

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

Dec. 1 to Dec. 15, 2019

DIVERSITY DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nongame Technical Committee of the Pacific Flyway: Natural Resource Scientist Buchanan attended the second partners meeting hosted by the Nongame Technical Committee (NTC). Like the first meeting held five years ago, this meeting included partners from across the western United States, this time including western Canada and northwestern Mexico. The emphasis of the meeting was to identify priority issues involving nongame birds from the North American Pacific Flyway, identify roles and responsibilities, and to identify tangible tasks that would be the responsibility of the NTC. In the coming months the NTC will clarify and prioritize the tasks that seem most relevant to the NTC's role and responsibility. These tasks will ultimately be described and presented to council for their endorsement and will then comprise part of the NTC work plan for the coming five years. Partners in attendance included U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (regional representatives and Joint Ventures), NGOs and other organizations.

Red Knot: Natural Resource Scientist Buchanan organized and facilitated a conference call with three other leaders (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey) of a 2020 project focused on genetics and abundance of the two Red Knot genetic populations that migrate through Washington (Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay) during spring each year. This three-year project will include partners from several agencies and organizations in the United States, as well as partners from Mexico, Canada and the Netherlands.



Red knot marked in Mexico and re-sighted at Grays Harbor, Washington - Photo by J. Buchanan

Short-eared Owl Survey Project: Natural Resource Scientist Buchanan participated in regularly-schedule conference call to plan for the 2020 short-eared owl survey (otherwise known as Western Asio flammeus Landscape Study, or WAfLS). The upcoming survey will be the third year of this initiative in Washington. Eight western states are involved in this project: California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. All 50 survey locations in Washington are situated in the Columbia Basin. Joe Buchanan is the project coordinator for Washington.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this installment.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this installment.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this installment.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this installment.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Ungulate Specialist Garrison worked on several ongoing projects related to elk management in Washington. Garrison and Deer and Elk Section Manager Hoenes met with regional staff members to discuss and plan an elk capture to population Washington State University's hoof disease research facility. Garrison entered data from approximately 570 ungulate teeth for shipment to a third-party laboratory. Once analyzed, these teeth will provide valuable information to WDFW for ungulate management across the state. Garrison also continued work

on strategy development for an incentive program designed to encourage hunters to harvest diseased elk.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

The Wolf Advisory Group (WAG – made up of a diverse set of citizen stakeholders working collaboratively to provide recommendations to the department on wolf conservation and management) has four vacant positions. Wildlife Conflict Section Manager Dan Brinson participated on a panel to interview candidates interested in serving as members.

Statewide Wildlife Conflict Specialist Cole Caldwell worked with Cornell University on an ongoing project to develop Washington specific training for Wildlife Control Operators (WCO) using nationally recognized best practices outlined in the National Wildlife Control Training Program. This program is administered through a series of on-line courses that a new WCO would take in order to receive certification.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Nothing for this installment.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this installment.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this installment.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this installment.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Region 6 Coordinator Montgomery visited Kitsap Bow Hunters classes and presented service awards.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Regional Coordinator Elliott participated in the Region 5 Strategic Plan Workshop.

Coordinator Elliott had four newly certified instructors and set them up in the event manager system and sent them onboarding materials (information, contacts, logins, etc).

Regional coordinators Whorton, Garcia, Dazey, and Elliott coordinated logistics for a trial Skype Master Hunter Advisory Group (MHAG) meeting. With both MHAG and Instructor Advisory Committee (IAC) members statewide coming together quarterly in Ellensburg, weather is sometimes an obstacle. Skype meetings held in the regional offices could potentially allow the meetings to happen as scheduled even if travel across passes is not feasible.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

LANDS DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nothing for this installment.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Land Acquisitions: Phase two (560 acres) of the Grayland property near Westport was acquired Dec. 13 from Anderson and Middleton Logging Company using an Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) grant. We also recorded a Water Use and Access Agreement with the City of Westport since a portion of their municipal water supply comes from a well on the property. The property is quite diverse and includes saltwater estuarine habitats, old growth Douglas fir stands and cedar grove forests, and freshwater wetlands and ponds providing new hunting and other recreational opportunities. A celebration will be planned in the spring.

Pollinator Task Force: Vegetation Ecologist Merg provided his analysis of how the pollinator task force came to be to Conservation Section Assessment Manager Cotten, who represents WDFW on the task force. Merg also provided several sets of before/after pollinator-habitat project photographs to Cotton, to use in the introductory meeting of the task force.

Teanaway Community Forest: Range Ecologist Burnham delivered the 2019 grazing monitoring report to the Teanaway Community Forest Advisory Committee at their quarterly meeting. The committee had several comments about monitoring and outreach. Burnham also provided clarifications to the notes of the recent Grazing Technical Group, and with Habitat Program Biologist Meyer, adjusted the layout of proposed infrastructure in response to group input.

Grazing Permit Management: Range Ecologist Burnham coordinated next steps for a permit renewal on the Cowlitz Wildlife Area with manager Vanderlip and provided an updated grazing management plan, sent materials to Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area, and assisted with permit renewal procedures; and drafted an amendment and accompanying map for the grazing permit on the Big Bend Wildlife Area in hopes of increasing the Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) footprint on the wildlife area.

Spartina Management Coordination: Russell Nunez participated in the Willapa Bay Spartina Technical Advisory Group meeting and gave an update to the group regarding the season treatment totals.

Ecology Aquatic Weed Grant Support: Weed Coordinator Heimer wrote support letters for aquatic weed control projects for Clark County (Vancouver Lake) and DNR (Chehalis River Surge Plain) and a planning grant for San Juan County (Sportmans Lake). Heimer also helped the San Juan County weed coordinator calculate the ecology grant budget.

Aquatic Plant and Algae Management National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permit (NPDES) Reporting: Weed Coordinator Heimer compiled the required records from land managers and completed the annual reporting requirement for the NPDES Permit addressing treatment of submerged plants in lakes.

Forest Health Advisory Committee Meeting: Land Stewardship and Operations Section Manager Dahmer, Forest Lead Tveten, and Outreach Specialist Trendera participated in the committee meeting with representatives from conservation groups, the timber industry and other state and federal agencies to discuss coordination of future forest health efforts and a draft bill to generate funds for this state and federal priority.

Weigh Station Layout and Tree Marking: The Weigh Station Restoration Project is a thinning project over 94 acres of WDFW land and 100 acres of State Parks' land and involves tree cutting adjacent to the I-90 Cle Elum weigh station (I-90 exit 80) on the north and south sides of the freeway. WDFW owns the property on the north side of the freeway. The thinning project will result in: improved forest health, reduced wildfire risk in the Cle Elum/Suncadia Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), restoring stands to the "historic range of variability," and improved habitat for wildlife species.

Foresters Ruggirello, Mize, Hartmann, and Pfeifle marked leave trees throughout the WDFW portion of the project area. They marked larger diameter trees, primarily western larch, western white pine, ponderosa pine, and western red cedar with orange rings of paint to indicate to logging contractors not to cut them. This marking will shift the species composition of this forest away from Douglas-fir and grand fir dominance toward more drought- and fire-tolerant species, while also preserving western red cedar and western white pine – species that are not abundantly present on the east side of the cascades. The foresters also began to mark channel migration zones in the project area with flagging to ensure greater forest cover is left in areas where the Yakima River may have historically run.



The view of I-90 to the south from the bench where the WDFW portion of the Weigh Station Project is located shows the proximity of the project area to the highway, which is a high-risk source of fire starts. The community of Suncadia sits just beyond the northeast boundary of the project area.

Ramsey Creek Slash Pile Burning: WDFW personnel have completed burning slash piles across the Ramsey Creek project area on the Methow Wildlife Area. WDFW foresters Mize, Pfeifle, and Ruggirello had the support of wildlife area staff members to efficiently burn slash produced during the summer logging operations, thus effectively and efficiently removing the project's slash piles only months after their creation. All piles burned well and were 95 percent consumed within a couple hours of ignition. A prescribed fire is planned for these units in 2020.



There are beautiful views of the North Cascades from the Ramsey Creek restoration project



A particularly large slash pile burning

Wenas Wildlife Area, Cleman Ridge Restoration Thinning Project: Forester Mize completed first drafts of the project request for quotation (RFQ), Harvesting Services Contract, road plan, SEPA, Forest Practice Application, unit maps, vicinity maps and other pertinent documents. Forester Mize sent all this information to Wildlife Area Manager Confer-Morris for her review by Dec. 24. He also continues to work with Manager Confer-Morris and CAMP engineers to finalize details for a bridge design and implementation of a large woody debris project in Wenas

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

DNR Fire Prevention, Preparedness, Forest Health Agency Bill: Policy Lead Pamplin, Legislative Liaison McBride, and Land Stewardship and Operations Section Manager Dahmer met with DNR's state forester/policy lead and leg liaison to review and propose modifications to the language that would more equitably balance the opportunity for WDFW to receive appropriated funds for forest health activities including forest thinning and prescribed burning.

USFWS Section 7 Grazing Consultation: Range Ecologist Burnham and Land Stewardship and Operations Section Manager Dahmer coordinated with USFWS Grants Manager Hollis and Section 7 Manager Behan to further the ongoing consultation after receiving input from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding salmonids. USFWS has now requested that NMFS start formal consultation.

Candidate Interviews for New Biologist on Wenas Wildlife Area: Vegetation Ecologist Merg and Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky assisted Wildlife Area Manager Confer-Morris in interviewing six candidates for a new biologist position on the Wenas Wildlife Area. This new capacity is now possible with an increase in annual operations and maintenance funding from Bonneville Power for WDFW enrollments in its program to mitigate for the impacts on wildlife of federal dams on the Columbia River.

Mitigation Wildlife Area Spending Plan: Vegetation Ecologist Merg compiled requests from managers of those Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)-funded wildlife areas that were purchased with BPA funding. Merg developed a draft plan for spending the modest increase in operations and maintenance funding that will be available this year to those wildlife areas, and is preparing that spending plan for review.

7) Other

Airboating Magazine: Les Holcomb worked with Nicole Anderson to write an article about WDFW's new Diamondback Airboat for Airboating Magazine. The draft article was sent to Dave Heimer and Joe Buchanan for review and edits.

SCIENCE DIVISION

No report this period.

REGION 1

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Deer Mortality: Wildlife biologists Prince and Turnock investigated a white-tailed deer mortality on the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge. The doe was collared last winter as part of the Predator-Prey Project. She was found cached in a small grove of trees and biologists Prince and Turnock determined based on tracks and the scene that a cougar with at least one kitten had caused the doe's demise.

Moose Monitoring: Biologist Turnock checked several Department of Transportation cameras placed along main highways in District 1. These cameras are part of an effort to understand more about moose use of underpasses. However, the cameras will also collect photos of other animals crossing under heavily trafficked thoroughfares.

Wildlife Capture Planning: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill worked with district and research biologists to determine potential capture locations for an upcoming elk darting and collaring effort set to begin next week. Samsill contacted several landowners with elk damage to see if they have patterned elk coming in and if they are willing to allow WDFW staff members capture and collar elk on their properties.

Columbia Plateau Mule Deer Surveys: District 2 wildlife biologists Atamian and Lowe in coordination with biologists from Districts 4, 5, and 7 completed aerial and ground surveys in the Columbia Plateau Mule Deer Management Zone. Aerial surveys were focused in the Odessa sub-herd, while ground surveys covered all sub-herds. Weather was poor throughout the survey window, hampering both aerial and ground surveys. Data is still being entered, so no estimates to report yet.



Group of 26 mule deer in a field observed during aerial surveys



Doe and fawn group observed during ground surveys

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Hunting Clinic: Private Lands Biologist Gaston worked with WDFW Hunter Education Coordinator Garcia, WDFW Pheasant Program Coordinator White, the Spokane Chapter of Pheasants Forever, the First Hunt Foundation, and other volunteers to host an Upland Hunting Clinic in St. John on Dec. 7. The hunting clinic hosted 27 hunters and about 20 mentors and took place on private properties enrolled in various WDFW public access programs, coordinated by Private Lands Biologist Gaston with landowner permissions. The hunters had an opportunity to practice clay target shooting at Rock Lake Sporting Clays during the morning. The Spokane Chapter of Pheasants Forever hosted a lunch cookout and the afternoon was filled with mentors taking the hunters to the various properties assigned to them. Most of the participants were able to shoot their first pheasants or had opportunities to shoot. Despite the rainy weather, the clinic was considered a great success and will be planned again to next year.



Hunter and mentor with a dog walking a field in search of upland game



Successful hunters and a mentor showing off the spoils of an afternoon of upland hunting



Pheasants Forever volunteer showing a successful hunter how to properly clean a pheasant

Liberty Lake Water Access Site Redevelopment: Access Manager Dziekan met with Northwest Hydraulic Consultants (NHC) at the Liberty Lake public access site. NHC was on site to survey the shoreline and lake bottom for planned redevelopment at Liberty Lake. They were looking at the lake bottom to determine the best method for installing pilings for an improved boarding float and an extension. They were also surveying the area directly next to the ramp, where water and ice has eroded away the armoring, creating a steep drop off the side of the ramp. NHC will send this data to another consultant, who will then use the data to determine the best method for the planned shoreline work.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

United States Forest Service (USFS) Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill followed up with the USFS Republic District ranger to a request for permission for WDFW staff members to hang signs for hunters on USFS land. The purpose of the signs is to notify hunters about the possibility of cattle that may still be on the public grazing allotments. If a hunter was to see cattle while hunting on USFS land, WDFW personnel wanted to provide contact information for said hunter(s) to call the local USFS district office and report the sighting. This idea was bolstered not only by a request from Governor Inslee but a plan by District 1 staff members to reduce the amount of wolf-livestock conflicts that occur from cattle that get stranded during the winter season on public grazing allotments. Both Samsill and the USFS ranger agreed that this plan would be best if it was implemented during next year's hunting season. However, the USFS ranger felt that this idea would create confusion for hunters and stated that this would not be a necessary approach since most hunters know who to contact if they see cattle on the landscape during the late hunts. Regardless, this plan and many other ideas have been tabled for this grazing season. Both Samsill and the USFS ranger discussed the possibility of meeting up and discussing different strategies to improve livestock grazing while reducing wolf-livestock conflicts.

Conflict Prevention: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill and Private Lands Technician Fish worked on the incinerator currently stored at the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. After calling the manufacturer and troubleshooting the equipment, both WDFW staff members were able to get the incinerator to ignite and cure for four hours. Once Samsill and Fish receive an equipment card to fill the associated diesel tank, WDFW personnel will be able to troubleshoot the incinerator even more before development a start-up guide with how-to instructions for those that operate the equipment.

Asotin Turkeys: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade traveled to Pullman to meet Private Lands Biologist Gaston to pick up trapping supplies in preparation for turkey trapping. Wade and Private Lands Supervisor Earl finished setting the net and rockets up so the turkeys could get used to the presence of the added equipment. After the turkeys were accustomed to the trapping equipment Wade, Earl, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley, wildlife area personnel and volunteers from University of Idaho, and the local area along with a middle school job shadow student assisted with trapping and relocating 21 of the flock of 50 turkeys. The team also reset the net for a future trapping efforts.



Captured turkeys being boxed up for transport to their new home



Job shadow student releasing turkeys on WDFW wildlife area

4) **Conserving Natural Areas**

Nothing for this installment.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Meetings: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill attended the annual banquet/business meeting for the Ferry County Cattleman’s Association in Republic on Dec. 8. The meeting was well attended with roughly 40 attendees present. The following agencies/organizations were represented: Stevens County Cattleman’s Association, Ferry County Cattlemen’s Association, Cattle Producers of Washington, Washington Cattleman’s Association, U.S. Forest Service, and DNR. Samsill delivered a brief presentation as well as some updates on gray-wolf recovery in northeast Washington.

Wolf Presentation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman gave a wolf presentation to a local high school. This was the second year he has been invited to give presentations about wolves in Washington to the environmental advanced placement class at Mount Spokane High School.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Columbia Basin Deer Surveys: Biologist Rowan performed five ground surveys for mule deer in northern Grant County and eastern Adams County as a means of assessing buck-doe and fawn-doe ratios, as well as buck escapement. Planning and coordination for aerial surveys also took place, with biologists across districts performing surveys when weather conditions allowed. Aerial surveys allow for population estimates, as well as additional data on buck-doe and fawn-doe ratios, and buck escapement. Biologist Rowan also helped coordinate ground surveys for Douglas County, and completed the GMU 290 - Desert Unit Mule Deer Report.

Biologist Dougherty assisted with Columbia Plateau aerial deer surveys. Despite tough weather conditions biologists were able to persevere and get deer counted.



One of the bigger bucks observed during aerial surveys – Photo by Sean Dougherty

Chelan and Douglas County Mule Deer Aerial Surveys: Almost the entire month of December is dedicated to assessing the mule deer populations in Chelan and Douglas counties. This is accomplished through annual post-hunt surveys which attempt to estimate buck:doe and fawn:doe ratios. Douglas County is part of the Columbia Basin Mule Deer Management Zone where ground composition surveys are completed each winter. This year District 7 has many WDFW personnel to thank for helping to assist in accomplishing this task. Conversely in Chelan

County, due to the mountainous terrain and lack of ground access, composition surveys are typically attempted by aerial survey. Unfortunately, this often means many days spent staring at the fog, and 2019 was no different. This will be the second out of the past three years where we were unable to complete a comprehensive ratio survey in Chelan County due to weather limitations. Of 30 sample units, we only managed to survey three. After being consistently grounded for almost 10 days, Biologist Comstock pulled the plug on aerial surveys for this year.

Much of November and December has been spent preparing logistics for the upcoming mule deer captures planned to begin in mid-January in Chelan County. Biologist Comstock has been contacting landowners, coordinating with the vendor, preparing capture unit maps, and securing staging areas.



Fog settled into Cashmere valley (lower left) and the Entiat River drainage (top). Piebald deer mule deer observed during aerial survey (lower right) - Photo by Joe Bridges

Okanogan Mule Deer Surveys: Biologists Fitkin and Troyer conducted aerial mule deer surveys in the Methow Watershed to get post-season estimates of buck:doe and fawn:doe ratios. This year we classified about 1,300 deer spread over five game management units and generated raw ratio estimates of 23 bucks per 100 does, and 69 fawns per 100 does. The buck estimate is

up from last year's raw estimate of 16 and is right at the 10-year average. The fawn ratio improved from 65:100 observed last year but is still below the 10-year average of 74.

Douglas County Mule Deer Ground Surveys: Private Lands Biologist Braaten spent several days trying to complete deer surveys for District 7. Fog and inclement weather continue to hinder survey efforts. Private Lands Braaten classified 350 mule deer on two routes so far.



Mule deer observed during winter ground surveys in Douglas County – Photo by Eric Braaten

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Waterfowl Hunting Around the Basin: The basin has been seeing colder temperatures recently, freezing most wetlands. Most hunting has been focused on waste ways, creeks, large water bodies, fields, and some hunters have had productive hunts breaking open ice. The wildlife area's regulated access areas have still been receiving a good amount of hunter participation but at Winchester and North Potholes hunters have had to break open ice. At Frenchman Regulated Access Area, Specialist McPherson has been able to manipulate water levels enough to allow for open water in cells two, four, five, six, and seven allowing for good opportunity. Harvest at regulated access areas has been low the last couple weeks with the freezing conditions but with scouting and persistence some hunters have been seeing decent harvest. Specialist McPherson opened water control structure at Mansfield Pond as well to increase water velocity to break up ice and keep open water habitat available.



Open water in cell four of the Frenchman – Photo by C. McPherson



After opening water control structure mallards found the open water on Mansfield Pond immediately – Photo by C. McPherson

Frenchman Hills Game Reserve: Wildlife area staff members were alerted that people have been finding their way into the game reserve and hunting. Manager Edison and Specialist McPherson posted areas to educate people about their proximity to game reserve and enhanced posting at reserve boundary to make people more aware. This upstream boundary is incredibly difficult to access for maintenance due to the wide waste way.



Posts will catch people's attention when approaching reserve boundary – Photo by C. Eidson

Upland Bird Mentored Hunting Clinic: Biologist Dougherty assisted with coordination and implementation of a mentored hunting clinic that was focuses on upland bird hunting. This clinic was co-hosted by WDFW and Columbia Basin Pheasants Forever, and there were about 26 clinic participants and 13 volunteer mentors.



Little Twin Lake Aerator Meeting: Okanogan Lands Operations Manager Haug met with District Fish Biologist Fortier and representatives of the local fly-fishing organization to discuss a possible future aerator in Little Twin Lake outside of Winthrop. The installation of an aerator would disturb lands within the access site and require the placement of the device onto lands within our property – triggering the Lands Division's involvement. The group will be reaching out to the adjacent landowner to determine their level of interest or concern over the project. By placing the aerator in the lake, overwintering of trout should significantly increase and provide a better fishing experience.

Vault Toilet Replacements in the Methow Wildlife Area: Lands Operations Manager Haug met with Construction Project Coordinator Mosberger to discuss the future replacement of four vault toilets in the Methow – Davis Lake, Campbell Lake, Cougar Lake, and Boulder Creek (campground). The meeting helped determine logistics for delivery of the CXT toilets and what existing components of the access sites should be retained, and which need removed. Replacement should occur when roads dry and firm up in the late spring, early summer.

Methow Winter Recreation: Wildlife area personnel have recently met with a core group of volunteers who groom the winter recreation trails at the Methow Wildlife Area’s Lloyd Ranch to discuss winter plans. The Lloyd Ranch is a very popular winter recreation destination for a variety of winter recreation users but is renowned for its fat tire biking. The volunteer implemented grooming operation has been ongoing for nearly a decade. There are several miles of free groomed trails that dovetail into additional groomed trails at the adjacent Pearrygin Lake State Park. Although the trails are groomed with a fat tire biking emphasis, they are open to snowshoeing and cross-country skiing alike. There are also several miles of free groomed winter recreation trails at the Big Valley Unit of the Methow Wildlife Area. The Big Valley trails are also multi-use but are groomed with a cross country skiing emphasis.

Scotch Creek Hazard Tree Removal: The 2015 wildfire in the Limebelt area of the Scotch Creek Unit was severe enough to create numerous snags that present a safety hazard for recreationists and others using the area. Assistant Manager Dupont, and natural resource technicians Sklaney and Medina cleared the Limebelt and Lime lakes roads of dangerous snags that were threatening motorists and campers. Staff members dropped over 100 trees along 2.2 miles of roadway to stop the ongoing event of these trees falling over the road and in remote campsites.



Felling hazard trees along the Limebelt Road, Scotch Creek Unit – Photo by J. Olson

Quincy Lakes Recreation Planning: Lands Operations Manager Finger hosted a workshop to consider designating and decommissioning of trail systems through the Quincy Lakes Unit. The workshop shared a system of trails that could be observed from aerial imagery and then asked the participants to identify which trails were of importance. Important trails were typically part of a large loop route or had specific destinations such as vistas and interpretive features. Finger created a draft of the group's collective efforts and sent it out to the group for review in ArcMap and Google Earth formats.

Quincy Lakes Mountain Bike Race: Lands Operations Manager Finger and Wildlife Area Manager Eidson held a conference call with an individual interested in having a mountain bike race on the Quincy Lakes Unit in late February. A similar local race, 'the Beezley Burn', attracts about 100 participants annually in recent years but used to draw as many as 300. Finger and Eidson shared concerns (e.g. poor soil conditions, speed and safety, number of participants and distances covered, pre-race route improvements) but generally agreed to proposal under certain restrictions. Once the final proposal is received, we will solidify restrictions and work with Real Estate to issue a permit.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Deer and Elk Issues: Specialist Bridges received a few complaints of deer and elk getting into agricultural crops. Bridges met with the landowners, observed damage and distributed non-lethal materials. They were employed, with limited success, thus lethal removal permits were issued. Master hunters we successfully deployed to all areas with depredation permits.

Follow Up on Wolf Sighting Reports: Specialist Bridges continues to respond to citizen reports of a wolf sightings. During these conversations, information and education about wolf biology is the main topic of conversation. Specialist Bridges followed up in the area of the reported sighting, and discreetly deployed trail cameras to monitor the area.

Cougar Depredation: Specialist Heilhecker responded to a cougar depredation. A cougar killed three goats. A fourth goat died because its neck broke while caught in the fence. WDFW Enforcement Program issued a depredation removal permit and called an individual with hounds to look for the cougar.

Turkey Issues: Specialist Heilhecker visited with a landowner regarding turkeys eating cattle feed. There are approximately 55 turkeys roosting and feeding on his property. Specialist Heilhecker issued several kill permits to the landowner who will donate the harvested birds.

Methow Valley Bear Sanitation Management: Biologist Fitkin is spearheading a multi-partner effort to equip the upper portion of the Methow Valley with bear-resistant garbage cans for residential and commercial waste pick-up service. The local waste management company and the Methow Conservancy are enthusiastic partners and attended the initial project meeting of interested parties. The group has already secured an initial private donation of \$2,500 to acquire 10 cans for more extensive testing with local garbage trucks. We will be pursuing additional grants for deployment of about 250 residential cans as part of phase one, which we hope to implement by spring when bears emerge from hibernation.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

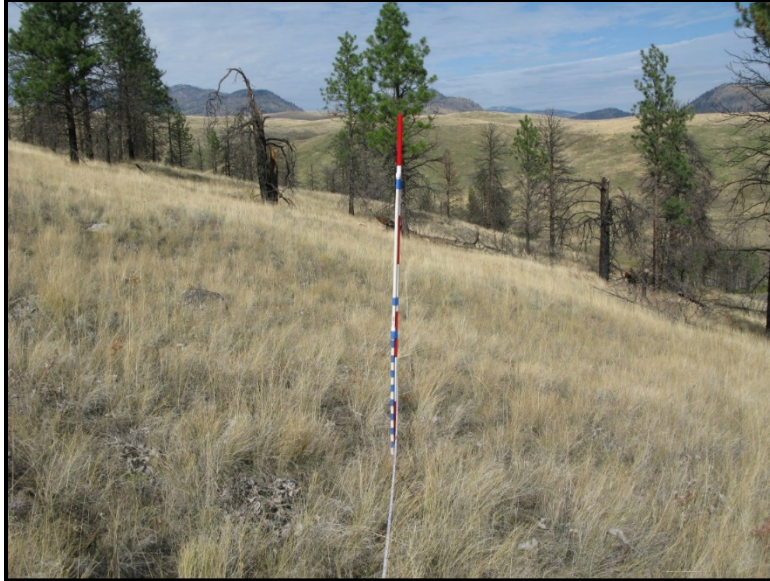
Monitoring Emergency Grazing Lease: In July of this year, WDFW issued a temporary grazing lease on the Honey Lake pasture, part of the Scotch Creek Unit. Allowable forage harvest on this pasture is 245 animal unit months (AUMs) annually and the season of use this year is July through September.

The main purpose of this permit is to provide emergency pasture for a local livestock operator who was displaced from his regular range due to the McCloud fire in 2017, while still maintaining ecological integrity as required by Policy C-6003. The use of WDFW lands in this capacity should help lead to habitat improvement on non-WDFW-managed lands in the area of the wildfire. This month WDFW Range Ecologist Burnham visited the site to collect post-grazing data.

Jeff conducted follow-up visual obstruction monitoring on the Honey Lake pasture. Visual obstruction is used as a measure of horizontal cover in areas where ground nesting birds is a management priority. Results for visual obstruction were very similar, with no significant difference observed between pre- and post-grazing data across eight transects distributed throughout the permit area.



Pre grazing on Happy Hill pasture in June 2019 – Photo by J Burnham



Post grazing on Happy Hill pasture in October 2019 – Photo by J Burnham

Methow Forest Restoration Project – Phase 2: During the course of about a month, Maintenance Mechanic Wottlin has spent time in the Ramsey Creek drainage digging fire line around approximately 30 slash piles and igniting them as weather permitted. The slash piles were created this spring during the 250+ acre commercial thinning project. Recently, three WDFW foresters visited the Ramsey timber unit to help wildlife area staff members ignite the remaining piles when weather was conducive. Additionally, the WDFW burn crew has recently finished a pre-commercial thinning project in the same area totaling approximately 70 acres. The plan is to initiate a prescribed burn in the recently treated Ramsey area in the spring of 2020.



This is an aerial view of a portion of the Ramsey Creek commercial thin unit. Notice the stark contract between the overly dense untreated areas in comparison to the recently thinned areas. The thinned area now closely resembles the forest's historic range of variability in regard to density and composition. Notice the slash pile being burnt in the foreground. Photo by Troyer



This is a different view illustrating the difference between a treated and untreated forest in the Ramsey Creek area. Again, an active slash pile is seen burning in the foreground. We expect to initiate a prescribed fire in the thinned unit in the spring of 2020. Photo by Troyer

Scotch Creek Unit Land Exchange: Progress continues to move forward on a proposal to exchange approximately 220 acres of high-quality shrub-steppe habitat on the Scotch Creek Unit (privately owned) for approximately 50 acres of irrigated alfalfa (WDFW owned). Lands Operations Manager Haug and Manager Olson met with the landowners this week to discuss details of the exchange prior to putting out a request for bids to appraise both properties. Both parties agree to move forward on this project.

Funk Mountain Coordinated Resource Management Meeting: Manager Olson attended the Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) meeting for a grazing lessee on the Scotch Creek Unit, Limebelt area. The Scholz family has held this lease since the acquisition of Scotch Creek in 1992. Good coordination and exchange of ideas came from the group that included WDFW, USFS, NRCS and DNR. After the meeting, Manager Olson herded seven head of Scholz cattle from the Scotch Creek Basin on the wildlife area, to private lands approximately 2.5 miles north. With repairs to the fence and gate, the problem of trespass cattle should be over in this area.

Methow Coordinated Resource Management Meeting: Recently, Methow Wildlife Area staff members along with Land Operations Manager Haug partook in the annual CRM meeting. This meeting is well attended by WDFW, USFS, DNR, Methow Conservancy, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Okanogan Conservation District. The intent of the meeting is to discuss the previous year's grazing season and to plan for the upcoming grazing season. Some of the primary topics discussed revolve around grazing rotations between all the aforementioned land agencies, water developments, fencing needs, current and future management goals, and interactions between livestock and wildlife.

SAFE-CRP: Biologist Hughes completed a practice conservation plan as the final portion of Conservation Planning Part 2 Training. This training is a step to become a certified conservation planner. The NRCS will review the plan and provide feedback in the next few weeks. The landowner will begin implementing the plan in 2021. The conservation plan Hughes developed was a prescribed grazing plan that maintained and enhanced habitat throughout the 640 acres. There are two specific areas (one being an expired CRP field and the other is a bottom draw infested with Russian knapweed) that will be reseeded to native grasses.

Douglas County Riparian Habitat Project Planning: Private Lands Biologist Braaten spent a few days afield meeting with landowners about potential future habitat projects for spring 2020. Private Lands Biologist Braaten also spent time with Region 1 and 2 Private Lands staff members discussing project ideas, design, layout, budget, equipment, etc. Private Lands Biologist Braaten created a habitat project evaluation form for Ciera Strickland to assist with cultural resource review.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nova Non-Nova Criteria (NNC) Working Group: Lands Operations Manager Finger participated in a team effort to develop clear criteria and process for consideration of road grading projects statewide. Finger coordinated with staff members to better understand road grading projects and need and worked with Water Access Manager Harmon to test a draft prioritization tool and brought feedback back to the group for consideration.

Discover Pass Kiosk: Lands Operations Manager Finger participated in a discussion about potentially installing a Discover Pass kiosk (aka Flowbird machine) at the Frenchmen Coulee climbing area. These machines are programmable for five menu items, and in our case would likely include 1) annual pass, 2) daily pass, and 3) donation (specific to the area). The machines cost \$6,550 each with an \$844/year maintenance package. Service is provided through Verizon or AT&T. Though State Parks has not had any vandalism issues with the 77 machines they operate, local personnel expressed concerns about vandalism due to the relatively remote location. To mitigate this risk, the machine could be removed seasonally. If the machine is destroyed, responsibilities to replace would match the Discover Pass split by the relative allocations of 84/8/8, thus WDFW would be responsible for 8 percent of the replacement cost. Further discussions are needed on whether to pursue but local staff are supportive of giving it a try. If we move forward, local staff members could construct the mountain pad adjacent to the CXTs, within an area already surveyed for cultural resources.



Trout Unlimited/Barkley Ditch Repairs: Lands Operations Manager Haug met with representatives of Trout Unlimited, the Barkley Irrigation Ditch Company and WDFW personnel to discuss the planned repairs on WDFW property as a result of the irrigation efficiency project. In coordination with WDFW Kuykendall engineer and Wildlife Area Manager Troyer, the group approved plans to repair over 3,000 feet of impacted shoreline near the Methow River outside of Twisp. The repairs were completed by a local contractor and meet our specifications. The area was reseeded with native bunchgrass and will be monitored for the next two to three years to look for noxious weed infestations and erosion.

Meeting with Skyline Ditch Company: Lands Operations Manager Haug, Real Estate Division Manager Sandberg, Wildlife Area Manager Troyer and Water Rights Specialist Knudsen met with representatives of the Skyline Ditch Company in Winthrop to discuss our involvement with the company and their request for cooperation. A number of questions were answered, and the conversation proved useful in moving forward with their request. Manager Sandberg is planning to present the information and request to our agriculture office for their opinion in the matter.

Okanogan District Team Meeting: Okanogan Lands Operations Manager Haug met with the district team to discuss local issues and update the group on news from around the district. Haug discussed the upcoming acquisition projects for this RCO funding round as well as a number of state lands development projects to consider. He also touched on recreation planning and issues related to certain activities throughout the county. Regional Habitat Program Manager Andonaegui represented regional management and took the information and topics back to Ephrata for discussion.

7) Other

Winter and Wildlife:





From top: Barred owl watching mule deer rutting behavior, pileated woodpecker, winter slowly arriving in the Methow Valley, barred owl – Photos by Scott Fitkin



*Northern pygmy owl from Lester Road within the Methow Unit of the Methow Wildlife Area -
Photo by Justin Haug*



Mule Deer sparring near Methow Wildlife Area headquarters - Photo: Justin Haug



Winter scenes from Ramsey Creek area, Methow Wildlife Area – Photos by Justin Haug

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

The winter closure for the Mellotte elk feed site on the Wenas Wildlife Area went into effect Thursday morning (Dec. 12). Gates were locked and ‘**Closed Area**’ signs posted at winter closure entrance points. Elk have been moving across Clemans Mountain for the past couple of weeks, with 200-300 animals seen in the vicinity of Mellottee.



Closure signs posted at Mellotte gate

Mule Deer Surveys Completed for Columbia Basin: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand completed two roadside deer surveys in the Kahlotus area. Data from both routes have been collected annually for several years to collect buck and fawn ratio estimates. Deer numbers seemed to be lower compared to past surveys, but the deer appeared to be in excellent condition. Thanks to DJ Werlau (Fish) and Ashley Rogers (Wildlife) for assisting with the surveys. District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra assisted teams conducting flight surveys for deer by flight-following and participating in planning and debriefing calls. Foggy weather caused several delays both for air and ground surveys, which are used to inform management actions and season guidelines.

Managing Wildlife Populations: District 8 staff members shipped samples (hooves, blood, liver, and kidney) to the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Lab as part of the new research into hoof disease. More samples are wanted, so Biologist Bernatowicz contact the Yakima Training Center (YTC) and set up a collection cooler at the YTC check in/out building. Bernatowicz also contacted the local Department of Transportation shop and asked they inform him if any elk roadkill are found.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett received word that a very large sink hole was found on a Feel Free to Hunt property in Benton County. Enforcement officers replied to the original call and posted flagging near the hole to warn anyone accessing the property. Hulett went up later and posted safety zone signs around the hole. The hole was estimated to be at least 18 feet deep.



Private Lands Technician Byers looking into the 18-foot-deep sink hole

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area personnel continue removing hunting camps and structures built on the wildlife area.





Burning toilets and removing non burnable trash found in hunting camps from the L.T. Murray

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Paterson Deer Damage: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand completed a new Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement, prepared, and delivered associated damage permits to assist a very large row crop farm experiencing deer damage. Additionally, non-lethal hazing strategies will be implemented to minimize damage occurrence.

Rattlesnake Mountain Elk Claims: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with a wheat producer and the assigned crop adjuster on finalizing a damage claim from this past growing season. The entire claim documents have been reviewed, approved and funds to cover the loss disbursed.

Vineyard Deer Damage: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to haze problem deer from several wine grape vineyards and tree fruit operations along the Columbia River. Pressure from late season hunters and damage permits have assisted in reducing deer activity.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area staff members have been maintaining and checking elk fencing for winter.



Windthrow on new fence that was repaired during this period

District 8 Conflict Specialist Wetzel patrolled all major conflict areas for elk activity. Most areas had few elk and there have been only two reports from landowners about elk conflict.

Two landowners in Cle Elum reported elk in new seeding timothy. Elk are persisting at this location even though the area is inside Elk Area 3911 and the landowners have damage permits issued. The reason is the landowners have not allowed access for any type of hunting.

District 8 Conflict Specialist Wetzel patrolled the Ryegrass area for elk movements. A moderately sized group of elk are now located near Hult Butte but appear to be staying there and not venturing down onto I-90.

A large orchard in Badger Pocket called Conflict Specialist Wetzel about needing a small amount of additional fencing materials to complete an elk exclusion fence. Fencing was delivered and a fencing inspection was completed. The orchard manager reported that the fence has significantly reduced elk use of the orchard since the fence was completed. More work such as cattle guards on several roads will be needed in the future.

District 8 Conflict Specialist Wetzel checked problem fence areas to prepare for elk movements associated with snow events.



Gate and wing fence ready for Manastash elk migration

Yakima County: District 8 Conflict Specialist Wetzel inspected and fixed fence sections on the western end of the Tampico elk fence. Several sections will need additional work but in general, the fence is functional at this time.



A section of elk fence that will require additional work and monitoring after spring runoff events



A section of cross fence that has been intentionally cut and left open for unknown reasons

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Wenas Wildlife Area staff members broadcast seeded 127 acres of areas that burned hottest in this summer's 6,500-acre Pipeline Fire.



Broadcast seeding with tractor

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Manager Mackey attended the monthly meeting of the Wildlife Education Corp (WEC) volunteers that staff the visitor's center and provide elk viewing tours during winter feeding operations. One potential new member was present and is a retired WDFW employee from the region. Safety training was also conducted for tour truck operation.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Confer Morris, along with Colockum Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky and Vegetation Ecologist Merg interviewed six candidates for the new Wenas 9-month Biologist 2 position.

New Private Land Technician Hired: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett finished hiring Trina Byers as the new Natural Resource Technician. Trina comes to Private Lands from the salmon carcass survey crew (Fish Program) out of the Pasco district office. Trina is set to begin with Private Lands on Dec. 16.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 4

No report this period.

REGION 5

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

December Elk Count on Mudflow: Biologist Stephens conducted an elk survey on the Mudflow Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. This survey is conducted monthly throughout the winter. There were only 11 elk observed, all of which were bulls. It is common for elk use to be light early in the winter and for elk numbers to increase as the snowpack increases.

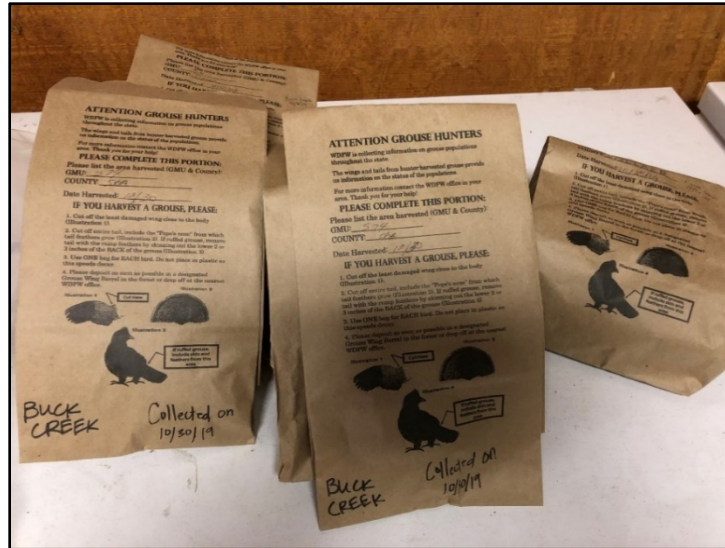
Puget Island Columbian White-tailed deer Survey: Biologists Stephens, Holman and Customer Service Specialist Smith conducted a Columbian white-tailed deer survey on Puget Island. The survey takes place on two driving routes. Deer are located, counted, and classified into age and sex classes. A total of 158 deer were counted during the effort. The effort is a cooperative project organized by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the data generated helps inform management decisions related to this federally threatened and state endangered species. For more information on Columbian white-tails see the WDFW website at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/odocoileus-virginianus-leucurus>.



Columbian White-tailed deer grazing on Puget Island

Grouse Wing Barrels: Biologists Bergh took down all three grouse wing barrels in District 9 this week. A total of 28 wings/tails were collected this fall, which was the first attempt at grouse wing collection in the district. An average of approximately 2,000 grouse are harvested in Skamania and Klickitat counties each year, so a submission of 28 wings/tails was somewhat disappointing. Different locations for the barrels may be considered for next season, although

consistency in locations over time may lead to increased submissions. The purpose of collecting hunter-harvested forest grouse wings and tails is to help evaluate changes in species composition, sex, and age of harvested grouse over time. A big thank you to all of the grouse hunters who participated this fall!



Hunter-harvested grouse wings submitted via three wing barrels located in District 9

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

Klickitat Mule Deer Aerial Surveys: Biologists Wickhem, Bergh, Holman, Stephens and Jacobsen spent the week conducting aerial surveys for mule deer in Klickitat County. Fog and low clouds prevented flying for much of the week, but the dedicated crew worked through the weekend to complete nearly all survey units. The data collected from these surveys allow the district to calculate a population estimate for GMUs 388 and 382, as well as buck to doe and fawn to doe ratios to assess the composition of the herd. Data will be entered in the coming weeks, and the district is hoping to see evidence of a stable or growing herd. Thanks to the flight crew for their endless patience in the face of uncooperative weather, to Pilot Emerson from JL Aviation for safe and expert flying and to Habitat Biologist Johnson and Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven for tracking our flights from the ground.



Mount Adams above the fog along the Klickitat River



Counting and classifying deer in GMU 382 as they scatter in all different directions

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Late Archery Deer Season on the Klickitat Wildlife Area: On the Friday before the second weekend of the season, Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven visited hunters in the field to see how the hunting is going. Only six hunters were contacted and very few camps were

observed on the Soda Springs Unit. Hunters who have been monitoring game cameras placed on the wildlife area reported that the number of deer photos captured at the mid to upper elevations has dropped off sharply this week. Snow fell on Dec. 1, and with temperatures around freezing much of the week, patches of snow are still present. Road access is still good as of Dec. 6.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Tree Marking 1: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey received a report of a tree that had been used as a scratching post by a cougar. The individual was concerned about a cougar being in the area because it was near where children regularly play, as well as within 50 yards of chickens and goats. Aubrey visited the site and agreed the tree was likely marked by a cougar. A trail camera was set up on the tree to see if, and how frequently, anything was returning to the area. A check after three nights of the camera being deployed resulted in no confirmation of a cougar in the area, although other wildlife was observed. The trail camera will be left up through the weekend and checked again. A Critter Gitter scare device was loaned to the individual as well and was set up near the goat's pasture.



Scratch marks on a tree near the goat pasture and chicken coup



Coyote captured on the trail camera set up near the scratched tree

Tree Marking 2: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey received a report of another tree with markings on it in a different area. The markings in the pictures sent by the reporting party did not have the typical signs of a cougar, and more closely resembled porcupine damage to trees. Aubrey responded to the area and set up a trail camera on the tree as a precaution to monitor wildlife activity in the area that will be checked after the weekend.



Tree damaged by an unknown animal

Tree marking follow ups: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey pulled down and checked the two trail cameras from last week that were set up near trees that were marked, potentially by a cougar. Neither of the trail cameras captured an image of a cougar in the time they were deployed. Both landowners were satisfied with the time the cameras were left up. A predator deterrent was left with one of the landowners who owns goats for the time being while a door for the goats' shelter is constructed.

Possible Cougar/Bobcat Kill Near Goats: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a deer that had been killed near an individual's home. The homeowner was concerned due to the proximity to the house, as well as the locations where he keeps his chickens, ducks, and goats. After inspecting the carcass, and the location where it was originally found, Aubrey determined that the deer likely died prior to any predators finding and feeding on the carcass. The feeding patterns on the carcass were consistent with coyote behavior. Advice was given on the best way to protect the animals near the home, and what devices might deter predators from approaching too closely.

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area Wildfire Fuels Management: To reduce the risk of wildfire along the Soda Springs Road on the Klickitat Wildlife Area, debris left from a forest management project was piled by volunteers from Lewis and Clark College, and by Department of Natural Resources fire crews. A total of 50 piles of slash were constructed during the spring and summer. This week, WDFW foresters Pfeifle and Mize took advantage of good environmental conditions to burn the piles. This significantly reduces the volume of woody fuel along a county road that serves as the main access route onto the Soda Springs Unit, thereby improving public safety as well as the ability of the forest to withstand a fire should one start. This area is within the heart of critical habitat for western gray squirrels and conservation of their habitat is a high priority for WDFW.

Scotch Broom Control: Manager Vanderlip, Assistant Manager Steveson and Tacoma Resource Lands Coordinator Russell pulled scotch broom plants on the east end of Riffe Lake. In 2017, Tacoma Power lowered the full pool level of the reservoir 39 feet due to seismic risks and concerns about the structure of the dam. The drawdown has provided perfect conditions for weeds and scotch broom is taking advantage of those conditions all over the Kosmos and Riffe buffer areas. The area was treated in early 2019 but, as expected the scotch broom is persistent, small plants blend well with other vegetation and there is viable seed in the seedbank.



Hand pulling scotch broom with a weed wrench

5) Providing Education and Outreach

High School Presentation: Biologist Bergh gave a presentation on wildlife management and a career as a wildlife biologist to a Vancouver area high school wildlife biology class. She talked about the different species studied and the different types of surveys that are conducted by WDFW as well as her career path as a wildlife biologist. The students had some great questions with a lot of interest in elk hoof disease and how to volunteer in the field of fish and wildlife biology.

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

Grouse Wing and Tail Collections- Southern Olympic Peninsula: Biologist Michaelis and Murphie dismantled four grouse wing and tail collection barrels located in four places along the southern Olympic Peninsula. The number of samples were highest through the month of September and began to decrease during the month of October.

* Three additional samples were turned into the Montesano office.

Collection period	George Adams	Mill 5	Cougar Smith	Quinault Ridge	Total
September 1-6	0	5	9	2	16
September 7-11	0	0	6	3	9
September 12-16	3	6	9	2	20
September 17-23	4	4	3	4	15
September 24- 30	6	6	5	8	25
October 1- 7	5	6	2	2	15
October 8- 16	3	1	6	2	12
October 17- 24	2	1	0	3	6
October 25 – November 1	0	3	0	4	7
November 2 – November 8	1	1	0	0	2
November 9- November 18	4	4	2	1	11
Totals	28	37	42	31	138

A total of 138 wing and tail combinations were collected this year and was higher than the number of samples collected in 2018 (122). Information on the species, sex, and age of forest grouse is determined during a separate statewide meeting. Hunters get a chance to participate in this sampling and it gives them a better idea on areas that are more productive for forest grouse hunting.

Goose Survey 4: Biologist Michaelis conducted the fourth dusky goose survey in south Pacific County. The number of dusky Canada geese have increased. The number of Aleutian Canada geese, normally seen in fairly large numbers by now, have not been observed.

A total of 35 collared resident dark geese (wuskies) were observed. This total is included under the “unknown/other” category. This was the single largest observation of collared wuskies made during these surveys in Pacific County within the past 23 years.

12/03/19	Cackler	# Banded	Aleutian	# Banded	Tav/Lesser	# Banded	Dusky	# Banded	Western	# Banded	Vancouver	# Banded	GWF	Snow	Unknown/Other	Totals
Location																
South Pacific County	189	0	13	0	251	0	520	11	147	0	0	0	46	0	196	1,362
Totals:	189	0	13	0	251	0	520	11	147	0	0	0	46	0	196	1,362

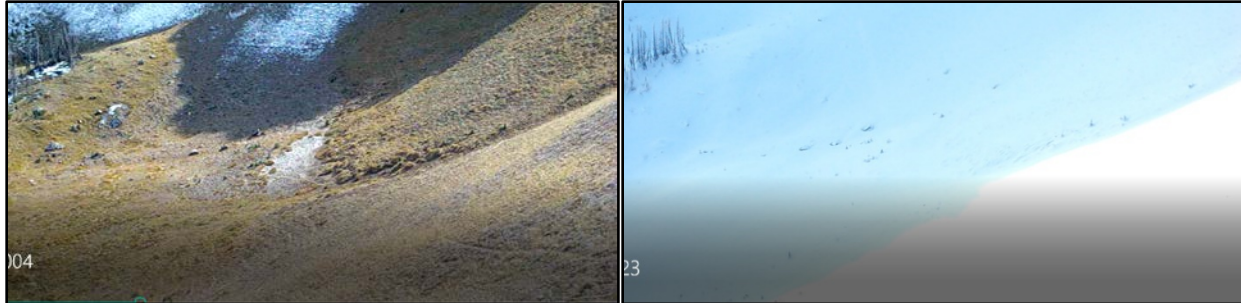


Large group of marked resident dark geese (wuskies) near the Chinook Wildlife Area



A portion of a group of 23 marked wuskies with one marked dusky Canada goose (red collar), in the upper right corner of photo

Wolf Camera Monitoring: Biologist Tirhi hiked up Norse Peak to retrieve a trail camera that was positioned to capture wildlife including wolves in the basin below. No wildlife was photo-captured over the two months the camera was deployed, but the snow conditions certainly changed.



Biologist Tirhi and volunteer Terry also spent a day rotating cameras in the Carbon River area to the northwest of Mount Rainier. One thing is clear, there is plentiful prey in the Carbon River if and when wolves make it to that area.

Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly: The Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) owns a large portion of the Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly habitat west of the Elwha River. District Wildlife Biologist McMillan provided CNLM a summary of the counts made during surveys in 2018 and 2019. The survey method of point distance count methodology began in 2018, with some revisions applied during the 2019 season. The counts here are the raw data and have not been analyzed for the method of data collection. Still the records give us an idea of the trend of butterflies flying during each season. The point distance count method results will be analyzed by Researcher Gail Olson.

Taylor's Checkerspot Surveys	
CNLM West	
28-Apr-19	162
7-May-19	338
22-May-19	233
23-May-19	103
3-May-18	54
11-May-18	77
15-May-18	103
23-May-18	28

Bat from Sequim: District Wildlife Biologist McMillan assisted a Sequim resident who had found a bat upside down in her farmyard. Biologist McMillan inspected the property and outbuildings that could be used by bats during hibernation. There weren’t any obvious roosting sites or bats found. The bat finally died and was collected by Biologist McMillan, frozen and prepared to be shipped to Biologist Tobin for a necropsy. The bat did not



show any signs of white nose syndrome during inspection with ultraviolet light. According to Biologist Tobin it is probably a California myotis.

Makah Copper Butterfly – Draft Candidate Species Assessment: District Wildlife Biologist McMillan is working on the Candidate Species Assessment for the Makah copper and June’s copper butterflies. The butterflies are bog and fen habitat obligates. The ownership of the known sites includes Olympic National Park, Makah Tribe, private forest industry, and private residential. Information is being gathered to articulate the existing land use regulations on state, private, park service, tribal reservations and federal ownership within the assessment. The task is proving challenging with many layers of land management regulations being relevant. The state-owned lands have various management rules that apply depending on the history:

“Not all lands within Olympic Experimental State Forest (OESF) are Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) managed and not all HCP-managed lands are under DNR-management. The latter scenario often trips people up: disposed lands may retain HCP management. To address both scenarios, I included two shapefiles: one of all DNR lands within the OESF and one of all HCP-managed lands within OESF. These reflect our current data as of 2019/12/05.” (Julia Jackson DNR quote from Thomas Laxon)

Similarly, the federal rules on tribal reservations need to be studied closely to determine what is applicable:

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) manages Tribal Trust lands, which include reservations. Being a federal agency, BIA’s jurisdiction is tied to federal regulation. That includes making sure that federally listed species aren't impacted on Tribal Trust lands. Outside of reservations, some tribes also have their own tribal fee land they manage completely themselves with other policies etc. that the BIA doesn't deal with. Land ownership (trust vs tribal fee) of any bog or fen habitat would be important to know.

If a tribal project (construction, harvesting, restoration etc.) is a federal action (the BIA authorizes, funds, or carries out), then federal wetland regulation (CWA, E.O. 11990 and 11988) is followed to make sure there aren't any impacts. For example, if a culvert is being replaced, it needs an Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) Clean Water Act (CWA) section 404 permit or to follow the ACOE Best Management Practices (BMPs). Other than that, the Tribe is responsible for wetland conservation if there isn't BIA involvement (if there isn't a federal action). (Anna Schmidt BIA pers. comm. 2019)

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Offutt Lake: The water access team contracted a private tree service to fall four large dead standing danger trees. The access team chipped limbs and cut the logs into firewood rounds, which was donated to local seniors. While there, the tree company was directed to climb and limb up a tree for a future restroom replacement project. After final cleanup, including raking limbs and blowing the asphalt, this project took the team four days to complete.



Mission Lake Kitsap County: The water access team, working with WCC Ecology, cut up fallen trees and brushed out fence lines that had major snow load damage from last year's storms. This 200-yard-long site was devastated and was one of two sites in Region 6 that was not addressed last year due to the extreme snowstorm and the number of sites affected.



Before



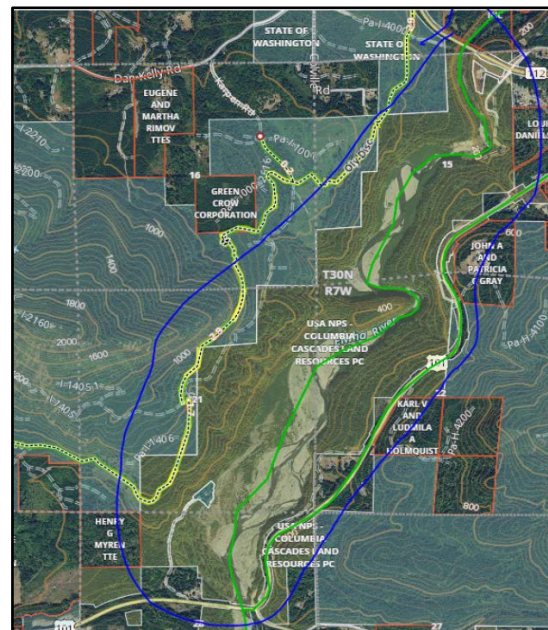
After

Bobcat Hunting: Biologist Tirhi sealed two bobcats shot by a hunter in Puyallup while hunting elk with his son.



Hunting Season Recommendations: District Wildlife Biologist McMillan provided input for the hunting season recommendations primarily reviewing the cow elk permit harvest on permits, many that have been recently created to provide more hunting opportunities with cow elk harvest. The Sol Duc GMU (607) had a cow permit harvest of 14, of which most were taken in the elk area in Forks, established to reduce the damage by the increasing elk herds there.

Hunting Access Inquiry: District Wildlife Biologist McMillan received a Team Montesano inquiry regarding hunting access within the Elwha River Valley between Highway 101 and Highway 112 in Clallam County. “There is a sign in the parking lot that says hunting and fishing is allowed per WDFW rules.” “State of WA Dept of Fish Wildlife”, “USA-NPS Columbia Cascades Land resources PC.” Several WDFW, Olympic National Park, tribal and other sources have been asked to find out the accurate status of this property for hunting.



3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Restoration Work at South Sound Wildlife Areas (Scatter Creek North/South and West Rocky Prairie): Biologist Randolph conducted seed inventory and reorganized all seed bins held in storage at Violet Prairie Farm, managed by our partners Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM). She and Biologist Cook worked together to prepare post-burn sites for seeding by removing tree limbs and scotch broom stems. Cook followed up with harrowing the ground to promote seed to soil contact and increase germination. More than 270 pounds of seed, representing over 40 native prairie species, were broadcast throughout twelve acres at the south unit of Scatter Creek, three acres at north unit of Scatter Creek and thirty acres at West Rocky Prairie. Biologist Cook utilized a commercial broadcast seeder to apply over 400 pounds of native fescue between all sites. In preparation for volunteer help, holes were pre-drilled with plant plugs staged into them. Then WDFW personnel, CNLM volunteers and AmeriCorps members worked together to plant approx. 3,400 prairie plugs (13 species) across the three sites in a single day, a gargantuan effort by any means! WDFW is grateful for the generosity of CNLM and AmeriCorps members!



Harrow pulled by ATV prepares the site for subsequent seeding efforts at West Rocky Prairie. Mounds can be particularly challenging!



Volunteers spend a rainy day in the field planting native prairie plugs at Scatter Creek North Wildlife Area to promote native biodiversity

Cross Agency Coordination: Biologist Tirhi represented District 11 at a recent interview meeting along with other WDFW prairie species and habitat specialist conducted by a representative of the South Sound Military and Communities Partnership (SSCMP). This partnership is comprised of local South Sound land managers and public agencies and routinely receives grant funds for various projects and studies intersecting civilian-military interests in the South Sound community. This is the first project to focus on habitat, and in particular, South Sound prairies and listed prairie species. WDFW personnel understand the importance of bringing our expertise to this project and look forward to contributing knowledge and guidance.

Conservation Easement for Prairie and Pocket Gophers: Biologist Tirhi spent an afternoon streamlining a management plan written for the first South Sound Prairie conservation easement to protect pocket gophers. Detailed information was removed from the plan and placed instead inside a second guidance document per the request of the easement funder, USFWS.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

District Team Meeting Coordination: District Wildlife Biologist McMillan has coordinated the upcoming North Coastal and Straits District Team meeting scheduled for Dec. 17. A very full agenda was prepared due to the many topics brought forward to discuss: sea otter population increases, beaver management, elk conflict in urban settings, chinook in the Dungeness, Taylor's checkerspot recovery, Makah copper assessment, Dungeness and Morse Creek wildlife areas-management and issues such as homeless camps, and many more.

7) Other

Lawrence Lake Water Rescue: While on routine site maintenance, water access team member Jesse Reeves heard someone on the lake yelling for help. Jesse observed a capsized kayak and a man in the water holding onto the kayak (without a life vest on) yelling for help. Jesse immediately dialed 911. While keeping a line of sight on the victim and relaying information to emergency services, Jesse also was reassuring the victim that help was on the way. Jesse scoured neighboring properties for floatation devices, waded into the cold water and tossed them to a neighbor attempting to row out to the man in distress. The man was loaded into the rescue boat and taken to shore, where emergency services began treatment for hypothermia. The man was taken to the hospital and was expected to fully recover.

Another Rescue - Stranded Camper Found: Biologist Michaelis was in the field looking at access into Department of Natural Resources land in the Dickey Game Management Unit (GMU 602). While back a considerable distance in the interior of the unit, he ran across a stranded camper who was huddled in the back seat of his car wrapped in a blanket. The camper was lost, wet, overdue by a day, and glad to see Michaelis. This goes to show how to expect unusual events while in the field and to assist the public if necessary.

This is the second time in recent years where Michaelis has been in the right place at the right time and taken action that may have saved a life.