

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

May 16 to 31, 2022

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Bird Excluders: Earlier this spring, northeast Region 1 Access Manager Dziekan received a call that a small bird had flown into a fishing line recycling tube and become entangled (thankfully the person got the little bird unstuck without injury). Dziekan fabricated bird excluders by cutting holes into purchased drain covers and mounting them onto the top of the monofilament recycling tubes located at some of his Access Areas. The new lids have the added benefit of making the openings too small to shove most garbage in the tube, which means less time spent cleaning fishing line to be recycled.



Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

2022 Grazing Season Preparation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett worked with five producers on grazing plans for their prospective allotments. Information on budget information, requirements, and updates from the winter were shared. Collar data was also shared with producers with possible denning activity in their allotment.

Range Rider Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett continued season planning with six potential range riders on possible assignments and contract changes. This included deployment of InReach devices.

Contract Range Rider: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb spoke with a perspective range rider about the interest in riding in the Blue Mountains. Although the individual had turned in an application, they informed Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb that they had taken a different position in Northeast Washington and were no longer interested in riding for WDFW.

Non-Lethal Deterrent Research Project Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett worked with several stakeholders on research being conducted to look at the efficacy of range riding. Completion of a plan and data sheet for range riders were completed.

State Line Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb and Natural Resource Technician Rimmelspacher deployed fladry in multiple fields near the Washington/Oregon state line to deter elk calving near commercial crops. The fladry deployment is temporary and will be used in conjunction with other non-lethal measures to mitigate near-term crop damage. Fladry deployment within portions of the Blue Mountains has been shown to change elk movement patterns for a short duration of time (two-four weeks).



Fladry deployed directly on the Washington/Oregon border

Elk Hazing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb also hazed elk along the Washington/Oregon border multiple times throughout the week to mitigate damage to commercial crops.



A small group of elk moving out of a wheat field and into the tree line after being hazed

Direct Loss Damage Claim: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb traveled to a Columbia County producer's residence to obtain a signature on the last day that a direct loss damage claim due to wolves would be paid by the department. The producer had previously sent the signed paperwork in but had mistakenly sent it to the Office of Financial Management. Everything was able to be sorted out with a couple of hours to spare.

Grouse Flats Elk: Natural Resource Technician Rimmelspacher traveled to the area multiple times this week. Rimmelspacher hazed over 300 head of elk from a commercial hay field in the area. Rimmelspacher also placed mineral blocks on the neighboring wildlife area, in attempt to draw the elk away from the hay crop. Wade followed up with the farmer who is managing the hay field.



Herds of elk being hazed away from the hay field

Producer Check-ins: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb spoke with numerous producers about recent turnout of livestock and provided updates on known wolf activity.

Conflict Prevention: Natural Resources Technicians Barron and Janowski completed the report for an unconfirmed depredation investigation. Barron and Janowski also wrote reports for bear and cougar incident calls that had been completed last week. The technicians searched for dropped very high frequency (VHF) ear tags in a U.S. Forest Service grazing allotment and set up a radio-activated guard box near where the cattle are hanging around in the allotment. Technicians Janowski and Barron responded to a bear breaking into chicken coup report and installed electric fencing around coup to deter the bear from returning.



Technicians also delivered two bear garbage cans to a landowner in Pend Oreille that has grizzly bears eating his dog food. Technician Barron deployed fox lights to deter a cougar that has been hanging around a cattle pasture. Barron also picked up a scare pistol that had been loaned out for hazing geese. Barron checked trail cameras loaned out to a producer for wolf monitoring and picked up fox lights.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Habitat Plantings: Private Lands Supervisor Earl visited some habitat establishment planting. With all the moisture, the forbs are really starting to grow well.



Food plot seeded this spring

Farm Bill: Biologist Baarstad completed field evaluations for Conservation Reserve Program-State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (CRP-SAFE) contracts; completed 12 contracts and submitted them to the Lincoln County U.S. Department of Agriculture office.

Weed Spraying: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area staff members have been busy spraying weeds at Swanson Lakes, Reardan Audubon, and Revere Wildlife Areas. They found a patch of phragmites on one end of the actual Swanson Lakes and are working hard to nip this new infestation in the bud.



Natural Resources Technician Wagner spraying phragmites at the west Swanson Lake

Providing Education and Outreach

Middle School River Rendezvous Presentation: Private Lands Supervisor Earl, Officer Sabo, and Officer Silver presented to six different groups of 8th graders at Hells Gate State Park. Various aspects of all jobs available at WDFW were covered.



Officers Sabo and Silver discussing various aspects of their jobs

Reardan Kiosk Installation: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area staff members are coordinating with the Reardan High School shop class for finishing the last few touches on the kiosk at the third parking lot at Reardan Audubon Wildlife Area. The last task remaining is installing the reader board between the left and right posts, as the frame and roof are now in place.

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

New Employee: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch has hired a new seasonal natural resources technician, Cody Wagner. His first day on the job was May 17. Cody is a graduate of Creston High School and has completed his freshman year at University of Idaho studying Wildlife Management. Welcome to WDFW, Cody!

Office Security Improvements: Finch and Wagner installed a Ring security camera on the office and main shop at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. The real-time video alerts their phones when motion is detected. The cameras also include a speaker/microphone, which have already proven useful beyond security needs. Recently Wagner was at the shop and Finch was in the office and Finch saw through the camera that an additional task needed to be performed, so they had a remote discussion on the spot.



Natural Resources Technician Wagner installing camera at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area office



Phone view from Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area shop

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Streaked-Horned Lark Survey – King County: Biologist Anderson conducted the first of three occupancy surveys for federal (Threatened) and state (Endangered) streaked-horned lark. Survey was conducted at Boeing Field International Airport. No target species but Anderson had many Savannah Sparrow (some territorial, some migratory) all over the site; a handful of state listed (Endangered) Oregon vesper sparrow flocked-up in one portion of the airfield along with an American Pipit that all appeared migratory; and resident crow and various gull species. It is a good survey but no target species.



Savannah Sparrow watching Air Force 2 takeoff (or multiple Lear Jets). Loudest bird survey ever! – Photo by C. Anderson, WDFW



Not wildlife but Air Force 2, along with perhaps 20 other Lear jets, did have an influence on the progression of wildlife survey – temporary stall and wait for lift-off – Photo by C. Anderson, WDFW

Island Marble Butterfly (IMB) Habitat Tour and Management: Biologist Licence and Diversity Division staff members participated in the annual IMB Habitat Tour to showcase private land habitat projects; to discuss successes, challenges, and unanswered questions; and to engage new landowners. On all accounts it was a successful event. Licence and partners also identified the first IMB eggs of the season at American Camp (NPS) and assisted the Department of Natural Resources with host plant monitoring as well as mitigating recreation impacts associated with a new fox den within IMB habitat attracting a lot of attention/potential disturbance. See also the [San Juan Islander article](#) for more information.



IMB egg on a Brassica rapa host plant and Habitat Tour participants appreciating a well-constructed fence to reduce deer herbivory on a host plant patch – Photos by K. Licence

Bald Eagle Rescue and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influence (HPAI) Confirmed Positive: In early May, Biologist Lincence responded to a report from a concerned member of the public regarding a bald eagle behaving “drunk” on Whidbey Island. Upon investigation, the eagle presented multiple signs of HPAI so it was captured for transport to a local permitted wildlife rehabilitator but died in transit. The eagle carcass was submitted to Washington State University’s Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory for further assessment and tested positive for HPAI. These results were confirmed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Veterinary Services Laboratory.



Sick bald eagle capture – Photos by M. Parry

Bald Eagle Rescue and Transport to Wildlife Rehabilitator: Biologist Moore responded to a call from Whatcom Wildlife Rehabilitation Center staff members of an injured eagle in Maple Falls, Whatcom County. The reporting party observed the bird on the ground for a lengthy period of time. When he went to investigate, he saw the bird was injured and promptly reported it. From preliminary observations it appears that the eagle may have been hit by a car. Bald eagles are one of North America’s largest birds and are slow to regain flight when on the ground. Motorists are encouraged to slow down and allow for birds on the road enough time to safely get out of the way to prevent a car strike. If a car strike does occur please report it to WDFW using our online [sick/dead/injured wildlife reporting tool](#) and contact a licensed wildlife rehabber in your area by searching [here](#).

Avian Influenza: Biologist Anderson has retained birds for testing from King County and kept in contact with Wildlife Health, Wildlife Rehabilitation, area rehabilitation, area affected municipalities, and area non-governmental organizations that have interest and outreach needs. Avian influenza is now, along with other west of Cascade Crest counties, also in King County in our wild and domestic birds. Find out more on our [WDFW Avian influenza webpage](#).

Bumble Bee Conservation – Bumble Bee Atlas – Xerces Society and WDFW: Biologist Anderson is gearing up for bumble bee survey in June – August in District 12. Anecdotally, Anderson has already had a nest of black-tailed bumble bees in a wren nesting box in his own yard this year and is needing report to the project. Bumbles have been anecdotally noticed as early as a yellow-faced bumble bee queen on January 1, 2022.



Black-tailed bumble bee worker (female) judging if it should come out of nest and nectar on various plants in yard including azaleas and weedy red deadnettle – Photo By C. Anderson, WDFW

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Issaquah Alps Trails Club – Annual Public Lands Forum 2022 – Wildlife in the Alps:

Biologist Anderson participated as one of the panelists for Issaquah Alps Trails Club (IATC) [Public Lands Forum](#), a multiple speaker presentation format regarding wildlife in the Issaquah Alps. Topics regarding the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) involved Species of Greatest Conservation Need, bear biology and coexistence techniques, reporting wildlife to WDFW, among other collaborative items that IATC can assist WDFW with.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Restoration at Leque Island: From 2013 through 2019, a collaborative project led by WDFW and Ducks Unlimited with support from partners restored 250 acres of tidal marsh habitat at Leque Island near Stanwood. The Leque Island Restoration Project is supporting Chinook salmon recovery and benefits shorebirds, waterfowl, and a variety of other fish and wildlife, and includes public access sites.

Now, scientists are finding salmon and other species using the restored marsh. Learn more in a new short film, [To the Tides: Restoration at Leque Island](#).

Western Toad Taxation Program in King County: Biologist Anderson worked with King County Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff members and a landowner to provide for acceptance of western toad use and regular presence on and around the subject property. This information was then applied towards permitting needs associated with the land being accepted into the [King County Public Benefit Rating System/Open Space Program](#). The land is now to be conserved for wildlife habitat with western toad being one of the major reasons for this reclassification of the land in working with King County DNR.

Western toad is a WDFW Species of Greatest Conservation Need. As natural landscapes where this species is found become fragmented and riddled with roads, this species drops out of local amphibian populations. We have seen this in lowland King County and now we are seeing it in other heavily developing counties in the Puget Trough. WDFW asks for reports of western toad and other wildlife in particular Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Please report on the [Report wildlife observations](#) page on our website.



Western toad around the vegetable garden; May 2022 – Photo by M. O'Brien

Providing Education and Outreach

Avian Disease Management Article for Echo Lake Newsletter: Biologist Licence provided an interview for the Echo Lake Community Newsletter regarding Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), Salmonella, and strategies community members can utilize to reduce transmission risk and report their observations. Multiple sightings of sick and dead birds associated with bird feeders and baths were reported in this general area throughout late April and early May 2022. An electronic version of this newsletter can be viewed [here](#) (article on page 7).

Living with Wildlife – Habitat at Home: Biologist Anderson participated in an [interview with Seattle Times](#) regarding support of natural habitat features and efforts to create habitat around one's property.

Bald Eagle Breeding Season Behavior: Biologist Anderson, Research Scientist Watson, partners with PAWS Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, and Urban Raptor Conservancy all teamed-up with media to provide [outreach on bald eagle behavior](#). The piece focused on local eagle breeding season shenanigans. Often eagles can get entangled with each other during courtship flights in early season and then also with territorial chases and antagonistic response to intruder eagles that come into an active territory as breeding progresses. The latter was the case in this piece – a chase that most likely was reiterating “you don't belong here – mine” by a territorial individual and an intruder. They wound up on the ground and it made for periodic media photos and outreach opportunity of what exactly are these birds doing – don't panic – if they seem unharmed and are just doing their thing – let nature take course as they are essentially arm wrestling for the prospect of keeping (or gaining) the territory.

Conducted Business Operations and Policy

State Protected Wildlife – Take Management: Biologist Anderson has been in ongoing contact regarding management of protected wildlife occurrences at the West Seattle Bridge emergency repairs (nesting [peregrine falcons](#) right in emergency construction work – using visual barriers and staged movements of novel structures that are at nest) and Deception Crag climbing wall (currently closed by [WA State Parks](#) and the U.S. Forest Service due to nesting falcons confirmed by WDFW) among other similar ongoing needs in the district.

Also, Anderson followed-up on an odd complete loss of nest/acute drenching of adult falcons, then eggs suddenly being gone at an urban grain facility along Seattle waterfront. Anderson visited with management and discussed how to keep falcons off of large structures and manage them appropriately with WDFW, non-government organizations that help monitor and place boxes, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Falcons are still using site for occupancy/territorial perch and feeding. Anderson discussed how to keep operations and maintenance moving if birds reoccupy and show active nesting. Management was very understanding and accepted that the birds may indeed now be a co-occupant. With a concentration of seven or so active falcon territories all on human infrastructure largely within Seattle city limits, WDFW tends get calls and requests for management needs regarding this species annually within urban areas like Seattle.



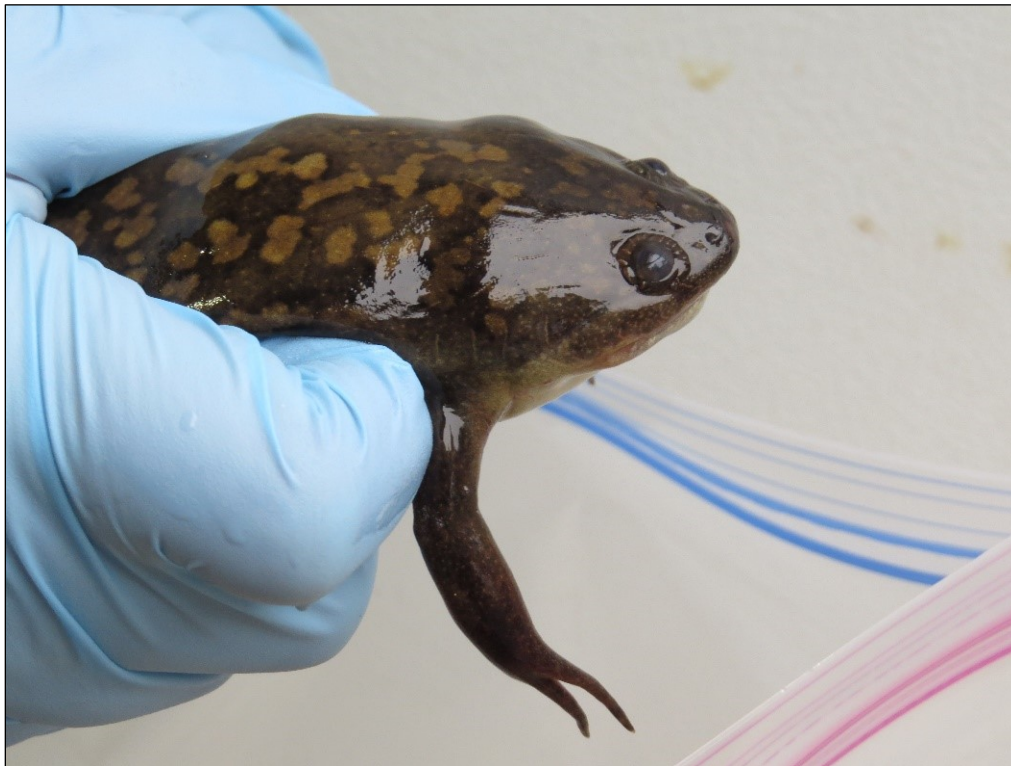
Adult peregrine falcon waiting to relieve partner on nest. Bridge deck work is conducted on hanging platform – the falcon nest is right up in the hanging platform/work site area of the bridge. It definitely took some adjustment on the birds' part but after the Department of Transportation implemented some mitigation measures, things are progressing well and no more divebombing of construction workers now! – Photo by C. Anderson, WDFW

African-clawed Frog Management and Occurrence in King County: Biologist Anderson has participated in ongoing discussions and a meeting regarding need to increase capacity for African-clawed frog work in Washington. With King County having multiple sites and with minimal effort producing more sites within the areas of known individuals, it is quite apparent that more effort is needed but staffing does not match. Legislative funding for this species and similar efforts is the current major challenge. Funding is more aligned to fish and marine species currently (e.g., European green crab, zebra/quagga mussel, etc.).

Kudos to the Fish Program Aquatic Invasive Species Section and Habitat Aquatic Research Section in ramping up efforts where possible and partnering for capture/containment efforts as well as eradication research. Find out more about this fascinating, but PROHIBITED (none in captive without permit from WDFW, none for sale, no transport across state lines, none in commerce and, to be blunt, none in Washington state period) species and its very unfortunate release here and what that means for Washington aquatic ecosystems and native species here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/invasive/xenopus-laevis>

Report non-native/invasive species at the link found mid-page: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/get-involved/report-observations>

Learn more about Aquatic Invasive Species in Washington here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/invasive>



African-clawed frog trapped in King County – Photo by C. Anderson, WDFW

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Western Pond Turtle: Biologist Butler and a dedicated group of staff members and volunteers began nest monitoring at the Pierce County recovery site. This year, 17 breeding size females were outfitted with transmitters. These turtles will be monitored every day from noon until 8:00 pm and if a turtle is found to be out of the ponds, they are closely observed for any signs of nesting. With the continued cold and rainy weather, there have not been any turtles found out of the ponds yet, but all the females have been observed basking. The first nest should be found any day now. Once a nest is found, a subset will be excavated and sent to the Woodland Park Zoo to support head-starting efforts and the remaining ones will be left in the ground to incubate naturally.



Female western pond turtles with transmitters – Photo by Brad Gill

Oregon Spotted Frog: Biologist Butler and technician Martenson conducted a second dip net survey at an Oregon spotted frog oviposition site. The purpose of this survey was to determine how Oregon spotted frog tadpoles moved across the site as water levels drop. Contrary to the previous survey, this time no Oregon spotted frog tadpoles were found during the effort, but red legged frog tadpoles were found. These surveys will continue every two weeks to track tadpole movements in relation to water level changes and hopefully improve the current mowing strategy to enhance tadpole survival.



Red legged frog tadpole

Western Pond Turtle: Biologist Butler, Program Manager Calkins, and Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) staff members met with the Squaxin Island Tribe Natural Resources and Cultural Resources staff members to discuss the upcoming fencing replacement project around the Pierce County western pond turtle recovery site. During the site visit, CAMP staff members discussed the various cultural resource surveys done and their findings as well as other permitting done for the project. In addition, current and future western pond turtle recovery plans were discussed as well as the habitat requirements needed for the turtle.



Biologist Butler shows a turtle nest to Squaxin Island Tribe staff members and WDFW CAMP staff members

Western Pond Turtle: Biologist Butler and Wildlife Program Manager Calkins met with Senator Nobles, Representatives Leavitt and Bronoske, and Woodland Park Zoo staff members for a site visit to discuss western pond turtle recovery efforts. The Washington State legislature recently provided funds for new fencing, soil amendment of the nest hill, shell disease research, and funds to control bullfrogs within the state. This site visit provided an on-the-ground look at where this money will be going and the impact it will have on pond turtle recovery and provided an opportunity to discuss the ongoing challenges of species recovery.



Biologist Butler explaining habitat requirements for pond turtle nesting

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Sol Duc River in Clallam County: The Water Access team has been working on numerous different activities outside of the routine maintenance. Water Access, Real Estate, Enforcement, and Department of Fish and Wildlife management have been working with a property owner near Forks for purchasing access on the Sol Duc River. This proposed acquisition is to secure boating access near the 16-mile mark of the river which has been temporarily lost at the Whitcomb Dimmel site from winter floods. There was a lot of extra work including after hours and a weekend by several (especially Lisa Coffman) to get this prepared for a Recreation and Conservation Office grant application with only two working days before the deadline. Thank you all!



Sol Duc River proposed acquisition for boating access and bank fishing

Failor Lake in Grays Harbor County: The Water Access team removed an abandoned boat and other dumped debris from the Failor Lake Access Road. Access staff members placed new signage to deter dumping after hours and encourage reporting of littering.



Failor Lake abandoned boat and debris removal; new signage placed

Duckabush in Jefferson County: Team Member Walker repaired a four-foot-deep sinkhole in the Duckabush parking area. The access crew members worked with a private contractor to remove several danger trees that were encroaching on the neighboring property. The roots of two maple trees were damaging the neighbors pumphouse and pushing the fence over an additional cluster of willows were removed from the same area because of internal trunk rot that often happens after the trees mature.



Sinkhole repair



Removal of danger trees

Many dump sites have been reported and picked up. This unfortunate trend has increased dramatically in recent months which is not only costly to WDFW but significantly impacts time and scheduling for the team's routine maintenance duties.



Dump sites

The Access team have been working with CAMP and Habitat staff members to schedule repair work on several access sites.