

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

February 16 to 28, 2021

DIVERSITY DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Oregon Spotted Frog Monitoring: The Oregon Spotted Frog breeding season is underway in Thurston County. Elsewhere in the state, breeding will be delayed by two to four weeks because of differences in latitude and elevation. Each female spotted frog lays a single egg mass. Biologists count the egg masses to estimate the size of the population. This year, WDFW biologists will focus on finding new breeding sites rather than monitoring known sites except for sites that have long-term datasets or where habitat restoration is underway. Populations in Washington occur in Whatcom, Skagit, Thurston, Skamania, and Klickitat counties. Oregon Spotted Frogs are federally threatened and state endangered.



Oregon Spotted Frog egg masses found in Thurston County on February 25, 2021. When first laid, an egg mass is a small compact ball of black eggs. The egg mass then starts to expand in size as the gelatinous coat around each egg fills with water. The five egg masses in this picture were laid within about 24 hours of each other. Some of the egg masses are so recently laid that they are still compact balls below the water surface, whereas the gelatinous coats of two egg masses have filled with enough water that the top of the egg masses are exposed above the water surface – Photo by L. Hallock

Northern Leopard Frog Recovery: WDFW was awarded a Competitive State Wildlife Grant for *Advancing Northern Leopard Frog Recovery in Washington through Reintroduction and Habitat Management – Phase II*. Partners for this project include U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Zoo, Northwest Trek, and Washington State University. The project goal is to continue recovery actions to save the last population of Northern Leopard Frogs in Washington and to increase the chance of persistence in the state by establishing additional populations. These efforts will further recovery work funded by 2018 Competitive State Wildlife Grant Program *Advancing Northern Leopard Frog Recovery in Washington, Idaho, and British Columbia through Reintroduction and Habitat Management*. The approach for recovery at the last remnant site is to address threats where feasible, enhance habitat conditions, and monitor status and distribution of the leopard frogs. Because there are economic and other factors that prevent elimination of all threats at this site, a new site was established in 2019. A total of 405 head-started leopard frogs were released. The success of the first year of head-starting and release was a positive step toward recovery. However, amphibian reintroduction projects require many years of effort and may also require attempts at multiple sites before new populations become self-sustaining. Therefore, additional funding is necessary to further support these recovery efforts. Saving northern leopard frogs in Washington is part of WDFW’s mission to preserve, protect and perpetuate fish, wildlife, and ecosystems. These efforts may also reduce the need for listing under the Endangered Species Act for western populations of northern leopard frogs.

Status of the Ferruginous Hawk in Washington: Biologist Gerry Hayes and Research Scientist Jim Watson recently completed an update on the status of the ferruginous hawk in Washington. The hawk is a state threatened species that occurs in shrubsteppe habitat in 11 counties of eastern Washington. Primary prey species include jackrabbits, ground squirrels, prairie dogs, and northern pocket gophers. Washington’s ferruginous hawks are migratory and spend two-thirds of the year away from their breeding range. In late February, Washington’s hawks depart winter ranges in California for breeding ranges in Washington. On the breeding range, hawks establish nesting territories where they construct nests, lay eggs, and raise their young. The department maintains a database of the locations of nesting territories and periodically conducts nest surveys to document adult occupancy and the number of young raised. Based on analyses across multiple survey years, the percentage of nesting territories occupied by adult hawks has significantly declined and measures of reproductive success have also declined. Factors affecting this species include loss, degradation, and fragmentation of grassland and shrubsteppe habitat, on both breeding and nonbreeding ranges, with corresponding declines in their primary prey species. The draft status report on the hawk is currently out for 90-day public review and the department’s recommendation is to reclassify the species to state endangered. Statewide nest surveys were last conducted in 2016 and the department will be coordinating surveys again this year beginning in March. Biologist Hayes will be coordinating with eastside District Biologists and agency partners to conduct nest surveys for 2021 beginning in mid-March.

Shrubsteppe Fire Recovery & Preparedness Proviso: The 2020 wildfires burned through an unprecedented amount of shrubsteppe habitat, impacting wildlife and rural communities alike and threatening populations of our rarest species. One of three Columbia basin pygmy rabbit recovery areas was lost and an estimated 50% of greater sage grouse and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse habitat was impacted. Interest from legislators prompted Division Manager Anderson and Landscape Conservation Section Manager Gorrell to collaborate internally and externally with experts, land managers, and partners to develop recommended actions for restoration of shrubsteppe habitats and communities. They also suggested collaborative development of a longer-term strategy for a more resilient shrubsteppe and rangeland landscape in the face of increased wildfire severity and frequency. These concepts are represented in a shrubsteppe fire recovery and preparedness proviso that is being sponsored by Senator Warnick (R) and Senator Rolfes (D) in the current legislative session. Immediate restoration actions proposed include increasing access to trained personnel to implement restoration actions, expanding production of native plants and seeds, implementing recovery actions for our rarest species, supporting wildlife-friendly fence replacement, and providing hay for ranchers to defer grazing. We have been working closely with partners at the Department of Natural Resources and the State Conservation Commission to prepare for implementation of near-term actions and convening of the task force of stakeholders to make longer-term recommendations should the proviso pass.

Shrubsteppe Fire Recovery & Preparedness Proviso

\$2.35M GF-S
to restore shrubsteppe habitat, wildlife, and communities affected by 2020 wildfires

\$1.5M Capital Funds
for shrubsteppe and rangeland cooperative wildlife fencing

Contacts

Hannah Anderson
Wildlife Diversity Division Manager
h.anderson@dfw.wa.gov
360-902-8403

Tom McBride
Legislative Director
tom.mcbride@dfw.wa.gov
360-490-1472

Resilient Landscapes for Wildlife and People

Once covering over 10 million acres in Eastern Washington, 80 percent of historic shrubsteppe has been lost or degraded. In 2020 alone, 800,000 acres of this imperiled landscape burned in devastating wildfires. Restoring shrubsteppe habitats and creating resiliency is more important than ever for wildlife and human communities.

Immediate, No-Regret Restoration Actions
Funding through this proviso will provide near-term relief for no-regret actions that support wildlife habitat and private landowners in shrubsteppe communities affected by 2020 wildfire, including:

- Creating and sustaining local jobs in Eastern Washington communities by engaging the Washington Conservation Corps and others to enhance capacity of trained personnel for cultural resources review, equipment operations, and actions to restore habitat.
- Establishing growing contracts with local nurseries and collaborating with the Sustainability in Prisons Project to increase availability of native shrubsteppe seeds and plugs for replanting after fire.
- Supporting recovery actions for endangered pygmy rabbits and threatened Greater sage grouse populations that were severely impacted by fire.
- Partnering with landowners on cost-sharing for wildlife-friendly rangeland fencing.
- Making hay available for ranchers to defer grazing and allow burned habitat time to recover.

Shrubsteppe and Rangelands Conservation Strategy
To plan for the future, the proviso guides stakeholders to identify longer-term shrubsteppe and rangeland conservation needs and includes recommendations to prevent devastating wildfires, respond to wildfire when it occurs, and implement recovery and restoration actions to sustain habitat and working lands.

Collaborating to Achieve Success
Washington's Department of Fish and Wildlife, with the State Conservation Commission, and the Department of Natural Resources will lead the collaboration supported by diverse stakeholders representing public and private landowners, land managers, environmental and working lands interests, local governments, conservation districts, and fire districts.

Persons with disabilities who need to receive this information in an alternative format or who need reasonable accommodations to participate in WDFW-sponsored public meetings or other activities may contact Dolores Noyes by phone (360-902-2349), TTY (360-902-2207), or email (Title5@dfw.wa.gov). For more information, see <https://dfw.wa.gov/accessibility/requests-accommodation>.

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

Carnivore Section Update – Bear and Cougar: Biologists Beausoleil and Welfelt have been busy conducting black bear den work to replace radio collars and continue to monitor long-term survival and reproduction. They have visited approximately 40 bear dens so far this season, navigating the extreme avalanche danger in the North Cascades. They coordinated with several regional wildlife program staff members who are gaining experience by assisting with this work. Many thanks to Biologists Mike Smith and Tucker Seitz for their assistance.

Biologists Beausoleil and Welfelt also had several discussions with regional wildlife program staff members regarding upcoming summer field season and continuing the statewide black bear density assessments. In 2021, they plan to conduct the DNA-based research in D3, D6, and D14. They are also analyzing DNA results of last year's density assessments in D10 and D11 as the individual genotyping was recently completed from the lab in British Columbia. The data is now being formatted and incorporated into the model. Those results should be available soon, bringing the statewide total to 6 districts that have completed black bear density estimates (soon to be 9 by summer's end).

Staff members in the section and the science division published a new manuscript in the Journal of Wildlife Management titled *Long-Term Evaluation of Cougar Density and Application of Risk Analysis for Harvest Management*, available online by March 2021. The manuscript presented 24 densities on 5 study areas which occurred over 16 consecutive years and collectively represented 46 research years.



Biologists Seitz and Welfelt hold onto some 5 to 6-week-old cubs near Snoqualmie at one den while Biologist Smith collects measurements and marks a bear at another den. Dens of females with newborn cubs are not normally visited (usually we use cameras to count newborns), but this is 11-year-old female's collar needed replacing



Most black bear dens in Washington are associated with trees, however this 5-year-old female found a rock cave to spend the winter hibernating and insulated the inside with sticks, grass, and leaves. At another den, Biologist Beausoleil tattoos the upper lip of a black bear that was denning in the mountains near Lake Wenatchee to provide a permanent marking for future identification



2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Biologists Beausoleil and Welfelt continue to monitor the harvest of black bear and cougar statewide. They maintain the agency's website and hotline on the status of Population Management Units (PMUs) open and closed to cougar hunting. They also manage the agency's mortality database for these species by entering harvest information provided by WDFW staff members and hunters.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Biologists Beausoleil and Welfelt assisted several wildlife and enforcement staff members engaged in human-wildlife conflict situations.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Biologists Beausoleil and Welfelt participated in education and outreach discussions regarding cougar-human interactions. They have been reviewing the information available in other states and intend to meet with a team of internal WDFW staff members to discuss WDFW's cougar education and outreach opportunities.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Biologist Beausoleil participated in several committee discussions that have been initiated internally for cougar including cougar safety, outreach and education, Blue Mountains elk assessment and potential cougar reduction assessment, and a science review of cougar-human conflict literature (internal & external participants).

Biologists Welfelt attended a two-day Diversity Advisory Committee meeting, which welcomed new committee members and outlined work to be done through sub-committees working on specific topics.

Biologists Beausoleil and Welfelt reviewed and provided comment on several Scientific Collection Permits submitted to WDFW pertaining to bear and cougar.

Biologists Beausoleil and Welfelt provided input to the 2021-2022 pages for the hunting pamphlet. Beausoleil participated in a commission meeting regarding cougar management and education and outreach.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

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

Wenas Wildlife Area – Draft Manastash Ridge Trail Plan: Wildlife Area Planner Vigue worked with regional staff members to re-develop the draft Manastash Trail Plan originally written by the Manastash Ridge Trail Coalition (MRTC). The revised plan should be completed for the MRTC review in March.

Tribal Consultation: On February 18, WDFW hosted the third in a series of consultations with Tribes from across the state on the topic of outdoor recreation on WDFW-managed and other public lands in the state of Washington. Enforcement and Outdoor Recreation was the main subject of this meeting. WDFW's Chief Bear, along with law enforcement leads from DNR, State Parks and the region's USDA Forest provided an overview of current enforcement levels in their respective jurisdictions and responded to concerns posed by Tribal communities before and during the call. Deputy Director Windrope also presented a draft Land Acknowledgement to be included with a set of WDFW Recreation and Conservation Principles.

E-Bikes: WDFW is reviewing its current practice of limiting the use of electric bicycles (e-bikes) to trails and roads that allow motorized vehicles. Planning and Recreation Manager Sisolak testified on 2/18 at the Senate Transportation Committee on Senate Bill 5452. Following the hearing, this bill was amended to direct WDFW and DNR to engage a public process to review options for opening closed roads and soft surface trails to e-bikes. SB 5452 is currently in the Rules Committee.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Olympic – Willapa Hills Wildlife Area: Lands Division staff member Vigue participated in applicant selection and interviews for the new Wildlife Area Manager for the Olympic – Willapa Hills Wildlife Area. Seven candidates were interviewed and four were selected for a second interview.

Scatter Creek Wildlife Area: Wildlife Area Manager Lowery and Wildlife Area Planner Vigue presented an overview of the new Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Management Plan at the Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting on February 26. This is the first wildlife area planning presentation made to the commission for this round of plans.

USFWS – Section 6 Grant Land Acquisitions: Wildlife Area Planner Vigue continues to work with Region 2 and Region 6 staff members on the development of two grant applications (Chester Butte and Violet Prairie) for initial USFWS review in March. Applications are due April 9. Staff members in both regions have contributed a fair amount of time in the development of the applications.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Partnership with Wild Grief: Program Specialist Trenda communicated with Wild Grief, a nonprofit organization based in Olympia, about the potential for a partnership. Wild Grief offers grief support programs for families and teens who have suffered the loss of someone important to them through a unique combination of peer support and nature connection. These programs are a great way to encourage young people and their families to develop connections to nature as a source of support and healing from grief. As the pandemic continues, department staff members have heard from the public about the importance of getting outside to improve mental and physical health, as well as to process the tremendous weight of the past year. A partnership with Wild Grief provides another opportunity for the department to help provide meaningful outdoor experiences for Washington residents and visitors and connect more people to the natural landscapes of our state.

Signage RFP: WDFW has issued Request for Proposals (RFP) for a consultant to develop Statewide Sign Standards and Guidelines. Responses are due by March 15. The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide direction for planning, developing, and managing signs for outdoor public use areas on WDFW-managed lands. The purpose of signs is to:

- Help protect the safety of visitors to WDFW managed lands and facilities.
- Provide direction and guidance for the use of recreation lands and facilities.
- Inform and educate the public about the natural resources of the area.
- Provide a positive image and identity for WDFW and/or a managing agency.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

SCIENCE DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Wolf and Lynx Cameras: Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock checked cameras in the Kettles with Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill. These cameras were placed for wolf and lynx monitoring. The lynx cameras are for a WSU-led project.

Lynx Cameras: Wildlife Biologist Prince teamed with DNR biologists to check cameras in the Kettle Range. These cameras were placed for a WSU-led lynx monitoring project. Biologist Turnock set out two winter carnivore monitoring stations in northern Pend Oreille County with a biologist from the Kalispel Tribe Natural Resources Department.

Abnormal Elk Hoof Growth: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb collected elk hooves from a Walla Walla County landowner who harvested a cow elk with a kill permit. The hooves were submitted for sampling and testing for Treponeme-associated hoof disease.



Abnormal hoof growth observed on a harvested cow elk

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Water Access Sites: Northeast Washington Access Manager Daniel Dziekan prepared Liberty Lake and Deer Lake Access Areas for the early spring fishing opener on March 1.



Liberty Lake Access Area, ready for anglers

Teamwork: Biologists Baarstad and Braaten, and WDFW licensing and marketing staff members held a Teams meeting to discuss ideas on improving agency marketing of spring turkey hunting opportunities. Biologist Baarstad reviewed road closure and disabled hunter access information for the 2021 hunting pamphlet and sent edits to Colleen Chandler.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Teamwork: Biologist Baarstad worked on hunting access requirements for District 1 landowners with Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements (DPCAs). Baarstad worked with program and contracts staff members to sort out issues with the Novatus contract system.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Lead Poisoning Abatement: Biologist Vekasy was contacted by Regional Customer Service staff members to lead a discussion on lead and effects on wildlife, and to identify strategies to minimize risk to wildlife. The topic arose during a recent District Team meeting when Wildlife Area staff members reported eagles feeding on coyote carcasses. Vekasy discussed lead effects on raptors scavenging carcasses with lead fragments and waterfowl ingesting lead pellets and sinkers, alternatives to lead ammunition and lead fishing gear, and strategies to make carcasses or gut piles inaccessible to foraging wildlife (remove to landfill, hide under debris, etc.).

Habitat Enhancements: Private Lands Supervisor Earl worked with three different landowners this week discussing habitat enhancements projects. Several great ideas were discussed, and Earl will be making site visits to finalize proposals.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Bear Awareness Presentation Schedule and Preparation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett worked with other WDFW staff members, a Pend Oreille County WSU Extension employee, and Defenders of Wildlife on the upcoming Bear Aware presentations for 2021. Content and tentative schedules were discussed.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

District 1 Range Rider Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor McCanna held a Teams meeting with Cattle Producers of Washington (CPOW) representatives Nielsen and Flood, Northeast Washington Wolf-Cattle Collaborative (NEWCC) representative Shepherd, Colville National Forest representative Weinmann, and Wildlife Conflict Specialists Bennett and Samsill. The goal of the meeting was to increase coordination and create a draft spreadsheet on who plans on covering which allotments with range riders. Weinmann informed the team of which allotments will not be grazed during the upcoming season. McCanna scheduled monthly meetings prior to the grazing season.

Sunshine Committee Testimony: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor McCanna testified for the Sunshine Committee regarding how RCW 42.56.430 (2, 3 and 4) has helped with threats against WDFW staff members, producers, and range riders. Chair Judge Krese will finalize the committee's recommendation in June or July.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Northern Leopard Frogs: Northern leopard frog (NLF) field season is approaching quickly, which means final habitat management steps and field work preparation are underway. Biologist Grabowsky assisted the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area (CBWA) staff members and WDFW fire program staff members by preparing portions of the NLF field site for a prescribed burn. There are many wetlands within the Northern Leopard Frog Management Area (NLFMA) in North Potholes that have been overcrowded by tall emergent vegetation, making it difficult for frogs to forage, find adequate breeding habitat, and navigate the shoreline.

This prescribed burn will not only improve habitat significantly for NLF by reducing the dense tall emergents such as cattail, but should also improve nesting habitat for some waterfowl species. The site was assessed by the CBWA staff members and WDFW fire crew and contingency lines were mowed to allow the burn team to control the fire more easily. The burn will occur during the first week of March.

Northern leopard frog breeding season surveys will be starting in the next two weeks. Temperatures are rapidly rising. Once water temperatures reach roughly 50°F, frogs will begin calling and breeding. Fortunately, the Washington NLF recovery project has been funded for another two years through another Competitive State Wildlife Grant and our reintroduction efforts can continue! This means more frogs will be reared at the facilities of our partners and reintroduced here in the Columbia Basin.



An example of the shoreline habitat that will be burned. Note the densely packed vegetation along the water's edge – Photo by Biologist Grabowsky

Mule Deer Mortality Investigations: Approximately 100 female mule deer are radio collared in the Methow Valley as part of the WDFW/UW Predator Prey Study (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/predator-prey-study>). Biologist Heinlen and WDFW Volunteer Fischer investigated three mule deer mortality signals this period to determine cause of death, if possible. Cause of death was determined as cougar predation, coyote predation, and an unknown determination for the three. A big thanks goes out to our WDFW volunteers to whom much of our work would not be as timely nor as easy.



Cause of death was determined to be cougar predation (top), coyote predation (middle), unknown predation (middle) and WDFW Volunteer Fischer assisting (bottom)

– Photos by J. Heinlen

Wolf Management: WDFW Statewide Wolf Specialist Maletzke and Biologist Heinlen conducted a snowmobile track survey in the Beaver Creek pack territory to try to determine number of animals. Three wolves were documented traveling together at multiple locations within their territory. This is consistent with what remote cameras in the area have shown this winter.



WDFW Statewide Wolf Specialist Maletzke documenting tracks and wolf tracks within the Beaver Creek territory – Photo by J. Heinlen

Chelan County Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Comstock participated in the annual USFS/WDFW coordination meeting to discuss the plans for the upcoming domestic sheep grazing season. The intent of these meetings is to proactively coordinate between agencies and the grazing permittees to avoid domestic and bighorn sheep mingling and develop an action plan if it does occur. While the modelled risk of contact between domestic sheep and bighorn sheep in District 7 is high for two of our herds, there is more spatial separation between the USFS grazing allotments and core herd home range than in some parts of the state. Despite occasional extralimital observations of bighorn sheep, there are no confirmed reports of contact between domestic free-ranging sheep and bighorn sheep in Chelan County to date. WDFW personnel, USFS, permittees, and other bighorn enthusiasts continue to remain vigilant in detecting and mitigating straying animals.

Pygmy Rabbit Population Monitoring-Winter Burrow Surveys: Each winter, we conduct active burrow surveys/counts within their known range and the release sites to determine survivorship of release pygmy rabbits and distribution and trend of the wild populations. Snow conditions provide reliable ways to locate and identify active burrows. At each active burrow site, we additionally collect fecal samples that partners from University of Idaho conduct genetic analyses on. These analyses identify the number of individual pygmy rabbits within each survey area allowing us to determine post release survival on release sites and provide a wild population estimate.

We have completed surveys on occupied areas in the Sagebrush Flat population. This population experienced a 90% decline over the past two years and our results this year indicate the decline has continued. It has been hard to grasp there were over 300 active burrows in the winters 2017-2019 and barely more than 10 currently.

New Pygmy Rabbit Area Discovered: That, of course, was until Feb 25, when our team decided to venture outside the normal occupied range and check out suitable habitat within dispersal distance and connectivity. The area is more than 3 miles from the nearest active burrow documented in Sagebrush Flat and consists of several mature Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) fields all on private land enrolled into a Safe Harbor Agreement, last visited by any WDFW staff members in 2008.

We were very surprised to confirm pygmy rabbit presence at this site and even more surprised to find 46 active burrows. We only surveyed about 2/3 of the site so undoubtedly more burrow sites exist there. We observed very high rabbit density in the drainages. Pellet samples collected were shipped to U of I for genetic analysis to shed light on their origin. We assume these are descendants of released rabbits that dispersed far beyond normal range. Gallie is working closely with Private Lands Biologist Hughes, who will be updating the landowner on this find. This of course opens up the landscape to looking at additional areas for pygmy rabbit occupancy, both in terms of the connectivity habitat between this site and Sagebrush Flat and surrounding habitat that has not been given much consideration given the far distance from known occupied sites.



Technician Clements and Biologist Jeffreys (the two tiny orange dots) locate a pygmy rabbit burrow and collect samples on the newly discovered site



“Ephrata Gold” – fresh pygmy rabbit pellets outside a burrow system

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Patterson Lake Access Area Improvements: Okanogan Lands Operations Manager Haug presented a project to the Boating Facilities Program (BFP) project review panel that will significantly improve the Patterson Lake water access site west of Winthrop. The project will add a concrete launch, improve parking, replace the existing vault toilet, and construct a boating float. Scoring was announced this past week and the project ranked 4th. If the state budget is passed with funding levels like past years, this project would be funded as of July 1.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Winchester Wasteway Russian Olive Removal Project: Ducks Unlimited, WDFW, and the Bureau of Reclamation have partnered on a multi-phased project designed to improve shallow wetland habitat along a portion of the Winchester Wasteway. The project has identified a number of poor to non-functional shallow wetland basins, and is systematically working to remove undesirable vegetation, excavate where beneficial, and reestablish desirable vegetation. During the past month, Assistant Manager Cole has provided logistical support for a contractor that has been removing mature Russian Olive trees, which are a state listed noxious weed, from approximately 50 acres of decadent wetland basins, and piling the material nearby.

Most piles will eventually be burned, allowing access into the basins for vegetation management and additional excavation work in the future. The project was funded with a federal North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant. This will be the last portion of a nearly \$1 million project that leveraged WA State Duck Stamp funds with federal grants to improve nearly 300 acres of wetlands within the Columbia Basin. More information here ([Migratory Waterfowl and Wetland Conservation Program story map](#)).



Breaking down a mature Russian Olive tree – Photo by Cole



Russian Olive Removal: Before (looking northwest) foreground piles are on the east side of the Winchester Wasteway, mature trees in the background are on the west side at the northernmost part of the project – Photo by Cole



Russian Olive Removal: After (same location as the 'before' photo) – Photo by Cole

Habitat Restoration: Biologist Hughes conducted a site visit of an old habitat plot that she is planning to enhance in Fall 2021 with the landowner. The site is in Northern Grant, outside of Hartline. Hughes is planning to have the landowner mow as soon as conditions allow and then will be working with the landowner on herbicide treatments for Canada Thistle. Hughes will be replanting trees and shrubs throughout the site. Only about 20% of the trees and shrubs initially planted survived due to mule deer eating the shrubs down. Hughes is working on developing different ways to mitigate the issues with deer being too hard on the shrubs when they initially are planted. Great Basin Wildrye was seeded throughout the plot previously and is doing phenomenal. The plot has good soil and a small spring that holds moisture throughout most of the year. The spring feeds the area where the trees and shrubs are planted.



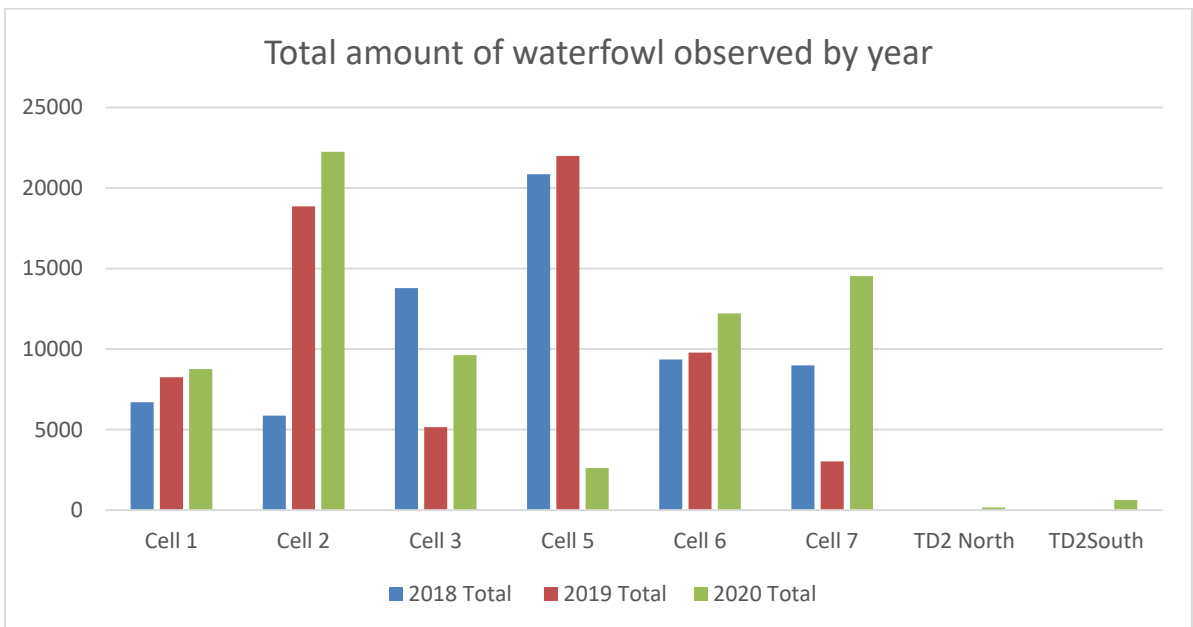
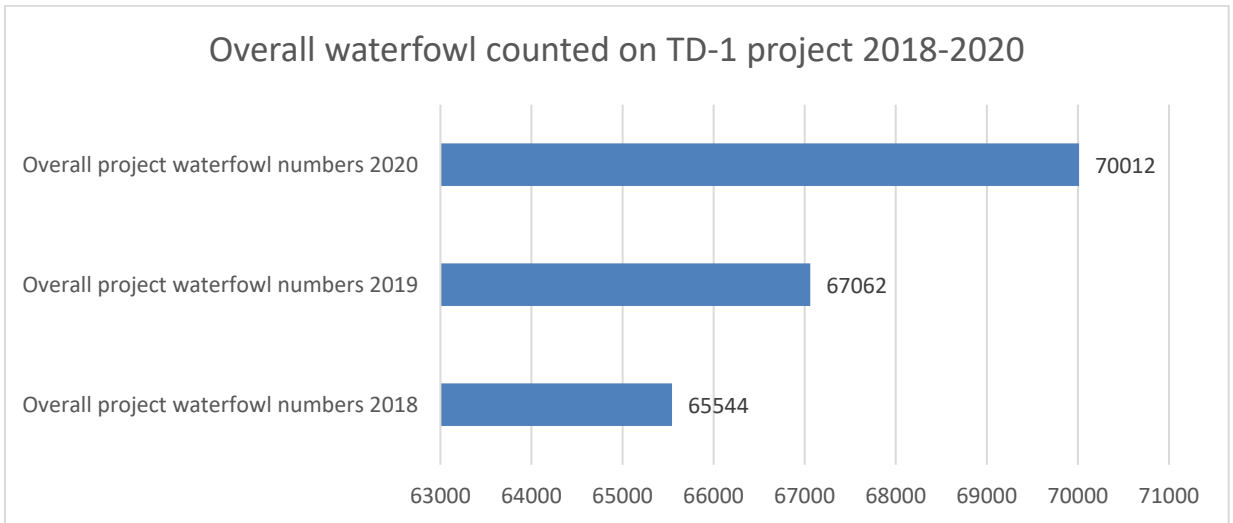
Great Basin Wildrye throughout habitat plot, that was previously seeded over ten years ago – Photo by Hughes



Rocky Mountain Juniper trees developed in habitat plot – Photo by Hughes

Biologist Hughes contacted a landowner of property adjacent to the Chester Butte Wildlife Area, which recently burned in the Pearl Hill Fire. Hughes received permission to plant shrubs this spring for post fire habitat recovery. Hughes will be planting sagebrush and bitterbrush plugs within the 640 section. WDFW is currently working on an acquisition proposal for this piece of property, in anticipation of adding it to the wildlife area. Hughes discussed the shrub planting and the potential for additional habitat enhancement at the site before WDFW takes ownership with Lands Operation Manager Finger. Hughes additionally spoke to the USFWS about potential funding options that could be utilized on habitat recovery efforts for the section while it is in private ownership.

Columbia Basin Managed Wetland Camera Survey: Specialist McPherson completed data entry and analysis of remote cameras that are deployed at the TD-1 project area. Waterfowl abundance counts with remote cameras have been occurring for three consecutive years to monitor spring migration and waterfowl response to increased moist soil management. During the 2020 remote camera survey season, two cameras were added to the TD-2 project area. The intention of the TD-2 project area was to create 71 acres of hemi marsh habitat to provide brood ponds for local waterfowl production. Currently with tall emergent vegetation and sedimentation, wetlands in TD-2 are seeing very low amounts of waterfowl production. Our goal is to have cameras surveying the area to establish baseline data and witness the positive response in waterfowl use as more habitat management occurs.



Total waterfowl observed by remote camera traps (cell 5 camera in 2020 had malfunction mid-March)

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Oroville High School Education: Olson met with STEM teacher Julie Vanderwal on site at the Eder unit, just east of Oroville. The school district is interested in using the wildlife area as an outdoor classroom to study natural processes and riparian function along Tonasket Creek. We discussed possible sites for monitoring and data collection, and safety for students. The only sites along Tonasket Creek are closely adjacent to the Chesaw road, which can be busy. There will be more to come on this.

Methow Partnership Outreach: Although the recent pandemic has put a screeching halt to many of our volunteer projects, the Methow Wildlife Area (MWA) is gearing up for some potential projects later this year. Currently, discussions are being had with several board members of the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (BHA) organization. Pre-Covid, the MWA has developed a strong working relationship with BHA and their organization still has a strong interest in rallying their members for yearly volunteer events in the Methow. As of today, the hope is to develop a plan to remove unnecessary fences in the Golden Doe unit while still meeting all Covid safety protocols. To date, BHA has already removed nearly 5 miles of old sheep fencing, which can inhibit wildlife travel routes and can even be lethal to wildlife who find themselves intertwined in the dilapidated fencing.

Additionally, the MWA is working on writing letters of support for the Methow Beaver Project's (MBP) grant funding endeavors. Currently, the MBP is seeking funding to monitor and study the efficacy of beaver restoration tools such as beaver mimicry, beaver dam analogs, pond leveler devices, and wood loading to name a few. The timing for this partnership is perfect as the MWA hopes to utilize beavers as a natural restoration tool throughout various locations of the wildlife area. To date, the MWA the MBP have worked together on some wonderful projects such as the Silver Side Channel, where beavers are actively working diligently to improve riparian and fish rearing habitat. Moving forward, the MWA hopes to build on this partnership and explore more opportunities to recruit beavers as a restoration tool.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Eder Unit Cleanup: Manger Olson contacted the Department of Ecology to request a waste tire cleanup on the Eder unit. Over 250 used tires have been located, scattered around the area. It so happens there is funding this year with the Department of Ecology to pick up waste tires. After contact with the County Solid Waste program, it looks like this might be changed to a county-wide cleanup. A venue is yet to be announced.

Columbia Basin Sign Infrastructure: As with other effected areas of Washington State, the mid-February snow events and cold weather caused an abrupt change of plans for Columbia Basin Wildlife Area staff members. The Wildlife Area's Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew had been scheduled for a shrub planting project near the Winchester Wasteway but changed course considering the weather conditions. Instead, they began to address signs and sign related infrastructure at public access points on the Wildlife Area. Over the next several years the Wildlife Area plans to update and replace existing signs where necessary, but to also install a variety of semi-standardized sign infrastructure such as "sign boards." Assistant Manager Bechtold introduced the crew to the wide range of signs the agency uses and the situations in which they are used, and trained the crew on the tools, materials, and installation procedures for sign boards. In total, the crew installed six signs boards, repaired fencing, and replaced signs at an additional seven public access points.



Sign board at the Road 18 parking area (Gloyd Seeps Unit) - Bechtold

Parking Areas and Road (Facilities) Maintenance: With the approach of the March 1st fishing opener, mid-February is typically the start of the annual roadside and parking area vegetation management pre-emergent residual treatments. The intent is to prevent noxious weeds and other non-desirable species from establishing and spreading along WDFW public access roads and parking areas. This effort also reduces wildfire potential, as well as providing a firebreak or anchor point should a fire occur. Due to the February snowfall and windy weather, Assistant Manager Cole and Natural Resource Specialist McPherson, along with Access Manager Harmon and Assistant Manager Steele, were able to capitalize on the only day with favorable conditions to treat all the access sites associated with the March 1 fishing opener. The residual work will continue over the next six-to-eight weeks as weather permits.

7) Other



Cow moose and calf north of Sinlahekin Wildlife Area headquarters – Photo by Wehmeyer



Maybe the last snow of the year from a couple weeks ago near Tonasket – Photo by Justin Haug



The thawed landscape on the Horse Spring Coulee Unit – Photo by Justin Haug



Douglas County: Landowners rebuilding fences destroyed in Pearl Hill wildfire
– Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

REGION 3

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Avian Estuarine Monitoring – Occupancy Analysis: District 13 Biologist Hamer met with Gary Slater of EcoStudies Institute to discuss ongoing research into the effects of estuary restoration on avian communities. In 2020, avian transect and point count surveys occurred in the Skagit and Stillaguamish Deltas at agricultural, restored marsh, and reference marsh sites during the winter, spring, and fall. Further surveys, led by the EcoStudies Institute, will be conducted throughout the remainder of this winter and into the spring. Biologist Hamer will be assisting the surveyors as needed and is currently developing an occupancy analysis to better understand the effects of estuary restoration and its factors on various avian species and guilds.

Bat Monitoring House Call: District 14 Biologists received a report about a landowner who found hibernating bats while demolishing an old building on their property near Lake Whatcom. Biologist Waddell contacted the landowner to get more details about the encounter. Assistant District Biologist C. Moore later visited the property to inspect the remaining parts of the structure. No remaining bats were found, and the landowner was notified that it is safe to dispose of the remainder of the structure.

Bat Survey: District 12 staff members have been conducting survey of bat boxes that have overwintering bats; checking numbers and looking for dead (previous large die-offs at location).

WA Bat Working Group: Regional district biologists attended this annual group to discuss bat management needs and efforts in Washington.

African Clawed Frog: District 12 reviewed an internal draft of a management plan for ACF at known locations in Washington (three total).

Island Marble Butterfly Coordination: Biologist Hamer met with partners from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and EcoStudies Institute to discuss ongoing Island Marble Butterfly conservation work. WDFW and the USFWS previously offered San Juan County landowners the opportunity to participate in an Island Marble Butterfly Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA). The CCAA provided landowners protections from incidental take if landowners established habitat plots for the butterfly. The EcoStudies Institute is working hard on San Juan and Lopez Islands to assist enrolled landowners in establishing their habitat plots to help conserve the critically imperiled butterfly.

Brant and Sea Duck Survey Preparation: Biologist Hamer prepared the district's boat and additional equipment for upcoming brant and sea duck surveys. Biologist Hamer was slated to assist Region 6 with their survey of Clallam brant; however, poor weather and incorrect tides have prevented the survey from occurring. The survey will occur when conditions allow. Regional staff members will also be assisting Sea Duck Specialist Evenson with boat-based sea duck surveys to establish age and sex ratios of sea duck species of management concern, particularly scoters and harlequin ducks. Survey activities this year will be focused on training staff members for more comprehensive surveys next winter.



Biologist Hamer glassing from a viewing platform during a training day for the upcoming boat-based sea duck surveys

Black Brant Hunting Season Monitoring in Whatcom: District Wildlife Biologists C. Moore and Waddell and Waterfowl Specialist Wilson distributed flyers on the windshields of hunters at several boat ramps in Whatcom County during the three-day season (January 16, 20, and 23), and on the youth, veterans, and active military waterfowl hunting day held on February 6. In the past, District 14 Biologists and Enforcement Officers have focused on in-person harvest checks of brant in Skagit County. This year, the goal was to fill gaps in our knowledge about brant populations using Whatcom bays. Because of the pandemic, District 14 Biologists created the flyer so they could continue to collect data while minimizing in person contact with the public. These efforts are carried out because two varieties of brant winter in Washington, Black Brant and Western High Arctic Brant (WHA/grey-bellies) which are susceptible to overharvest because they're the smallest Arctic goose breeding populations and only winter in a few areas, including Padilla and Samish Bays. Brant bag checks, in person and by photos, allow us to determine each bird's age and the population it came from. We received 20 voluntary submissions this year! That is over double the number of submissions received since the Whatcom season was reopened in 2018.



*(L) Hunter submitted Black Brant that were harvested in Drayton Harbor on Jan 23, 2021
(R) Two Western High Arctic Brant (grey-bellies) harvested in Drayton Harbor also on January 23, 2021. Distinction between the two populations is made by the contrasting colors of the neck and the breast of each bird*



Wing photos of an adult (left) and a juvenile bird (right). Young birds are distinguished based on white edging on the ends of secondary wing coverts

Elk Captures in Skagit Valley: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman, Natural Resource Technician Cogdal, and District Wildlife Biologists Waddell and Moore have been capturing and collaring cow elk in Skagit Valley as part of a project to understand how elk use agricultural areas and adjacent upland forests in an area where there is high potential for elk-human conflict. The team is darting elk from vehicles and has collared six elk in February, fitting each elk with a satellite GPS collar. The team will attempt to collar three more cow elk in March.



(L) Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman with an immobilized cow elk captured just east of Sedro-Woolley

(R) The same cow elk after she has been administered a reversal drug

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Livingston Bay Visit: Projects Coordinator Brokaw participated in a site visit for consultants interested in bidding on a project to assess management possibilities for property along Livingston Bay on Camano Island. The overall site is approximately 300 acres in size and Whidbey Camano Land Trust is interested in acquiring the 180 acres that are currently for sale. Brokaw is assisting the Land Trust on their project team.



The Livingston Bay property is immediately adjacent to Port Susan and much of it is farmed



The Livingston Bay property includes approximately 1 mile of shoreline

5) Providing Education and Outreach

King County Agriculture Commission: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Seitz met with the King County Ag Commission to discuss WDFW Conflict Program assistance to landowners.

Citizen Wildlife Conflict Education: District Biologist Anderson and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Seitz met with staff members at SHADOW Lake Nature Preserve and Woodland Park Zoo regarding citizen community efforts in nuisance wildlife outreach.

Media Contact: District 12 provided outreach regarding the salmonellosis epidemic in Washington and greater West Coast. A second interview involved conflict reduction with [coyotes](#) in urban areas.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

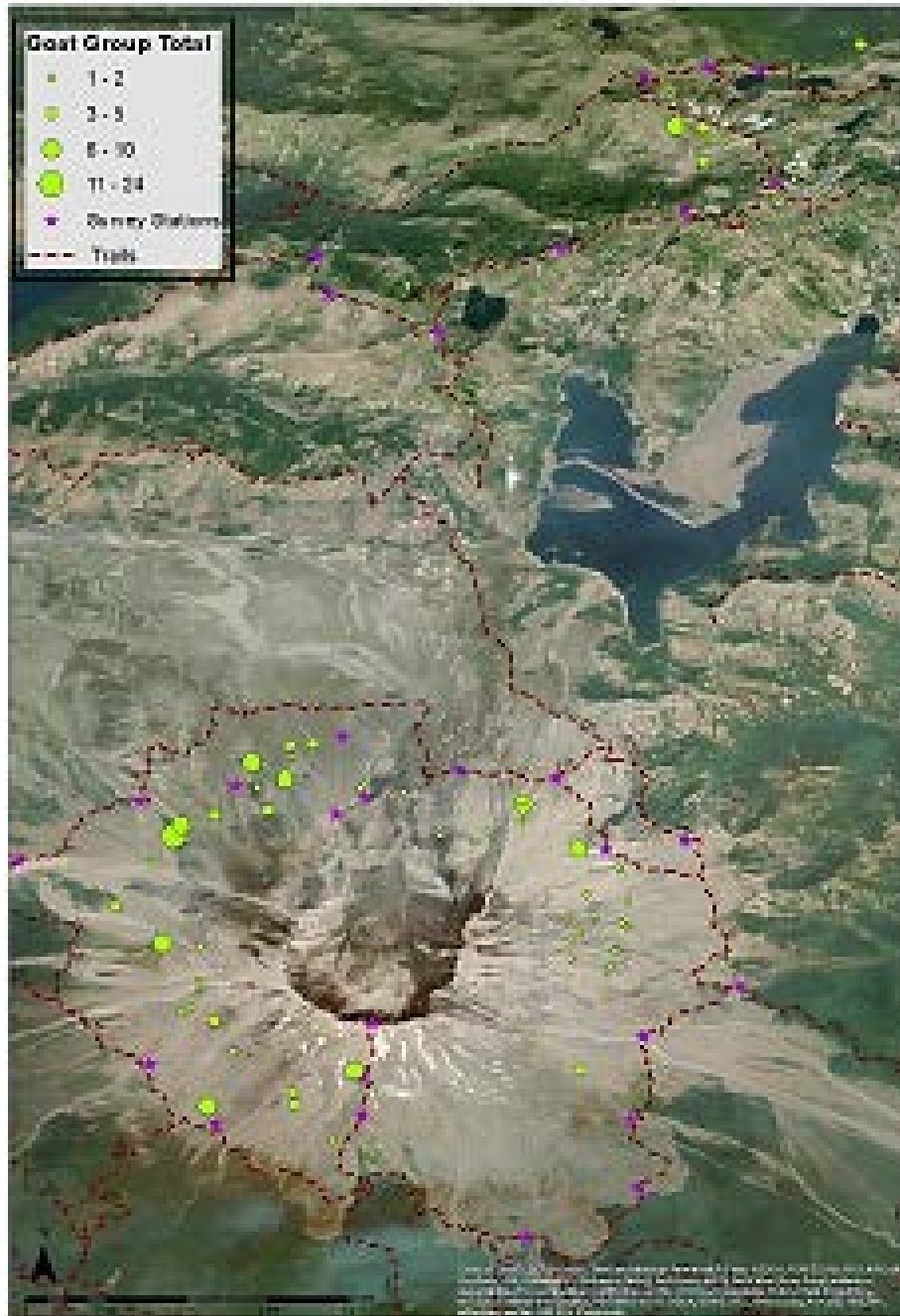
REGION 5

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Mount Saint Helens Goat Ground Survey Mapping: Biologist Stephens reviewed goat observations results from the 2020 Mount Saint Helens Ground Survey and plotted goat locations and group size in ArcGIS. From ten routes around Mount Saint Helens and Mount Margaret backcountry, observers saw a total of 200 goats. The survey effort is in partnership between WDFW, The Cowlitz Tribe, the Mount Saint Helens Institute, and USFS.

2020 Mt St Helens and Mt Margaret Goat Ground Survey



Goose Survey: Biologists Stephens and Holman conducted dusky Canada goose surveys in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. The main focus of this survey is to record dusky goose locations and to read the alphanumeric codes on any collared dusky. However, congregations of other geese, goose collars, and swans are also documented. A few dusky geese were observed during the survey effort as well as some collared resident dark geese.

Dusky Canada Goose Survey: Biologists Bergh and Wickhem conducted their monthly surveys for dusky Canada geese in Clark County. The Vancouver lowlands were still quite snow-covered, and geese of all types were congregated in the open areas. Many groups of dusky geese were observed and a total of eight neck collars were read. Additionally, Assistant Wildlife Manager Breitenstein observed and read four red dusky collars. These neck collars have a 3-digit alphanumeric code to identify individual geese. When re-sighted, these collars provide an estimate for dusky goose survival which is one of the metrics used by the USFWS to determine regulations surrounding goose hunting seasons.



Canada geese find green grass after the recent winter storm

Bat Hibernacula Surveys: Biologist Wickhem joined White-Nose Syndrome Coordinator Tobin, U.S. Forest Service Biologist Englund, and Bat Biologist Thomas in surveying three caves in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest for bat presence. The team also took samples to test for white-nose syndrome, a deadly disease that has decimated bat populations in other parts of the United States. In total, the team documented 252 Townsend's big-eared bats (*Corynorhinus townsendii*; a state species of greatest conservation need) and six *Myotis* sp., which was similar to the numbers observed in 2020. The team also collected 50 samples that will be sent to the USGS National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin to be tested for the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome.



A cluster of Townsend's big-eared bats on the cave wall



Biologist Wickhem scanning the cave entrance for bats. Biologist Wickhem swabbing a hibernating bat – the swabbing does not disturb their hibernation if done carefully

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

New Form of “Graffiti”: Access staff members Rhodes and McKinlay continued with storm clean up in Klickitat County, removing fallen trees and branches. They were also able to continue power washing restrooms to remove moss and clear roof vents for proper air flow. A new form of "graffiti" appeared on a sign at Barbers access; stickers were placed on a WDFW sign.



New form of “graffiti” fund on Access Sites

Snowstorm Cleanup: Access staff members Rhodes and McKinlay cleared multiple sites after the ice and snowstorm. Many sites had fallen trees and branches that had to be removed to open the roads up for safe travel. The most affected sites were Vancouver Lake and Oneida access. Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Technician Fox assisted with clean up at the Vancouver Lake Access site; thereby significantly shortening the amount of time it would have taken to clean up the site which allowed access staff members to move on to other sites more quickly.



Snowstorm Cleanup

Spring Cleaning: Access staff members Rhodes and McKinlay began power washing Access Site restrooms beginning with Modrow bridge. This is done to clean off moss and other debris from building up and also to make sure vents are clear for proper air flow inside restroom. Unfortunately, someone at the Icehouse Access site uses the ADA parking sign as target practice. The increased use of WDFW's access sites has resulted in many stolen signs, but this type of vandalism has not happened for quite some time. This type of vandalism is incredibly dangerous for anyone that may be using these Access areas.



Spring Cleaning at Modrow Bridge Access Site



Icehouse vandalism

New Gates: Access staff members Rhodes and McKinlay were finally able to get two gates installed. One gate was a new gate location project at Abernathy Creek that should help with all the illegal dumping and drug use. Lots of trash and needles are picked up weekly at this site; moving the gate closer to main road will hopefully help stop these activities. A new access gate was also installed at Vancouver Lake. The old gate has been rammed and pulled out multiple times, sometimes on a weekly basis, allowing people access to a remote location to dump garbage and other unwanted things. This week alone access staff members hauled out approximately 600lbs of trash. The new gate is a heavy-duty style with 4,000lbs of concrete poured into the gate-supporting post hole. This will hopefully prevent pulling the gate out.



New gate at Abernathy Creek



New gate at Vancouver Lake

Cedar Creek: A very large tree fell at Cedar Creek Access. The tree fell across the County road, taking out a guard rail, signs, and additional trees. Access staff members Rhodes and McKinlay were able to clear a path through branches and logs to allow travel to continue to the path leading to multiple fishing spots.



Fallen trees at Cedar Creek Access

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Urban Wolf Report: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen fielded a report of 10 wolves running through the Vancouver Bi-Mart parking lot at around midnight. The reporting party stated that they were “running in formation like they were in the Iditarod” and that the wolves were “running faster than a greyhound could run.” She believed the wolves were consuming spilled bird feed in the parking lot. Jacobsen thanked her for the report.

Deer Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen deployed a Master Hunter from the deer damage pool to an apple orchard in east Klickitat County where deer have been causing extensive damage to apple trees.

Dead Deer in Yard: A concerned landowner contacted WDFW regarding a dead deer in her yard in Vancouver. The landowner heard the deer being killed by an animal the night before, and it was partially consumed when she found it in the morning. The landowner texted photos of the deer to Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen, who believed that coyotes were responsible for killing and consuming the deer. Jacobsen provided advice on living with wildlife.

Mystery Tracks: With the recent snow events across the region, many landowners were able to notice animal tracks left in the snow their yards. Team Ridgefield and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen were contacted by multiple landowners in Clark County who were looking for assistance in identifying animal tracks. Unfortunately, most landowners photographed the tracks a day or two after the snow started to melt, and it was extremely difficult to try to determine what animals left the tracks since the photos were not able to clearly document the tracks.

Cougar Sighting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen followed up on two cougar sighting reports across southwest Washington this week. Advice was given to the reporting parties on living in cougar country.

Coyote Sighting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen followed up with a landowner in Vancouver who wanted coyotes lethally removed from her neighborhood. The landowner had observed coyotes walking down the street and was concerned for the safety of the children and outdoor cats in the area. Jacobsen discussed coyote biology with the landowner and the circumstances in which WDFW would consider lethal removal of coyotes (this scenario not being one of them). Jacobsen discussed the extremely low probability associated with coyote attacks on humans and reviewed tips on living with coyotes.

Elk Hoof Disease: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted by a concerned landowner in Klickitat County regarding treponeme-associated hoof disease. Jacobsen discussed the biological and management factors related to hoof disease with the landowner, who was appreciative of the advice.

Injured Bald Eagle: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to a report of an injured adult bald eagle in northern Klickitat County over the weekend. The bird's wing was severely damaged, but the eagle was mobile enough to lead a 50-yard chase through the underbrush and across a creek. With the help of the reporting party, Jacobsen was able to capture the eagle and transport it to Rowena Wildlife Clinic in Mosier, Oregon. Unfortunately, the eagle's wing had fractures to both the radius and ulna at the elbow level and the damage was too severe for the eagle to recover. The eagle was euthanized at the rehabilitation clinic. Thank you to the reporting party and to Dr. Jean at Rowena Wildlife Clinic for all her assistance!



X-ray of eagle and fractured elbow

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with a landowner in Klickitat County regarding elk damage. Permits and cracker shells were issued to the landowner, and Jacobsen will likely be deploying a damage hunter in the near future to help keep the elk off of the growing fields.

Cougar Concerns: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted by a concerned landowner who discovered a couple of cougar-killed deer carcasses along his normal jogging route. Jacobsen recommended that the landowner cease jogging in the area for the time being and discussed safety precautions and cougar biology and behavior with the landowner. The landowner was appreciative of the advice.

Continued TAHD Elk Calls: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey continues to respond to numerous calls about elk with Treponeme Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD) infections, as well as a “sick” elk. In many cases, TAHD elk are still mobile and information is passed along to the reporting parties about the disease. Elk that have progressed to being immobile from the infections were euthanized. Hooves were collected and passed along for Washington State University (WSU) research on TAHD. Thanks to Biologists Holman and Garrison for the assistance on some of these reports.

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey worked on continuing elk damage concerns throughout District 10. Damage pool hunters were utilized over the past two weeks and were successful in assisting landowners with their elk issues. Aubrey also met with a landowner who contacted WDFW for the first time about elk concerns and will be entering into a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement. Aubrey also checked in with a number of landowners and assessed their current needs to address elk damage.

Injured Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a report of an injured deer that was struck by a vehicle. Unfortunately, the deer had two broken legs and needed to be euthanized. Thanks to Officer Bahrenburg for the helping hand.

TAHD Elk Responses: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to many reports of elk with TAHD. Some cases were handled over the phone as the elk were still mobile and had already left the area where reported. Others required site visits and, in some instances, required euthanasia as the animals were no longer mobile. Hooves were collected from euthanized animals and taken to the statewide elk specialist to pass along to WSU for ongoing research on TAHD. One set of hooves from a landowner damage harvest were also passed along. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey also collected hooves from a recently deceased elk and delivered them to the statewide elk specialist to pass along to WSU for their ongoing research on TAHD.

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey worked with commercial producers throughout District 10, mainly in Lewis County, with ongoing elk damage concerns. A landowner permit was issued in one area, and a Master Hunter was deployed on a damage hunt in another.

Nuisance Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey followed up on a nuisance elk complaint initially taken by Enforcement. Elk are regularly traveling through an individual's yard and consuming feed meant for chickens and domestic ducks that roam the yard. Further advice was given on ways to deter the elk from traveling through the yard.

Injured Hawk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey picked up an injured hawk that was struck by a logging truck. The hawk was wedged between the bumper and grill of the truck. The driver was able to remove the hawk from this position. Unfortunately, the injuries sustained in the collision were severe and the hawk was euthanized.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Shillapoo Lakebed Project Proposal Site Visit: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald, Assistant Manager Breitenstein, and Ducks Unlimited Engineer Liske met in the North Unit of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area to discuss a project proposal to enhance waterfowl habitat in the historic Shillapoo Lakebed. The proposed project would install several water control structures in old drainage ditches that currently drain water off the area. The ditches were originally built in the 1950s by the Drainage District and the private landowners at the time to allow farming to occur in the lakebed, however the portion of the lakebed that the ditches are located in is now owned by WDFW. The ditches currently allow water that is on WDFW Lands to be pumped out of the fields by the local Drainage District sooner than the Wildlife Area Manager would like, resulting in less waterfowl habitat in the spring, impacts to native plant communities, decreased forage, and decreased hunting opportunity. The project, if completed, would help to keep about 150 acres inundated and not allow the water that is on the site to be pumped off the property sooner than WDFW would like. After the site visit and discussion, all parties involved thought that the project would have benefit and that a funding proposal should be pursued to hopefully construct the project in the next biennium.



DU Engineer Liske and Assistant Manager Breitenstein looking over the proposed project area

Cowlitz Wildlife Area – Kiosk Maps: Manager Vanderlip created a legend to be incorporated into the kiosk maps that Assistant Manager Steveson has worked very hard to produce. Steveson finished the maps and they look great. Thanks to Steveson, when a visitor looks at a kiosk on the Wildlife Area, they will have a map that shows them where they are and where the boundaries lie. Other information such as bathrooms, boat ramps, trails and such are provided on the maps depending on the unit's resources.

Cowlitz Wildlife Area – Scotch Broom and Blackberry Removal: Manager Vanderlip, Assistant Manager Steveson, and Natural Resource Technician Wallace pulled Scotch broom on the Spears Unit. It is estimated that approximately 1,000 small young plants were removed. Steveson and Wallace did most of the back-breaking work.

Natural Resource Technician Wallace transitioned to the Spears Unit and is working on mowing the vegetation (mostly blackberries) around the pond and unit edges on the Spears Unit.



Natural Resource Technician Wallace mowing vegetation

Klickitat Wildlife Area - Property Boundary Survey: A survey of the property lines for the 2019 Simcoe Mountains Unit land purchase was initiated. Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven worked with WDFW Surveyor Banks to locate established corners for Section 15, Township 5 North Range 18 East. Location of known reference points is the starting point for a property line survey. Among the points found was a quarter corner that was originally marked in 1869. This monument was located in a grove of oak trees, and it turned out that one of the oaks was a bearing tree marked in the 1869 survey. The surveyor’s notes from that time indicate that it was 9 inches in diameter; now it is still alive and about 14 inches in diameter.



1869 Bearing Tree

Klickitat Wildlife Area - Wildflowers on Simcoe Unit: During the course of other work, WDFW staff members found a patch of buttercups blooming at an elevation of about 2,600 feet in early February. Sagebrush buttercups are early bloomers, but it was a surprise to find them at this elevation in winter.



February Buttercups on Simcoe Unit

Klickitat Wildlife Area - Downed Trees: Following a strong windstorm in early February, several trees were lying on the ground on the Soda Springs Unit. Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven cut a tree out of one of the main roads on the Soda Springs Unit to restore driving access. VanLeuven also counted many broken and downed trees on private land along Box Canyon Road, where winds gusted to 80 mph as recorded by weather stations nearby. The Simcoe Highlands received the brunt of the storm.



Downed Pine on Soda Springs Unit

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Spotted Owl Presentation: Biologist Stephens gave a presentation about spotted owls to a fifth-grade class over Zoom. The fifth graders are studying ecosystems and predator/prey relationships. Prior to coming to work for WDFW, Stephens worked on a spotted owl study in the coast range of Oregon, so she shared photos and details of this work with the students.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 6

Nothing for this installment.