

# Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

Oct. 16 to Oct. 31, 2020

## **DIVERSITY DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **GAME DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **HUNTER EDUCATION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **LANDS DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **SCIENCE DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **REGION 1**

### **1) Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Bighorn Sheep:** Asotin Creek Wildlife Area Manager Dingman located the bighorn sheep and submitted the locations through Survey123. One of the older GPS collars is starting to malfunction and send random mortality signals. Dingman found the ewe alive and well with the herd but the VHF portion of the collar is also appearing to malfunction. Dingman spent some time cleaning up her VHF receiver and deleting frequencies of collars that are no longer in the herd.



*Ewe on left has an older GPS collar that is starting to malfunction and send random mortality signals*

Biologists Wik, Vekasy, and Cotterill spent two days ground darting sheep in Asotin Creek as part of a multi-state nutrition study. Three ewes were captured and processed. District Biologist Wik spent one day with Dr. Christensen, DVM, locating and testing domestic goats and sheep for Movi. Three landowners were contacted, and an operation of over 30 goats within five to seven miles of the Tucannon sheep was discovered.

Biologist Cotterill recovered a collar from a bighorn sheep ewe that died last winter in a remote part of Asotin County. He began systematically cleaning disparate GPS datasets as part of larger disease modeling efforts to inform bighorn management.

**Chicken Feeder Deer:** Wildlife biologists Prince and Turnock worked with Ungulate Research Scientist Devivo to successfully immobilized a town deer in Republic with a chicken feeder on her neck. The deer had the chicken feeder on her neck since the summer but was able to move and feed normally. The cooler weather and her regular patterns in town provided a good opportunity to try and dart her. As a bonus, the feeder was returned to the owner unharmed.

**General Season Deer Modern Firearm Opener:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett assisted in a short patrol of hunters in northeast Washington. More than 30 contacts were made, and one successful young hunter was encountered. The young man harvested his first mule deer at more than 250 yards with his family.



*First time harvest in GMU 101*

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Access Site Cleanup:** Northeast Washington Access Manager Daniel Dziekan and Natural Resource Worker Uriah Meeks cleaned up and prepared water access sites for the winter. With the autumn drop in public use, they have been able to focus on more time-consuming tasks that they couldn't complete during the heavy use of the sites in summer 2020, when picking up after visitors took all their time. This week, Dziekan and Meeks dropped and piled limbs, and prepared green waste for hauling. They also focused on adding gravel to potholes and reinforcing ramps before winter ice sets in. Finally, Dziekan and Meeks found time and paint to add a fresh coat to the speed bump at the Newman Lake water access site.



*Newman Lake: before and after*



*Boat ramp: before and after*

**Fishing at Z Lake:** A Spokane area fly fisherman caught and released some rainbow trout at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area the week previous and sent along some nice photos this week. He also spotted post-Whitney Fire elk tracks near the lake.



*Z Lake trout – Photo by Jack Massie*

**Recreation Access Area Maintenance:** Technician Heimgartner and Natural Resource Worker Wight worked together to clean access sites on the Snake River, Grande Ronde River, Asotin Creek, Grouse Flats, and the Wooten. They report that there are a lot of people using the access sites. They spent a couple of days this week putting in new campfire rings at popular campsites. They took their work truck to a vendor to order new tires. There seems to be a shortage of tires as these manufactures had paused making tires so they could make ventilators during this pandemic. Heimgartner and Wight did some winter maintenance on equipment. They report that the temporary porta-potties at Couse Creek and the Shooting Range have been picked up.



*WDFW access sites are getting lots of use*



*Heimgartner and Wight installed fire rings at campgrounds*

**Public Contacts:** Biologist Baarstad received 19 calls and emails this week regarding deer, waterfowl, turkey, and coyote hunting opportunities throughout eastern Washington.

**First-Time Hunters:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb had the opportunity to speak with some first-time hunters while inspecting a Walla Walla County property experiencing elk damage. The youth hunters on the property were very proud of the fact that they had accomplished the online Hunter Safety Course earlier this year. Moreover, they filled their tags on the final day of modern firearm season.



*A proud first-time hunter filled her tag on the final afternoon of modern firearm season (GMU 149)*

### **3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

**Sunshine Disposal Bear Awareness Flyer:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist O'Connor drafted a bear awareness flyer for the Sunshine Disposal Refuse Company to reduce human-bear conflict by promoting proper garbage management for customers in Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille counties. O'Connor has been in communication with Sunshine Disposal to implement a WDFW-funded bear

resistant garbage container loaner program for residents of the three counties experiencing extensive issues with bears accessing garbage.

O'Connor also worked on an educational flyer promoting garbage awareness and management to reduce attractants and conflict for black bears in northeast Washington. The flyer will be distributed in the Sunshine Disposal, new customer packets throughout the counties of Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille. This is an ongoing project between the regional wildlife biologist and District 1 wildlife conflict specialist, with support from Rich Beausoleil among other valuable WDFW staff members.

**Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF):** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb met with the Walla Walla Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) chapter president to discuss elk-related damage issues in the Blue Creek Game Management Unit (GMU). The RMEF local chapter is aware of the historical agricultural damage areas within the Blue Creek GMU and is open to helping with volunteers should any future projects or plans require assistance in implementation.

**Elk Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb met with a Columbia County producer who has on-going fence damage issues caused by crossing elk. The uncommon fence line damage area resulted in heavy elk traffic underneath a fence creating erosion in a high-angle slope part of the pasture. The producer's concern was that cattle might move through the area eroded by elk trails and be hit by a passenger vehicle (i.e., liability concerns). An empty 50-gallon drum was staked into the ground which appears to be successfully deterring cattle from crossing until a more permanent fix can be fashioned.



*A 50-gallon drum placed in a depression caused by elk movement. The barrel is a short-term solution to prevent cattle from moving off the private pasture*

#### 4) Conserving Natural Areas

With two tractors and two harrows, Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch and Natural Resource Technician Donovan Colvin began scratching in the native grass seed that was aurally dropped the week before onto heavily burned parts of Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. Not surprisingly when using old farming equipment, a harrow lift cylinder broke down. Also, not surprisingly, Finch found a vendor in Spokane who rebuilt it by the next day. The pair will continue this work for the next two to three weeks, weather permitting, until the seeded areas are all harrowed in.



*A good scratching-in*



*Remnants of perfectly timed snowfall*



**Swanson Lakes Post-Fire Activities:** WDFW Construction Coordinator Chris Alston visited Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area on Friday. He met with contractors to get estimates to repair the headquarters office. Emergency authorization has been issued to hire a vendor for immediate start, to avoid further damage from winter weather.

WDFW Vegetation Ecologist Kurt Merg coordinated with Wildlife Area Manager Juli Anderson on ordering shrubs, providing planting augers, scheduling and more, regarding rooted forb stock that will be hand-planted this fall. Planting has been pushed out to November, due to snow and cold weather occurring in late October. Merg and Anderson are also coordinating with the Spokane chapter of the Audubon Society for funding future forb grow-out by a contract vendor, for planting in spring 2021.

Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch and Natural Resource Technician Donovan Colvin worked with US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Wildlife Biologist Jason Lowe to take delivery of BLM-owned grass and forb seed. Finch and Colvin then seeded an old farm field on BLM ground on Thursday, on contract with BLM. This field is located between two units of Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area and is very close to a sharptailed grouse lek. Finch also completed an order for a native grass mix for severely burned ground at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. A local crop duster flew the mix onto the ground on Thursday, perfectly timed before Friday's snowfall which probably improved seed-to-soil contact. Finch had planned to follow the seed drop with a harrow pass to scratch in the seed but will determine next week if and/or where harrowing is still warranted.



*Ground seeding grass mix on BLM field adjacent to Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area*



*Aerial seeding grass mix at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area*

#### 5) Providing Education and Outreach

**Post-Fire Messaging:** Anderson spoke with WDFW Legislative Director Tom McBride and Lands Division Manager Cynthia Wilkerson this week, concerning local cattle producers' questions about the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area grazing policy after the Whitney Fire. A field tour of a variety of public and private properties may be scheduled, for different property owners to clarify to others their own goals and mandates, and to inspect habitat quality on these lands after the September Whitney Fire.

**Wolf-Livestock Presentation:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett presented information about range riding and wolf-livestock conflict in Washington to members of the public. Additional panelists included two non-governmental organizations (NGOs), WDFW Region 1 Special Assistant to the Director Steve Pozzanghera, and a producer.

**Grizzly Bear Outreach:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist O'Connor assisted with a grizzly bear education and outreach effort in Pend Oreille County. Wildlife Conflict Specialists Cook and O'Connor spoke with hunters, campers, and recreationalist within the Selkirk Grizzly Bear Conservation region of northeast Washington. We had only positive experiences when communicating bear awareness and grizzly bear safety to groups and individuals enjoying the natural resources of Pend Oreille County. As part of the information campaign, bear spray and bear safety pamphlets from the Grizzly Bear Outreach Project were passed out to promote the use of bear spray as an alternative to firearms if a bear encounter did occur.

#### 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**

**Washington Predator-Prey Project (mortality follow-up):** Biologist Heinlen and Research Scientist Devivo investigated the death of a radio-collared mule deer, finding the deer cashed under a tree and buried in vegetation. A necropsy was conducted, and the radio collar was retrieved.



*Mule deer cashed under a tree and buried in vegetation* – Photo by J. Heinlen

**Mule Deer Mortality Follow-up from British Columbia:** British Columbia Wildlife Biologist, Andrew Walker contacted WDFW Biologist Heinlen seeking assistance investigating a mortality signal from a mule deer radio collared in southern British Columbia that sent a mortality signal from Okanogan County. Biologist Heinlen found the radio collar which had dropped off the mule deer as it was fitted with a drop off function that worked as designed. The collar was recovered, and the mule deer lives on. This radio collared mule deer was part of British Columbia's Southern Interior Mule Deer Project. More information on this project can be found [here](#).



*Dropped radio collar from a mule deer collared in British Columbia and fitted with a drop off function which activated in Washington State – Photo by J. Heinlen*

**Bighorn Sheep Fall Surveys:** Biologists Jeffreys and Comstock conducted annual counts of all three bighorn sheep herds in Chelan County: Swakane, Chelan Butte, and Manson. Biologists performed ground surveys of the Swakane and Chelan herds by stopping at different observation points along US 97 and US 97A to glass for sheep. The Manson herd inhabits a stretch of the north shore of Lake Chelan and must be surveyed by boat. Volunteer Kirk Wallace generously offered to transport Biologists Comstock and Jeffreys on his boat for the survey. All sheep observed were classified according to age and sex to determine herd composition. Numbers and sex/age ratios observed for each herd will be included in the next biweekly report.



*Volunteer Kirk Wallace graciously provided use of his boat so Biologists Comstock and Jeffreys could conduct bighorn sheep surveys on Lake Chelan – Photos by Devon Comstock (left) and Kirk Wallace (right)*



*A band of sheep on Chelan Butte*– Photo by Emily Jeffreys



*A ram crossing Navarre Coulee Road* – Photo by Emily Jeffreys

**Highway 97A Collisions:** The last two weeks of October saw multiple bighorn sheep killed by vehicle collisions at the north end of Wenatchee, just below where the Highway 97A fence ends. This is a common congregating point for bighorn sheep during the rutting period. Unfortunately, four sheep were hit in about a one-week period. Biologist Comstock worked with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) personnel to get reader boards placed on the highway at critical points warning of the high potential for sheep in the area, as well as to recover some of the ram heads. It is illegal to salvage or possess bighorn sheep horns in the state of Washington unless harvested under a legal permit or obtained by authorization from WDFW's Director. WDFW salvaged ram heads are donated to permitted nonprofit hunting groups to help raise funds for bighorn sheep projects, such as the Highway 97A fence.

Each year, October marks the beginning of a period of significant increase in sheep presence along the sides of roads, crossing highways, and even coming into neighborhoods and city streets as rams travel long distances to secure mates. Sheep tend to remain at lower elevations throughout the winter for better access to forage and are drawn to the salt used to clear icy roads. Motorists are asked to exercise caution when traveling along Highway 97A, especially from Wenatchee to Entiat, and to remain vigilant for sheep in the road at all times.



*An ewe and young ram killed on Highway 97A where someone had illegally removed the horns from the ram – Photo by Devon Comstock*



*Two mature ram heads salvaged from road kills which will be donated for fundraising – Photo by Devon Comstock*

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Modern Firearm Season:** The modern firearm season was a busy time in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area this year. Most campsites were full with either camp trailers or wall tents. On opening weekend at least 67 camp trailers were counted in the valley and there were numerous wall tents as well. Mid-way through the week we received a few inches of snow that stayed through the remainder of the hunting season, but it didn't seem to have an effect on the amount of camps. Most people stayed through the whole season and there were many successful camps in the valley. The Methow Wildlife Area also experienced a high volume of hunting and hunting camps throughout the wildlife area. The campgrounds of Cougar Flat, Bear Creek and Beaver Creek were packed with hunters with success seemingly high throughout the valley.



*Dispersed camping along Upper Beaver Creek Road bottom* – Photo by Justin Haug



*General season deer hunters in East Fish Lake Campground* – Photo by Justin Haug



*Hunting in Okanogan County with Whitestone Mountain in the background* – Photo by Haug

**Hunter Access Program:** Private lands biologists spent the opening day of modern firearm deer season, out talking with landowners within the Pearl Hill Fire boundary and talking to displaced deer hunters providing information and suggestions on where to hunt. Private Land Biologist Braaten talked with 65 hunters with 11 bucks and one bear in Douglas County.



*A family celebrates opening day traditions out hunting mule deer together in Douglas County -*  
Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

Biologists also coordinated with WDFW Enforcement about trespassing incidents, which were addressed immediately.



**Blue Lake Water Access Site:** Lands Operations Manager Finger checked progress on the Blue Lake Water Access re-development project. Changes to the layout will influence how trailered boats go about launching and questions arose about how functional the new layout would be. Finger also checked on the condition of the boundary chain link fence, which was supposed to be replaced, but due to funding constraints, had to be removed from the project. Finger coordinated with Access Manager Harmon on potential ways to get the fence funded.



*Blue Lake Water Access Site looking inland from the start of the plank launch, paving will be completed by the end of October* - Photo by Finger

**Pheasant Season:** Eastern Washington's general season for pheasant began on October 24 and will continue through January 18. Biologists released pheasants in release sites the day before the season opener.





*Pheasants received a cold welcome when released in Eastern Washington* – Photos by J. Heinlen and E. Jeffries

**Regulated Access Areas:** Filling wetland basins at the Frenchman and Winchester Regulated Access Areas started early this month. Currently all basins at the Frenchman are at full pool and seeing heavy use by mallards, northern pintails, wigeon, gadwalls, green-wing teal, and sandhill cranes. North Potholes Regulated Access Area is experiencing limited water availability due to operation of water on Potholes Reservoir only ponds one, two, and four have water and it is much lower than typical years. Ponds three and five have no water at all, so Specialist McPherson will put a sign by the registration box alerting hunters of conditions. The youth hunt occurred on October 3 and all regulated access areas saw youth hunter participation.



*Sandhill cranes enjoying wetland basin fill up at the Frenchman Regulated Access Area* - Photo by C. McPherson

### 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Turkey Trouble:** Specialist Heilhecker received a call from an orchardist adjacent to the Palmer Fire burn scar. He stated turkeys roost nearby, then come to his orchard to eat apples on his trees. Since the orchardist did not sound interested in hunting, she suggested using paintball guns to haze. It has been effective, at times, for other landowners. Specialist Heilhecker informed him that financial compensation for crop loss does not exist for turkeys. She entered a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) into Novatus and will meet with the orchardist after the agreement is returned from headquarters.

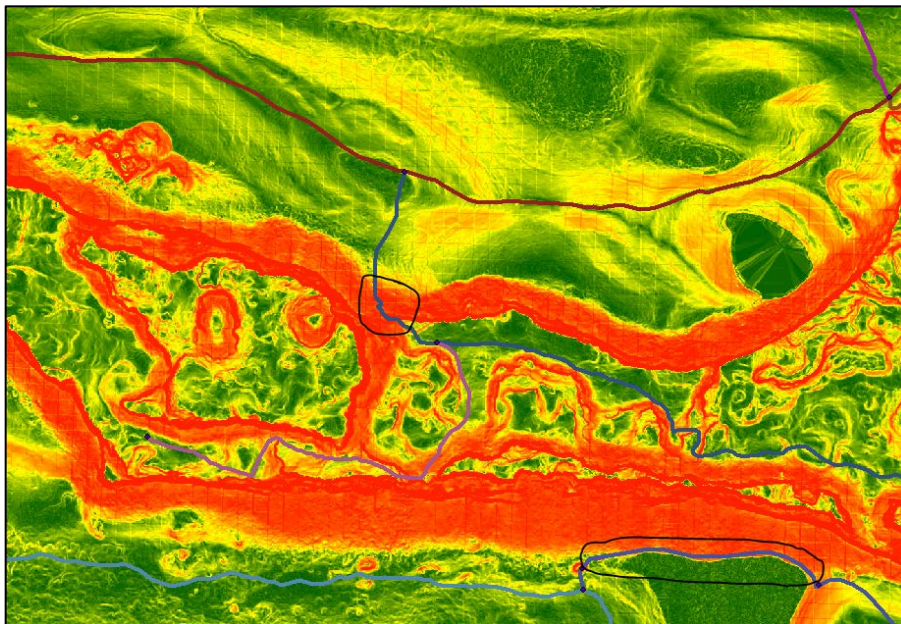
Specialist Heilhecker met with another orchardist to sign a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement. The orchardist has experiencing turkey damage to his apples. Specialist Heilhecker issued several kill permits. However, the orchardist said the permits would likely go unused. Freezing temperatures in the next several days would end the apple harvest and therefore the turkeys could eat the remaining apples.

**Deer and Elk Damage:** Specialist Heilhecker received two deer damage complaints from orchardists familiar with the program. She submitted a new Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement for the orchardist with an expired agreement. The other orchardist, who is adjacent to the Palmer Fire burn scar, has an active agreement. She asked both landowners to use licensed deer hunters during the upcoming general season. Specialist Heilhecker also received a damage complaint regarding elk in alfalfa fields. The landowner is familiar with the damage program. Specialist Heilhecker renewed his Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement and issued him a kill permit to remove one antlerless elk.

### 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

**Quincy Lakes Trails Planning:** Lands Operations Manager Finger held two online meetings with the Compliance and Recreation Planning Teams to work towards the submitting a Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Nonhighway and Off-road Vehicle Activities (NOVA) Trails Planning Grant. Two new members have joined the team, Cari Mathews, Executive Director of Quincy Chamber of Commerce, and Larry Leach, Assistant Region Manager. The discussions have been focused primarily on meeting the needs of the planning grant such as control and tenure documentation, an update on the discussion of NOVA eligibility with the RCO Grant Managers, request for support letters, cultural resource survey requirements and estimating contractor costs, additional permits required, and costs associated with plan development. Finger scheduled a fall rendezvous with the archaeologists on the team to spend a little time getting to know the area and hopefully to install a good portion of the trail counters.

The reason DNR had only recently entered the discussion was because the lease agreement had not been renewed until just recently. With DNR now at the table, we were able to get their perspective on level of support for this project. Managing trails falls within the lease terms and management plan but DNR will be requiring that any trails designated or developed be constructed to USFS standards and WDFW must decommission all trails at the expiration of the lease. Finger began investigating what it means to have trails built and maintained to USFS standards. For the most part, this does not appear to be a problem, however, there are lengthy trails across talus slopes.



This LiDAR image shows how trails systems will likely have some steep and challenging areas to develop trails of USFS standards. The colored lines represent identified trail routes. The circled area near the center of the image shows where steep slopes occur, and switchbacks will likely have to be designed. The circled area near the bottom is a trail segment that traverses a large talus slope. Finger was able to make use of this LiDAR imagery to create a shapefile of polygons in various slope categories. The slopes can then be overlaid on the trail system to identify segments that will require more intensive trail construction. Though a soils layer exists, the talus slopes lacks the necessary resolution and will likely have to be mapped manually.

Finger also coordinated with attorneys for a private lands parcel which has been having issues with trespassing. Posting boundaries is the responsibility of the landowner but given the difficulties associated with accessing the boundary (landlocked and very steep), we've decided to offer a helping hand by providing a ROE permit and guidance on getting to the boundary for this fall. At this time, the wildlife area staff members will also post trails that lead to the private property boundary to hopefully stop the trespassing from occurring. Finger also advised them of two geocaches on their property and made suggestions for how to contact the individual who placed them.

**Safe Harbor Program:** Biologist Hughes conducted habitat surveys on General Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acres that are being enrolled in Safe Harbor Program (SHP). Hughes continued to work with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to review the background on the two tracts being enrolled into SHP, that had 14 active burrows on CRP in Beezley Hills. The information gathered during the habitat surveys will be used in a proposal to create leave areas within these General CRP fields for the duration of the CRP contract. The field stands were originally seeded to crested wheat and 50 percent of the fields were reseeded in strips in 1999 to 3 cultivated grasses with Sandberg's. The strips reseeded into a General CRP mix have now outcompeted sections of crested wheat. The fields currently have a great grass stand of native grasses and forbs that have come in along with the cultivated CRP grasses reseeded in 1999. The minimal weed pressure and mix of grasses and forbs will support the proposal in allowing leave areas in the CRP stand.



Photos by Hughes

**Post-fire Rehabilitation and Soil Stabilization:** Lands Operations Manager Finger participated in an online meeting involving modelers from DNR and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), City of Bridgeport, County Commissioner Straub, Foster Creek Conservation District, wildlife area staff, and Habitat Program staff to learn about the potential for catastrophic flooding in Bridgeport and to determine what can be done to mitigate for potential impacts in the coming springs ahead. Unfortunately, soil burn severity maps are believed to perform poorly for this area and no new products are available to date (possibly in the works however), so managers must rely on observations of fall green-up to understand how rapidly recovery might occur. On the bright side, green-up is occurring across much of the slopes above Bridgeport. The discussions that ensued left WDFW managers feeling like the best approach, with available staff time and resources, is to clear culverts and make efforts to protect them from potential blockages and to rehabilitate vegetation in the watersheds of critical drainages.



*Fall green-up beginning above the city of Bridgeport* - Photo by Finger



*Close-up of green-up response* - Photo by Finger



*Assessing and discussing next steps to reduce likelihood of culvert blockages from runoff and debris flows* - Photo by Finger

With regards to rehabilitation efforts, plant materials are in extremely limited supply and any sagebrush seeding attempts will require wild collection and clearing of seed. Therefore, to better understand natural vegetative response in areas of interest, Lands Operations Manager Finger and Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Blake worked together to test what plants we can expect to move in based on soil samples from the top ½” of the soil profile. Soil samples were spread thinly over about two inches of potting soil under irrigation and grow lights to evaluate the response and gauge the potential need for additional sagebrush seeding. Finger and Blake will work together to expand on this pending result of this initial effort.



*Soil tests to determine whether sagebrush might respond without seeding and to determine what other plant species we can expect to establish over the next growing season - Photo by Finger*

**Okanogan Lands 20/20 Applications:** Okanogan Lands Operations Manager Haug submitted two Lands 20/20 applications for future land transactions. The projects include a potential donation and acquisition of an inholding on the Driscoll-Eyhott Island Unit of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. The projects will go through a technical review in early November and be presented to the Executive Management Team and on to the WDFW Commission early next year.



*The Driscoll-Eyhott Unit of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area* - Photo by Justin Haug

**Scotch Creek Riparian Project:** Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Manager Olson and Lands Operations Manager Haug toured the RCO-funded Scotch Creek Riparian Restoration Project. The overall goal of this project is to bring a half mile of Scotch Creek into a healthier condition, by improving water quality and stream habitat. Objectives include raising the water table, establishing riparian vegetation, capturing sediment to aggrade the incised stream bed, and increasing the capacity of the stream and wetland to store water for drought protection. Plans are to plant a significant amount of water birch trees that will benefit the sharp-tailed grouse populations in the area. The next week, Haug toured the site again with North Central Education Service District STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) coordinator and regional science coordinator to discuss using the site to develop a fifth grade STEM module for local school districts around the project and associated beaver dam analogs.



*Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Manager Olson looking at one of the many beaver dam analogs constructed in Scotch Creek* - Photo by Justin Haug



**Vegetation Management:** The Columbia Basin Wildlife Area aerielly treated 960 acres of invasive Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) in select areas on four different units. Common reed is a non-native grass, growing up to 14 inches height, that aggressively invades and dominates shallow wetlands, shorelines, and moist soil areas. It's rapid displacement of desirable wetland vegetation results in degradation of the productive, high quality shallow wetland habitat that supports waterfowl and shorebirds in the area. This invasive species has proven to be a significant management challenge, with few effective control options. As *Phragmites* become more widespread and established, it is hopeful that bio-control agents, which are most typically insects from the area of origin that target the plant, will become available in the future as another tool to address this problematic plant.



*Common reed (Phragmites) infestation along the Winchester Wasteway (Cole)*

**Farm Unit Irrigation:** Included in the real estate portfolio of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area are several parcels identified as “farm units.” Basically, a “farm unit” is a parcel of land deemed to be irrigable and has the necessary infrastructure to receive water by way of the Columbia Basin Project. WDFW developed these farm units several decades ago for wildlife habitat, typically upland birds, by seeding perennial grasses and planting berry producing shrubs and trees such as western juniper, August olive, Wood’s rose, and Saskatoon serviceberry. Today, WDFW staff members continue to manage these parcels and still utilizes the aging infrastructure. In July and August of every summer, WDFW personnel can be found checking siphon tubes and clearing debris from spigots to keep the systems operating as well as possible. The results of the irrigation are hard to quantify, but the most visible results are the copious amounts of berries produced on some of the trees and shrubs over the two-month period. Assistant Manager Bechtold has been operating these systems all summer and has recently had the water turned off and removed all irrigation related equipment for the season.

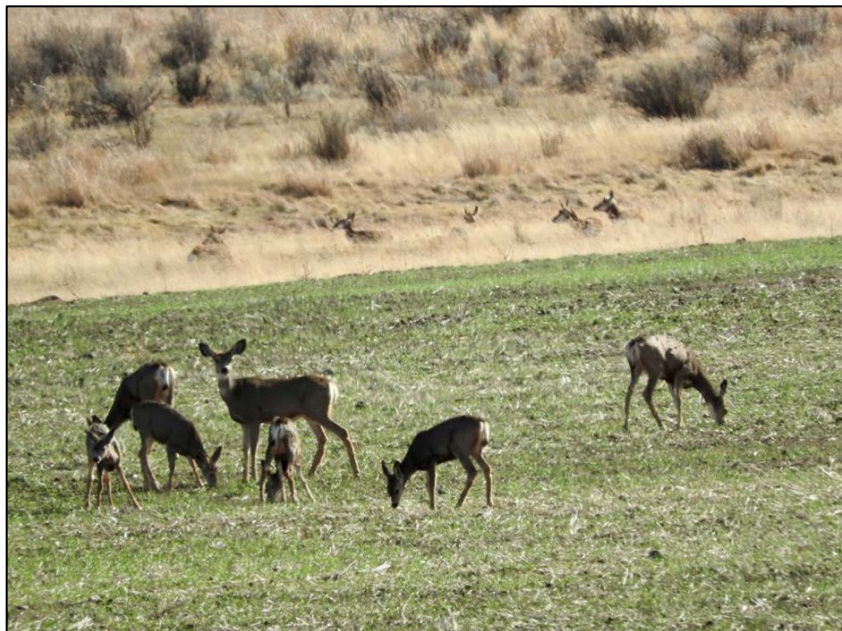


*Western juniper after two months of irrigation* – Photo by Bechtold

**Apple Maggot Quarantine:** Lands Operations Manager Finger met with wildlife area staff members Peterson and Blake, Douglas PUD staff Schilling, Patterson, and Schulke, and the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), to discuss the presence of a complete life cycle of apple maggots within shrub plots at the Bridgeport Bar Unit. Confirmation of the complete life cycle of apple maggots has the potential to trigger quarantine of the area, which has significant impacts to export markets. Douglas Public Utilities District (PUD) and the Wildlife Area were quick to respond to all recommendations from the WSDA and the Chelan-Douglas County Horticultural Pest and Disease Board by removing potential host plants. This will hopefully result in a decision to not invoke a quarantine zone of this area by the Director of the WSDA.



*Snow came early to Okanogan County as seen on the mountains along the Twisp River valley on October 22, 2020* – Photo by J. Heinlen



*Douglas County mule deer and pronghorn antelope* - Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW



*Western gray squirrel near Sinlahekin Wildlife Area* – Photo by Haug



*Early October snowfall in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area* – Photo by Haug



*Sunset from Silver Hill on the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area* – Photos by Haug



*Chopaka Mt. sunset on the Similkameen-Chopaka Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area* - Photo by Haug

### **REGION 3**

#### ***HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:***

##### **1) Managing Wildlife Populations**

Wildlife Biologist Biologists Oates and Moore flew a survey of south Quilomene to look for any signs of pneumonia in bighorn sheep. The bighorns sampled in early October tested negative for *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (MOVI). The survey was a follow-up to check if previous testing had missed positive animals. Oates and Moore observed 44 bighorns (lamb to ewe ratio was 0.85), with six adult rams in south Quilomene. Further north 16 bighorns with four adult rams in total were observed. Oates and Moore were confident that they observed all sheep that were in the area and that there were no signs of pneumonia.



*Bighorn sheep in South Quilomene*

While staff members were working on Quilomene, a call was received regarding a dead/sick bighorn sheep on Clemans Mountain. Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manger Mackey responded and collect samples from a fresh, dead lamb. District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz arranged to pin and sample a ram harvested by a permit holder. The lamb tested positive for MOVI, however, the ram tested negative. The test results are an indication of an early disease outbreak. In recent days, additional reports have come in from the public regarding dead, sick, and coughing bighorn sheep. MOVI typically infects most of a population. With the rut now on, there will be frequent movement between sub-groups. There is no vaccine or management action that can be taken that is known to be successful to prevent or stop MOVI. Hunter harvested sheep in the late season will be sampled to determine the current extent of the outbreak.

District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz responded to two radio-collared deer mortalities. Both were cougar kills. Muckleshoot Tribe staff members investigated one mortality but couldn't determine the cause of death as most of the animal had been consumed. District 8 continues to have fairly high mortality rates on collared adult female deer.



*Two radio-collared deer buried by cougars*

Wetlands in the Sunnyside, Windmill, and Mesa units have all started filling with water prior to the opening of waterfowl season. The cooling weather this week combined with natural forage in the wetlands have duck numbers increasing daily.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin spent the last month mowing all cells of the Rice Paddies wetlands and rebuilding levees. All the cells are cleared of thick cattails and other vegetation down to a ratio of about 20 percent cover (vegetation islands) and 80 percent open water. The levees have also been rebuilt between cells and around the eastern perimeter making maintenance of water levels more manageable.



*Rice Paddies southeast cells after mowing with new levees in distance*





*Signage to discourage walking on and trampling down new leve*

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Wascisin mowed approximately 80 percent of the Johnson Wetlands area as well, leaving a perimeter of tall grass and riparian tree growth. Assistant Manager Ferguson worked with the Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District to dredge out the area around the intake pipe for the Bridgeman Pond/Morgan Lake/Johnson Wetland complex, greatly increasing water flow into the area. After the removal of a small beaver dam, water is flowing into Johnson at a steady rate, hopefully filling the wetlands for the waterfowl season.



*Mowing Johnson Wetlands*



*Johnson water flow as of 10/13/2020*

Manager Kaelber and Assistant Manager Rodgers assisted Sunnyside Wildlife Area staff members by mowing out the Haystack Ponds wetlands. Personnel were then able to take out large swaths of overgrown cattails which helped open additional water areas for waterfowl habitat and hunting opportunities.



*Haystack ponds area after mowing*



Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin planted approximately 50 acres of habitat plots consisting of millet, sunflower, and native grasses around field edges, in swales, and rice paddies cells. Several of the plots turned out well with good seed generation.



*“100-acre field” edge habitat plot sunflowers and millet*

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Mountain Goat and Cougar Inspections:** District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra conducted inspections for hunters who successfully harvested mountain goat and cougars this season. During this time of year, the number of inspections is ramping up. Inspected animals usually come from elsewhere in the state by hunters living in Tri-Cities area.



*Mountain goat inspected after harvest*

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik and District 8 Wildlife Biologist Oates released pheasants in the Quilomene Wildlife Area. Extra birds were released in the Quilomene due to the “Cottonwood” site burning up in the Evans Creek fire.



*Pheasant released in the Quilomene Wildlife Area*

District 8 Wildlife Biologists Bernatowicz and Oates responded to numerous calls and emails from hunters regarding places to hunt, access, pheasant releases, and more. Bernatowicz also provided information to WDFW’s Public Affairs office on hunting multiple species of upland bird in the same day. The information will be provided in a blog.

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart partnered with Mountains to Sound Greenway staff members to guide volunteers in the building of a kiosk at Cabin Creek. He also erected the kiosk that was built by Boy Scouts on Beacon Ridge.



*Cabin Creek kiosk built by volunteers*





*Erecting the Beacon Ridge kiosk built by Boy Scouts*

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik and staff members began developing a project that will work with local stakeholders to reroute the United States Forest Service (USFS) trail #1385 away from South Fork Manastash Creek. The current trail location delivers sediment to the South Fork Manastash Creek.



*Shoestring USFS motorcycle trail delivering sediment to South Fork Manastash Creek*

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart and Natural Resource Scientist Nass were accompanied by WDFW Enforcement Officers Nassett and Peterson to remove an abandoned camper and 500 pounds of trash at two homeless encampments along Taneum Creek. Both had been on site for over 30 days.



*Homeless encampment at a dispersed camping site along Taneum Creek*



*Cleaning a dispersed camping site at the bottom of Shadow Creek Road on the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area*

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik and Assistant Manager Winegeart cleaned up multiple sites in Cabin Creek along the powerlines where parties have taken place.



*Trash left after several parties in Cabin Creek along the powerline corridor*

### **3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

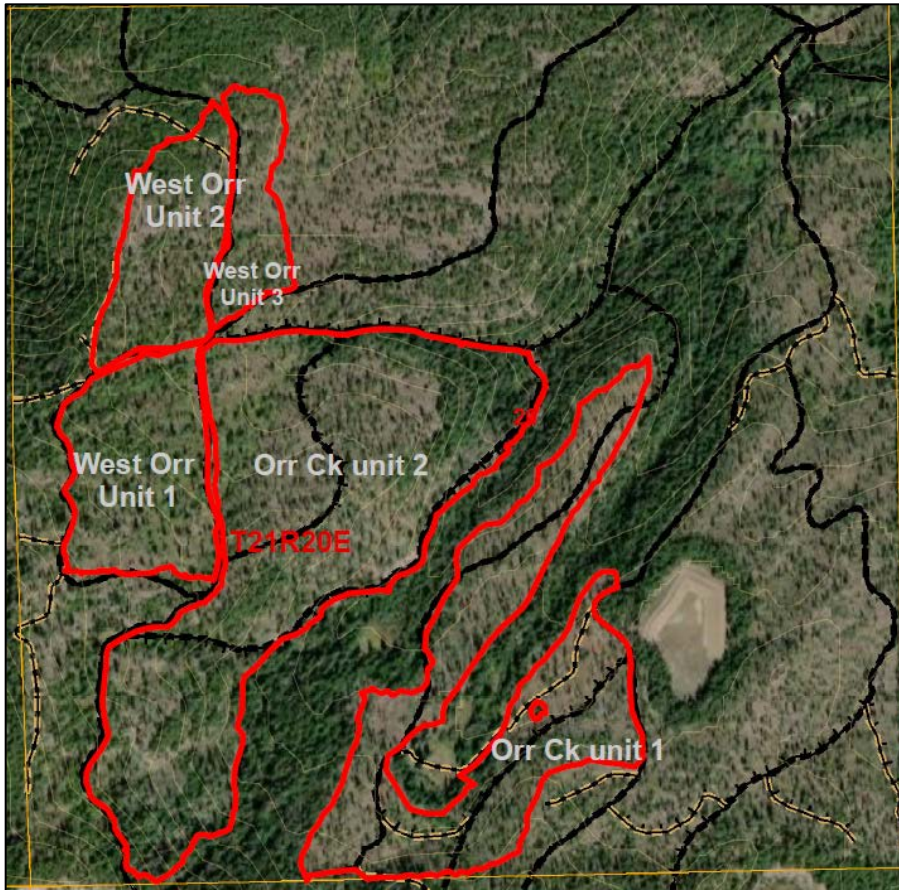
District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel continued cougar trapping efforts in the east end of GMU 334 because of domestic sheep depredations. Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by a farmer in Cle Elum who wished to file a claim for his hayfield, even though no hay crop exists there at this time. Conflict Specialist Wetzel met with a crop damage appraiser in Cowiche to look at an orchard there with potential elk damage. The recent frost culled the crop on the trees, and it is questionable whether a claim can be filed at all.

**Wolf Activities:** Range Rider Ward and District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel discussed cattle locations in areas of the Naneum Pack and Teanaway Pack territories this month. Many cattle are off the range, but most areas still have a few cattle in widely dispersed small groups. Cold weather usually brings these cattle back to the home ranches.

### **4) Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Fire Crews and Colockum Wildlife Area staff members began developing containment lines for upcoming prescribed fires in the Stemilt Basin, Colockum Wildlife Area. The Prescribed Fire Team from Okanogan spent two weeks flagging lines and clearing logs so a dozer could be used to build lines. These units were thinned in 2019 and are prime for a prescribed burn to reintroduce fire back onto this landscape. Burns are planned for spring and fall of 2021.





*Fire Unit Map for Orr Creek on the Colockum Wildlife Area*



*Dozer working to develop firelines in Stemilt Basin on the Colockum Wildlife Area*



*Fireline Created through Orr Creek Burn Unit 1 on the Colockum Wildlife Area*

**Kahlotus Unit Fire Assessment:** District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra toured GMU 381 to assess habitat damage from a fire back in early September. The fire burned from Snake River Road across Devil's Canyon and nearly all shrubs were lost as well as a few homes, structures, CRP and Wheat Stubble. Several roads will remain closed for opening weekend of deer and ducks.

CAMP engineers finished installing water bars and gates on non-green-dot roads in the Green Gate Restoration Area of the Quilomene unit of the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area. They ripped portions of the old user- built two track roads so staff can seed with native vegetation. Natural Resource Specialist Nass and Assistant Manager Winegeart will contract wing fence installation to prevent vehicles from driving around the gate.

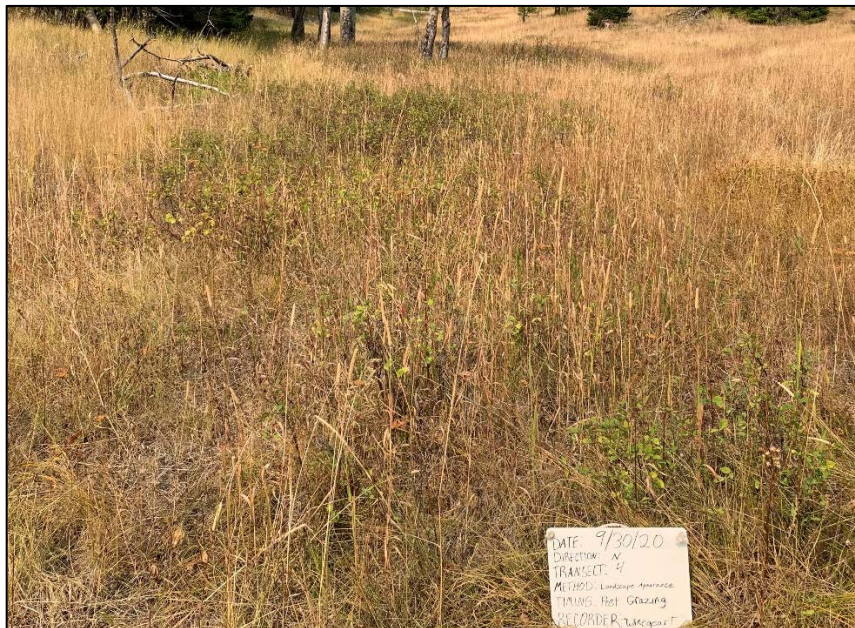


*Vehicle gate and non-motorized pass through in the Quilomene Wildlife Area*



***Ripped non-green-dot road ready for seed in the Quilomene Wildlife Area***

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart conducted post sheep grazing landscape monitoring on the L.T. Murray. The permit allows for 160 AUMs to be utilized across 4,500 acres in a three-month span. Very little use was observed at the monitoring sites. Winegeart removed the sheep herder's combo locks and checked the status of gates in the grazing area.



***Post grazing sheep monitoring on the L.T. Murray***

## 5) Providing Education and Outreach

**Interest in Bluebirds for Interview:** District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra conducted an interview with a journalist for AAA Magazine doing a story on the Bickleton Bluebirds Nest Box Trail. Fidorra covered Bluebird ecology, nest site competition, and benefits provided by nest boxes.

## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart and Natural Resource Technician Blore replaced an old stock fence gate on the Quilomene Unit. A combination lock was added to permit riders to remove trespass cattle.



*New gate along Parke Creek Road on the Quilomene Wildlife Area between Whiskey Jim and Upper Parke pastures*

## 7) Other

Nothing this installment.

## **REGION 4**

### *HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:*

#### 1) Managing Wildlife Populations

**Oregon Spotted Frog Working Group Meeting:** District Wildlife Biologists Waddell and Moore attended the virtual Washington Oregon Spotted Frog workgroup quarterly meeting. The group discussed restoration, habitat monitoring, and outreach updates. Waddell and Moore summarized their efforts on an outreach grant geared towards educating local landowners in Skagit and Whatcom counties on how they can help protect the species and the habitat it uses.

**King County Special Permit Hunts:** District 12 worked the opening day of the Green River special permit hunts. Hunters lined-up to check-in and then head into the Green River Watershed to harvest an elk or deer.



*Hunters checking in at the early morning hunter check station in GMU 485*



*Deer moving around on opening day in the Green River Watershed in GMU 485*

**Permanent Marking of a Bighorn Sheep Ram:** District Wildlife Biologist Waddell applied a permanent mark (see red arrow in photo), commonly called a pin, to the horn of a legally harvested bighorn sheep taken by a local hunter (hunt occurred outside Region 4). Biologist Waddell also counted growth rings on the horns to estimate age and took various horn measurements. Successful hunters who kill a bighorn sheep ram must present the horns for inspection and marking within ten days of harvest.



*Location of the permanent pin applied to the horn of a legally harvested bighorn sheep*

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Private Lands Access Program and Waterfowl Habitat:** Region 4 Private Lands Access Program had 33 waterfowl habitat and Access Program sites open for the public on the opening day of waterfowl season. Private Land Biologist Wingard worked the opening day and spoke with some of the many hunters out enjoying good duck hunting weather and tides. Nearly all the waterfowl habitat and Access Program sites were being hunted, the Skagit Wildlife Area parking lots were filled or beyond capacity, the boat ramps were busy as well. Overall it was a successful and busy opening day.





**Private Lands Access Program Island Deer Hunting Opportunities:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard setup seven Private Lands Access Program Island Deer Hunting sites in San Juan County. These sites are available through the Hunt by Reservation system on the WDFW website. The sites offer a variety of landscapes to hunt, from pastoral settings, to orchards, to forested mountains. Multiple hunters have reported success at these properties already.





*Private Lands Access Program - Island deer hunting site on San Juan Island with the provided hunting blind in the background*

**418 Late Buck Hunter:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard met with a selection of 418 special permit hunters who were selected to receive a Sierra Pacific Industries Hamilton Mainline gate key. The hunters were very excited and grateful for the opportunity, the special permit hunt starts on October 31.

**Waterfowl Season Opener:** Our Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager reports a very active start to the waterfowl season opener this month. The Cherry Valley Unit was very busy due to high rainfall that provided sheet water and full ponds throughout the unit.

### **3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

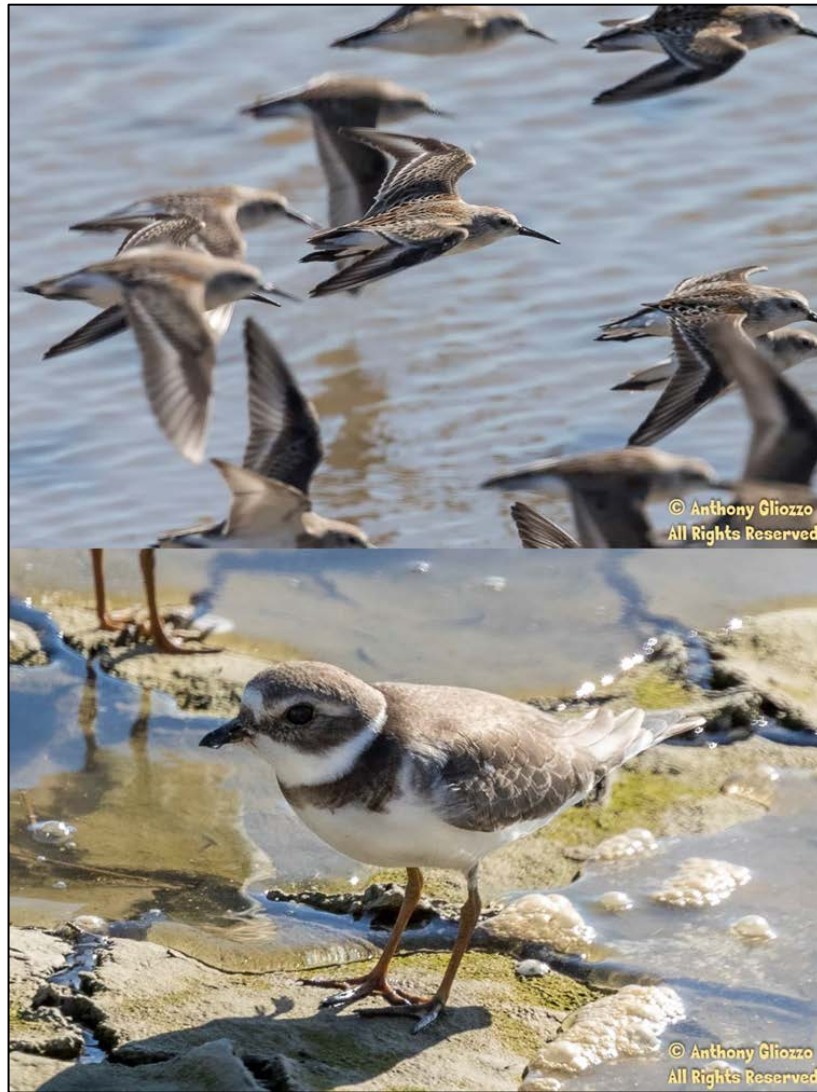
**Port of Seattle Integrated Pest Management:** District 12 donated a master hunter-built barn owl box for use by the Port of Seattle in their efforts to attract barn owls and other raptors to control rats and mice at facilities. The box will be used as an example to build more and place them in a pilot project. Barn owls take to other similar built/natural areas of Seattle so as long as there is a local population in the area District 12 looks forward to hearing of success and gaining some local photos for outreach use from the effort.



*Juvenile barn owl at local King County park* – Photo by Joyce Meyers

#### 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

**Leque Island Monitoring:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw visited the site to go over vegetation and channel monitoring and adaptive management with Doctor Greg Hood from the Skagit River Systems Cooperative and Daniel Zimmerman of WDFW's Noxious Weed Program. A wide variety of native marsh plants are colonizing the site, though invasive *Spartina* has been observed and will need to be continually monitored and treated. The Stanwood Camano News published a story that describes observations on the site after one-year of the transition to a salt marsh available [here](#).



*A local bird watcher, Anthony Gliozzo provided some great photos of shorebirds using Leque Island for WDFW to use in future communications materials*

**Common Species:** District 12 met with Conservation Section Manager Cotten and representatives at the University of Washington regarding the prospect of “rewilding” certain common species that are locally extirpated or at very low levels but arguably viable in reestablishing given preferred habitat is present. In certain species their occurrence, locally, may be affected by as simple a factor as the given species just does not move about much naturally. If winked out previously at a given spot, but habitat still present, it is plausible the local population has not reestablished simply due to this one fact of not being a very vagile organism so unable to move back into preferred habitat patches due to lack of mobility across a given spatial scale. More talks are to occur regarding the prospect of this concept and potential of related efforts being examined.

## 5) Providing Education and Outreach

**Graduate Student Interviews:** District 12 provided two interviews to two separate master's degree students working on degrees in the Woodland Park Zoo Advanced Inquiry Program with Miami University. One student is examining bat conservation, education and efforts within area communities (particularly low income); another is examining human-wildlife conflict, local efforts and issues, current techniques and needs.

**Non-native Species:** District 12, collaborating with Diversity Section Biologist Hallock and researchers with University of California- Berkeley, met with a family that found a slender salamander in their yard in Kirkland. The nine-year-old son is the lead on salamander rescue and care, and he is doing a great job! Researchers are interested in genetics from this animal in order to determine species, general location of origin, and examine within a larger body of data examining cross-border translocation events, commonality of occurrence of such events, and other factors of interstate commerce that may be promoting unwanted travel and other concerns in various amphibian species such as this one. This species may be the California slender salamander but has yet to be determined as there are many slender salamander species in Mexico, California, and southern Oregon.



*Biologist with salamander in hand about to take tail clip*



*Salamander in its vivarium setting*

**Elk Hunting in King County (District 12):** The Stampede Unit (466) has been unusually busy this season given all the fires, people wanting to stay near home, desire to find places that are open and little fees involved (e.g. state or federal land), and wanting to get a hunt in. Unfortunately, that can mean a bit of loving nature to death at times. Biologists went up the first Friday of archery season and noted quite a few camps and hunters, more than seen in past seasons, in the 466 area (mainly USFS land with some open industrial timber land interspersed). After talking with a WDFW officer that patrolled that area sounds like opening weekend for the general archery elk hunt had quite a few folks out. It is great to see folks out but some of the numbers have us a bit concerned.

The officer checked 54 hunters in 45 minutes that first Saturday of the hunt and continues to see much more than average vehicle traffic off the main roads. Many folks are relaying they didn't put in for an eastern Washington hunt due to various reasons. Also, fires and Covid-19 were mentioned as factors to stay on the western side of the crest. Hunters from all over the state were in King County. Biologists will continue to monitor end of season harvest numbers and get field reports from officers who regularly patrol those areas; in order to keep a tab on hunting pressure and general use of local game units. Folks are having a good time, aside from the aforementioned "packed in tight" scenario, and have been in contact with biologists regarding what they are finding, where to go, etc. Lots of calls on elk and grouse hunting over the last month. Very glad to hear folks are out, enjoying nature, having positive experiences!



*Bull elk in King County with what appears most likely to be an umbilical hernia. Animal is fine, just a lump.*

**Washington Waterfowl Association Meeting:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard gave a preseason presentation at the monthly Northwest Chapter of Washington Waterfowl Association meeting. This meeting is always lots of fun with excited hunters and good news to share about the hunting opportunities available for the coming season. It is also a good venue to get feedback on where WDFW can do better and what WDFW and WWA can do to work together.

**Western Washington Waterfowl Hunting Season Update:** District Biologists C. Moore was interviewed by Bill Monroe - WF360 Pacific Northwest Migration Editor and blog writer for the Ducks Unlimited Migration Alert review the pacific flyway. The blog can be found [here](#), once it is published.

## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

**WDFW Puget Sound Monitoring Staff Network Meeting:** District Biologist C. Moore attended the virtual WDFW Puget Sound Monitoring Staff Network meeting. The goals of this group are to establish a network of WDFW staff who are working on status and trends monitoring related to the Puget Sound Ecosystem Recovery and Management. This group includes biologists from many different programs including wildlife, marine mammal, fisheries, and habitat.

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that seasonal Natural Resource Technician Brooks Estes continues to support the Boater Access and Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Programs. Brooks has been busy maintaining five fishing access sites, repairing and painting access gates, replacing aged signage and keeping litter under control. She also continues to do tree fall cleanups from the recent windstorm and brush cutting overgrown weeds when weather permits.



*Example of repaired and painted access gates and unit entrances*

## 7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

## **REGION 5**

Nothing for this installment.

## **REGION 6**

### *HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:*

#### **1) Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Snowy Plovers:** Biologist Novack participated in the Recovery Unit 1 Annual Western Snowy Plover Working Team Meeting with multiple partners from Oregon and Washington. Snowy plovers have been highly productive in Oregon this year and their fledglings should keep dispersing to supplement bird numbers in both Washington and California.

**Dusky Goose Surveys:** Biologist Sundstrom began the seasonal bi-monthly goose surveys on October 28, covering a portion of southwest Pacific County, in Biologist Michaelis's absence. Sundstrom, along with District Biologist Novack, conducted surveys throughout Grays Harbor County on the 29, field testing the new data entry program Survey 123 for the surveys. The data has not yet been tallied but geese were found at a few locations throughout the Chehalis Valley.

**Goose Hunter Checks:** Biologist Sundstrom has been taking goose hunter phone calls, although very limited, as signs have not yet been posted and no cards are currently being placed on hunter vehicles. Directives have yet to be formed regarding dusky goose harvest compliance random field checks.

**Hoof Collection for Washington State University Research:** Biologist Harris, with the assistance of a few local master hunters, are attempting to collect infected elk hooves for Washington State University (WSU) research. The master hunters are using permits issued by Biologist Harris for this purpose. Edible meat will be donated locally. Biologist Harris was able to collect one set from Pacific County. Unfortunately, the elk was in poor condition and determined not edible. Overall collections have been slow. With various hunting seasons in progress, efforts have been focused on areas receiving agricultural damage and collectors avoid an area with other hunters present. Fortunately for the producer and unfortunately for the collection efforts, elk have not been readily available. Public hunting access on these properties is helping keep the elk on the move. Efforts will continue where appropriate.

**Cougar and Bobcat Seals:** Natural Resources Technician Tupen has sealed multiple cougars and bobcats for lucky hunters over the past few weeks.

**Taylor's Checkerspot Survey Station Measurement Records for 2020 and 2021 Surveys:** Biologist McMillan spent time improving the survey route, marked stations, and kept records for a point count method of butterfly population monitoring at the northern site west of the Elwha River. The upcoming timber harvest that is occurring in the surrounding habitat has made it necessary to gather site records that will be changing due to the removal of trees in the vicinity.



*Biologist McMillan measuring and forest harvest flagging for 2020 and 2021 survey route analysis*

**Site Visits to Control Invasive Vegetation Within Taylor’s Checkerspot Habitat:** During the site visits Biologist McMillan has made some progress with invasive vegetation control, primarily focusing on some of the Scotch broom patches. This control will need to be expanded to involve additional persons and the process to get this done is yet to be solved.



*Scotch broom throughout the Taylor’s checkerspot sites, requiring District 16 personnel to strategize methods and means of control*

Biologist Ament also spent a day on October 29, 2020 to review and document Scotch broom at the site. She had previously directed the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to focus their time on controlling this invasive species during their allocated time working at the Taylor’s checkerspot sites. They accomplished some control at the far upper west end of the site. More efforts are certainly needed to address this issue. Biologist Ament will be working with DNR to see if the WWC would be available to assist with more weed control. She will continue to document what habitat improvements are needed there. Some shrub areas that were cut back in the past have grown back up. To improve butterfly access to nectar and host plants these areas will need future control work.





*Scotch broom removed by WCC crew at the Taylor's checkerspot site*



*Scotch broom patches located at the site and an open slope void of Scotch broom*



*Dense shrub areas along Taylor's checkerspot survey route that were trimmed back in previous years*

**Gathering Seeds from Native Vegetation for Taylor's Checkerspot Habitat:** Biologist McMillan gathered native seed to disperse onto habitat areas that will be altered due to the pending adjacent timber forest harvest. The primary seed collected includes fescue, Oregon sunshine, Castilleja, death camas, and chocolate lily. Biologist McMillan has sampled the various grass species to determine which ones are native and which ones are invasive.



*Biologist McMillan assessing grass species at the site for habitat enhancement efforts for portions of adjacent forest harvest that is targeted for habitat conversion into Taylor's checkerspot habitat if possible*

**Trumpeter Swan Monitoring:** Biologist Ament spent time last month organizing the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society volunteers who will assist with monitoring trumpeter swans in the Dungeness Valley during the 2020-2021 season. There was overwhelming support from the local Audubon group to continue with the survey effort. Participants showed enough interest to continue with weekly surveys with two teams of observers. Survey protocols were outlined. One team survey on the west side of the Dungeness River and the other team surveys on the east side of the river. The weekly survey is conducted on the same day and during the same time period.

Past data was reviewed, and some improvements were made to the survey form. Two dedicated volunteers that led the monitoring last season are assisting once again. Survey schedules have been prepared and surveys started last week. Biologist Ament has instructed the “swan team” volunteers on the protocols when dead or sick/injured swans are observed.

**Swan Count:** Two swans were observed flying overhead during the survey last week, but none were seen by monitoring teams on the ground. Apparently two small groups of swans were seen at Smith Lake and off Schmuck Road in the past few days. Swans had arrived nearly three weeks earlier than expected this season in Whatcom and Skagit counties.

**Rescue of Tundra Swan:** The Region 6 office had received a call about a sick or injured swan in Sequim on October 26, 2020. Biologist Ament was on leave that day and out of the area. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Blankenship, other agency staff members and wildlife rehabilitators were not available to respond. Biologist Ament contacted the reporting party (RP) the next day and promptly responded to collect a young tundra swan that wandered up to a property along the Dungeness River. She planned to transfer the weak swan to the Discovery Bay Wild Bird Rescue Center. The swan was suffering from migration exhaustion. It was thin, dehydrated, and had coccidia. Biologist Ament spent time on the evening of October 28, 2020 planning the transportation of the swan to the Whatcom Humane Society Rehabilitation Center that specializes in the care of swans. Hopefully the swan will receive treatment and be able to be released back to the wild.



*Young (exhausted) tundra swan that was rescued along the Dungeness River*

**Abnormal Black-tailed Deer Hoof:** Biologist Ament was contacted on October 18, 2020 by a friend who reported that a buddy of his had harvested a black-tailed buck near Sequim that had a deformed hoof. All other hooves appeared to be normal. She obtained some photos and requested that the hunter cut off and freeze the leg with the deformed hoof. She contacted Deer Specialist Hansen and Veterinarian Mansfield. They thought it would be good to have the hoof sent in for testing. Unfortunately, when the hunter was contacted again, he apologetically reported that the deer leg was thrown out mistakenly. At least two other cases of abnormal deer hooves have been

reported in the Sequim area in the past. The suspicion was that the deer had laminitis. Biologist Ament had submitted deer hooves a few years back that were abnormal and will try and track down the results of the lab work conducted.



*Abnormal deer hoof on a buck harvested near Sequim*

**Great Horned-Owl Collected:** Biologist Ament took a call from a friend who reported that a dead great horned owl was found on a property along Three Crabs Road, north of Sequim. She stopped by in the evening when returning home and collected the owl. There was one small area of exposed skin on one wing but no other obvious signs of the cause of death. The Greywolf Vet Clinic was contacted, and staff members were willing to assess the owl for possible injuries. Due to some unexpected patients, a veterinarian will conduct an assessment when available in the future. The landowner has called several times to learn why the owl may have died.



*Great horned owl that was found dead on a property along Three Crabs Road*

**Bald Eagle Nest Documentation:** Biologist Ament followed up on a report of a new bald eagle nest on a property just east of Sequim. The property was presently for sale and a real estate agent representing a potential buyer wanted to understand the impacts of having the nest on the property. Biologist Ament was not aware of this nest and dropped by when in the vicinity for other work. A nice neighbor lady across the street from the property was contacted and reported that the nest, which in a large tree directly above the house, has been there since at least 2018. Apparently, there is a neighborhood blog about the eagle pair. They have been successful at fledging several eaglets and in one year a young eaglet fell to the ground and was sent to the Discovery Bay Bird Rescue Center for Rehabilitation. Biologist Ament wondered if this new nest was an alternate for another nearby eagle pair. When she did a quick search of that territory, she found two more new nests in the vicinity of the old nest that was in major disrepair.



## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Crocker Lake Waterfowl Hunting:** Biologist Murphie replaced a poster at the WDFW water access site on Crocker lake, which directs waterfowl hunters to avoid the safety zone along the west side of the lake.

**Sign Improvements at Lower Dungeness Waterfowl Hunting Site:** Biologist Ament made some effort to replace and improve the signage at the Lower Dungeness Area located north of Sequim prior to the opening of the waterfowl hunt season. Maps and the Discover Pass signs had been removed from the sign board. She also hiked out to the designated hunt station and replaced a sign on a post that identified the location.



*New signs placed at the Lower Dungeness hunting area*

**Grouse Wing Barrels:** Biologist Ament had installed grouse wing/tail collection stations at three locations in the district. One barrel is in Clallam County (5.5 miles southwest of Sequim) at the junction of Slab Camp Road and Lost Mountain Road. Another barrel is located on United States Forest Service land west of Lake Crescent at the junction of the Cooper Ranch Road and USFS Rd 29. A final barrel was installed on DNR land east of Sequim. This barrel is at the Junction of Salmon Creek Road (NF 2850) with NF Road 2906. Fortunately, DNR is not limiting access above a gate that was installed last year during an active timber harvest operation. All barrels have been checked for wings/tails every two to three weeks. See summary table below. During the last barrel check on October 23, 2020, Biologist Ament was disappointed to see that vandals had removed the plastic barrel at the Salmon Creek Road site. A thick wire cable securing the barrel stand to a tree was cut and a lock cable securing the barrel to the stand was also cut. Fortunately, the wood frame, sign, and mailbox were left on site. She spent time last week finding a replacement barrel and will re-install the station this week.

District 16 Grouse Wing Barrel Collections	Date	Slab Camp Road	Cooper Ranch Road	Salmon Creek	District 16 Total
	Set-up August 31 and Sept 1	-	-	-	-
	Sept 1 to Sept 11	3w, 2 t	1w, 1t	0	4w, 3t
	To Sept 28/30	1w, 1t	11w, 1t	0	12w, 2t
	To Oct 23	1w	10w, 5t	3w, 2t	14w, 7t
	<b>Total Collected</b>	<b>7w, 3t</b>	<b>22w, 7t</b>	<b>3w, 2t</b>	<b>30w, 12t</b>



*Grouse wing/tail barrel located at Salmon Creek Road*

**Wounded Black-tailed Deer:** WDFW Enforcement staff members contacted Wildlife Program personnel to report a deer that was apparently stuck on a fence near Sunland Development in Sequim. A real estate agent selling the property had observed the struggling deer. Biologist Ament was able to respond and found the deer dead at the base of the fence. She observed wounds in the abdomen that appeared to be from an arrow. With assistance from Fish Biologist Ollerman, she was able to load up and dispose of the young buck. Law enforcement personnel were advised of the situation.



*Dead young buck with arrow wound that was stuck in fence near Sunland*



**Private Lands Hunt by Reservation Waterfowl Sites:** Before Biologist Sundstrom began her two-week vacation, all waterfowl Hunt by Reservation sites in Grays Harbor, Mason, and Jefferson counties under her jurisdiction had been signed, posted, and reservation hunts were entered into the system through November 7, 2020. Technician Tupen assisted Sundstrom in the posting of lands as well.

There was a concern from a landowner's representative regarding opening day. To address the situation, Sundstrom was on-site for an observation of hunter activity at 4:45am on Saturday, October 24. The Hunt by Reservation rules for this site clearly indicate that no hunter shall arrive more than two hours before legal shoot time, no more than 15 shell shots per person, no more than three people per reserved unit, and must have their reservation permit on the dash of the vehicle. Legal shoot time was 7:05am and the first hunter arrived at 5:48am, well within the two hours before shoot time. By 10:00am, most of the hunters were wrapping it up for the day and none had exceeded their 15-shot limit. The only 'misstep' that was noted was only one vehicle had their reservation registration clearly visible on the dash. Only one vehicle with one hunter arrived at 8:00am to see if any of the units were unoccupied; one unit was unoccupied, and the hunter took the spot. After a conversation with the landowner's representative, it was speculated that the problems they experienced on opening day may have been a result of the excitement of waterfowl hunting opening day and some hunter's may have been a little overzealous. Future site observations will follow to make sure all are in compliance with WDFW's Private Lands Program rules.

**Feel Free to Hunt - Cover Crop Planting:** Biologist Harris observed a landowner disking and planting winter cover crop on a Feel Free to Hunt area in the Brady Flats. Cover crops provide needed nutrition for migratory waterfowl as well as help prevent erosion, protect water quality, and provide biomatter to the soil. WDFW reimbursed the cost of seed and the landowner provided the labor and equipment to plant. A week later Biologist Harris checked the area and found that the swans are starting to migrate to there and are using the planted fields.





*Equipment in the distant background disking and seeding and there really are swans at the far end of the field!*

**Timberlands Access:** Biologist Harris worked with several timberland managers regarding access issues. As usual, some are ignoring the rules and ruining it for others. In one area where the landowner opened roads for public motorized access, so people could have motorized access to land-locked public lands, a road grader was vandalized. Unlawful camping, ORVs behind gates and unsafe driving are ongoing issues.

**Dump Sites:** Natural Resource Technician Tupen cleaned up garbage that had been dumped on commercial timber company lands in Grays Harbor County.

### **3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

**Improving Efficiency:** With working from home being the new normal, and using a work truck as a mobile office, one inefficiency that has grown is the need to go to the office to print agreements and permits. Biologist Harris requested, and is testing, a mobile printer. Often, he would have to drive an hour out of his way to print or scan an item. Now, with a few minutes to get the printer out and set it up, the item is printed. For larger print needs he will still need the office printer. However, most times just a few pages need to be printed. Being able to do it on site is a huge time saver and provides a better service to the producer and others. After using it a few times, Biologist Harris estimates that nine uses of the printer that avoid a special trip to the office with result in time savings enough to cover the cost of the printer! In less than two weeks 35 percent of the cost has been recovered from increased efficiency.



*Printer almost ready for use, just need to add paper and it is easily tucked away and accessible*

**DPCA's:** Natural Resource Technician Tupen and Biologist Harris have continued to work on renewing Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements with landowners experiencing crop damage.

**Bears:** Natural Resource Technician Tupen and Biologist Harris responded to a few reports of bears getting into garbage, apple trees, and bird feeders and some that have been seeing bears close to their homes. Advice was given in all reports.

**Cougars:** Biologist Harris responded to several reports of cougar observations. Most not confirmed. While some were just letting us know what they saw. The majority represent the irrational fear of predators brought on by media and social networks. Much time is spent discussing and educating the reporting parties.

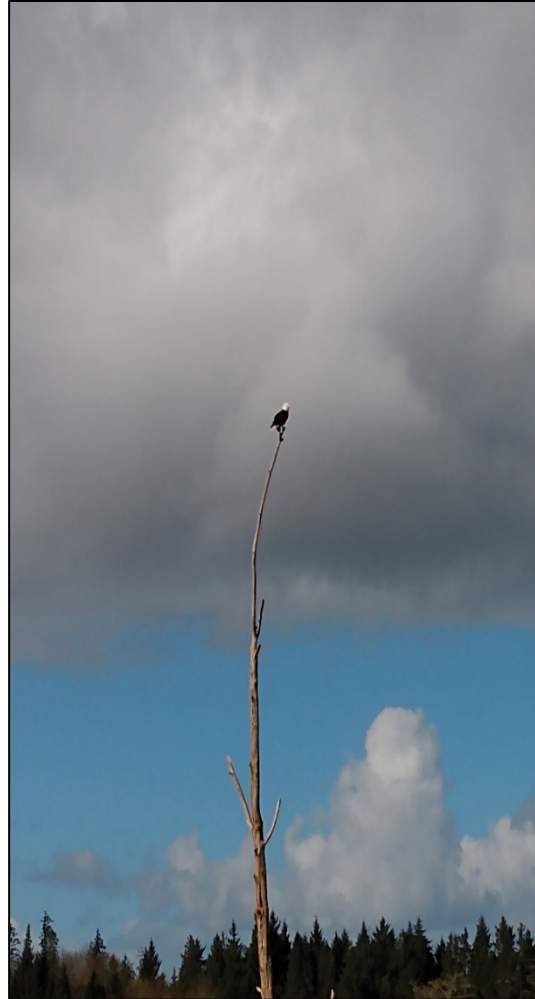
#### **4) Conserving Natural Landscapes**

**Protecting Riparian Areas:** Biologist Harris worked with a timberland owner in Grays Harbor County to schedule placement of ecology blocks to prevent dumping and illegal ORV access. The ORVs in this area are doing damage to riparian ecosystems.

**Wildlife Area Maintenance:** The Olympic wildlife crew has been completing the fall fertilizing. So far, there have been more than 400 acres completed, using many tons of fertilizer. The fall fertilizer ensures a healthy growth for winter elk forage, ensuring a longer winter growth and an earlier spring growth.



The mowing operations at the Chinook Wildlife Area (including the Goulter acquisition) have come to an end. With higher tides and the rainy season as well as other operations taking place, they've come to a stopping point. Although not all, most user groups seem to be content with what has been done in that area to enhance their hunting activities.





*With elk season upon us, the Olympic Wildlife Area will be temporarily down to one staff person. Please be nice.*

#### 5) Providing Education and Outreach

**Hunter Contacts:** Biologist Novack responded to numerous customer service inquiries about hunting and hunting seasons. One young male bobcat was sealed.

Biologist Sundstrom returned waterfowl hunter phone calls who had questions about several of the Hunt by Reservation sites as well as the reservation system.

Biologist's McMillan and Ament have talked to many hunters that have called to find out more about hunting options within District 16.

Biologist Murphie responded to public inquiries related to:

- Deer hunting
- Elk hunting
- Hunting access
- Waterfowl hunting
- Dead deer
- Domestic rabbits
- Mountain goats
- Trapping
- Coyote with mange

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.