Manager cleaned and waxed the enameled plates on the water gauges to make them easier to read.



Pond B Gauge

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Sondino Unit Ditch and Roadside Brush Clearing: To improve water delivery to an important turtle pond on the Sondino Unit, a crew from the Larch Corrections Camp cut and pulled aside blackberry vines and small trees from the ditch that serves the pond. This is the first stage in removal of vegetation from the ditch. The plan is for the work to be finished using a backhoe or excavator this fall. The Larch crew also cut back overgrown brush and trees that were encroaching on a county road adjacent to WDFW property.



Clearing brush from fence line along Balch Road

Cowlitz Wildlife Area – Habitat Management: Wildlife area staff members have installed a rock barrier on the Spears Unit. The barrier creates a designated parking area and prevents unauthorized motor vehicles from entering vegetated areas and those areas where revegetation to improve habitat conditions is planned. Historically, members of the public have used this location to conduct off-road activities like “mudding.” The public still has non-motorized access and public day use has increased since the wildlife area has taken actions to make the area more attractive.



Rock barrier around the Spears Unit parking area