

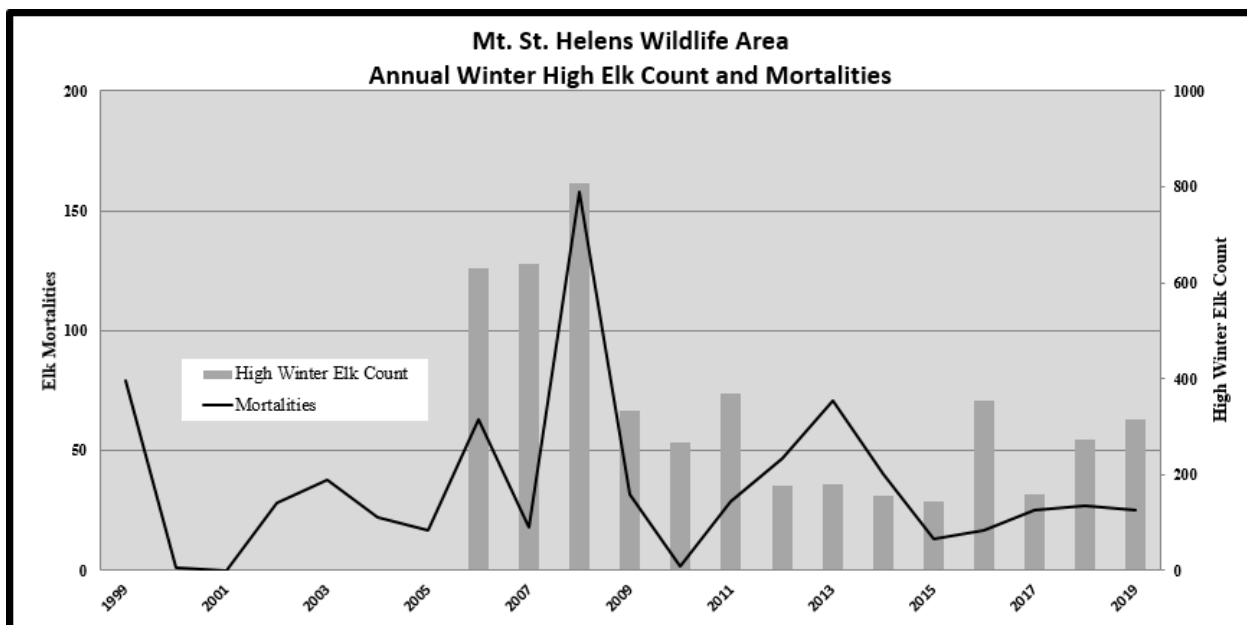
# Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

April 16 to April 30, 2019

## **GAME DIVISION**

### 1) Managing Wildlife Populations

**Annual Mudflow Elk Mortality Survey:** Wildlife Area Managers Hauswald and Wildermuth, along with Biologist Holman and Hoof Disease Coordinator Garrison, conducted the annual elk mortality survey on the Mudflow Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. Twenty volunteers associated with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) joined WDFW personnel. Surveyors found 25 elk carcasses associated with winter mortality. WDFW uses the survey to index winter severity, in conjunction with the monthly winter elk counts on the Mudflow. The winter of 2018-19 was average on the severity scale (Figure 1). Thanks to the RMEF volunteers for contributing their time to conduct the survey. See the Figure 1 below illustrating the 20-year history of the elk mortality survey on the Mudflow.



*Figure 1: Mudflow Unit of Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area elk mortality survey summary*

### **Estimating the Prevalence and Distribution of treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) of Elk:**

Hoof Disease Coordinator Garrison worked with Science Division GIS Specialist Whelan to obtain hunter harvest reports from the 2018 license year. During the reporting process, WDFW asks successful hunters if they observed any abnormalities on their elk harvest's hooves. The proportion of hunters answering 'yes' is used as an index estimate of TAHD prevalence by game management unit, region, and herd (Table 1). In general, TAHD prevalence has remained stable and even declined in some areas (Figures 2).

Table 1: Estimated prevalence of treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) of elk by stateside, elk herd, and WDFW region, derived from hunter mandatory reporting, 2016-2017. Hunter reports of abnormal hooves are not confirmed cases of TAHD and are therefore only an index of true disease prevalence.

	2016			2017			2018		
	N	Estimate	95% CI	N	Estimate	95% CI	N	Estimate	95% CI
Western Washington	2494	0.15	0.14-0.16	2247	0.11	0.10-0.12	2728	0.11	0.10-0.12
Eastern Washington <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1939	0.01	0.01-0.01
Mount St Helens	958	0.23	0.20-0.26	688	0.17	0.15-0.20	758	0.18	0.16-0.21
MSH Core	447	0.40	0.36-0.45	290	0.32	0.27-0.38	324	0.27	0.22-0.32
North Cascades	25	0.08	0.02-0.25	27	0.11	0.04-0.28	51	0.18	0.10-0.30
North Rainier	323	0.03	0.01-0.05	305	0.04	0.03-0.07	426	0.07	0.05-0.09
Olympic	177	0.06	0.04-0.11	173	0.04	0.02-0.08	276	0.05	0.03-0.08
South Rainier	193	0.11	0.08-0.17	203	0.12	0.08-0.17	209	0.11	0.08-0.17
Willapa Hills	798	0.14	0.11-0.16	823	0.10	0.08-0.12	985	0.09	0.07-0.11
Region 1 <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	630	0.01	0.01-0.02
Region 2 <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	79	0.01	0.0-0.07
Region 3 <sup>a</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1230	0.01	0.0-0.01
Region 4	144	0.03	0.01-0.07	115	0.03	0.01-0.07	189	0.05	0.03-0.09
Region 5	1460	0.22	0.19-0.24	1173	0.16	0.14-0.18	1337	0.17	0.15-0.19
Region 6	890	0.06	0.05-0.08	959	0.06	0.05-0.08	1202	0.06	0.05-0.07

<sup>a</sup>Eastern Washington hunters were not included in 2016 and 2017 hoof disease reporting

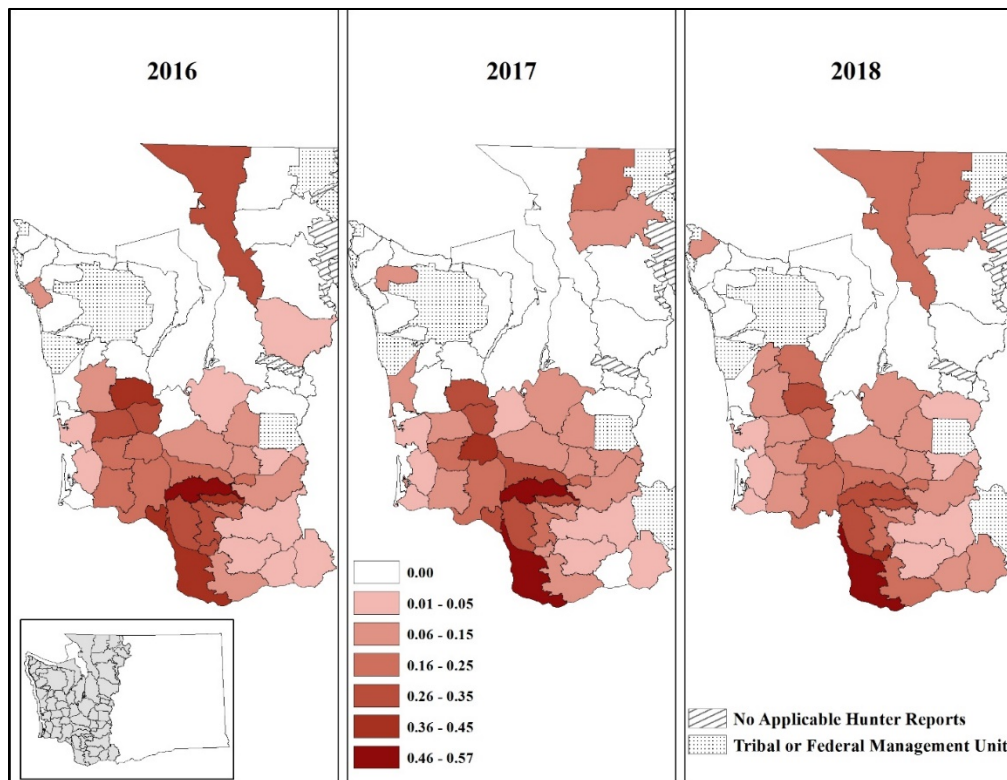


Figure 2: Estimated prevalence of treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) of elk by game management unit (GMU), derived from western Washington elk hunter mandatory reporting, 2016-2017. Darker-shaded GMUs indicate higher disease prevalence. Hunter reports of abnormal hooves are not confirmed cases of TAHD and are therefore only an index of true disease prevalence.

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this reporting period.

## 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Livestock Loss Compensation – Stakeholder Working Group:** Statewide Wildlife Conflict Manager Dan Brinson is facilitating a new working group comprised of stakeholders and staff members to evaluate the current claims process for providing loss compensation to producers who have experience predator caused (particularly wolf) livestock mortality. The working group is tasked with identifying necessary changes to the compensation program to streamline and improve the process for efficiency. The first meeting was held via a conference call and the group will meet three to four times in the next few months to develop a full recommendation to the department.

**Statewide Livestock Injury and Mortality Investigation Training:** The Wildlife Conflict Section coordinated with WDFW Enforcement and Wildlife Program staff members to host a one-day Livestock Injury and Mortality Investigation training in Ellensburg. Seventy-seven WDFW staff members were in attendance. The training consisted of lectures and hands on demonstrations and presentations. Participants engaged in six separate depredation scenarios and learned how to identify predator behavior and injuries, legal parameters, ethics, communication and action protocols, and other pertinent evidence for determining predator-related injuries and mortalities.

## 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this reporting period.

## 5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this reporting period.

## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this reporting period.

## 7) Other

**Featured Employees this Week:**

**Cole Caldwell, Ben Maletzke, Kristin Mansfield, Joey McCanna, Candace Bennett, Ellen Heilhecker, Joe Bridges, Steve Wetzels, Trent Roussin, and Gabe Spence**

Shout out to the folks above for preparing and presenting a thorough, informative, and enjoyable depredation training and Wolf Capture Ethics and Techniques workshop. Special recognition to Cole for pulling this team together and handling all the arrangements. There were 77 WDFW

staff members, from Wildlife and Enforcement programs, in attendance during the depredation segment, and 44 in attendance in the Wolf Capture Ethics and Techniques workshop. Both trainings consisted of classroom lectures and hands on demonstrations and presentations. Participants engaged in six separate depredation scenarios and learned how to identify predator signatures, structural injuries, and other pertinent evidence for determining predator-related injuries and mortalities. The second day's training provided demonstrations and an opportunity to learn how to appropriately and effectively capture wolves while minimizing incidental captures of non-target species. The training received resounding praise from the participants. Nice work, team!

## **HUNTER EDUCATION**

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

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

Nothing for this reporting period.

#### **2) Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this reporting period.

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

Region 6 Hunter Education Coordinator Montgomery assisted Biologist Harris in recruiting drivers, both master hunters and hunter education instructors, for the Mountain Goat Relocation Project. This continues to be a popular project with our volunteers.

Region 3 Hunter Education Coordinator Garcia emailed out information on several fencing projects in the Kittitas and Yakima areas

Region 5 Hunter Education Coordinator Elliott is communicating with several master hunters to find a person willing and able to complete a taxidermy project for the department. We hope to utilize a cougar hide that is being stored by one of the conflict specialists and have it prepared as a full mount. The cougar will then be used as a decoy in Region 3. By utilizing master hunters, we offer them an opportunity to give back as well as fill a department need at a significant monetary savings.

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

Region 6 Hunter Education Coordinator Montgomery worked with Pierce Conservation District helping recruit volunteers for a tree planting along salmon bearing streams.



## 5) Providing Education and Outreach

**National Hunting and Fishing Day:** Region 6 Hunter Education Coordinator Montgomery still working on National Hunting and Fishing Day, coordinating with several non-governmental organizations along with agency programs. Working to help with their displays, activities, and giveaways and prizes.

**Washington Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC):** Region 6 hosted the state YHEC competition. Normally this is a qualifier event for the national event held in Raton, NM. Unfortunately, the nationals were canceled this year, but 39 participants showed up for a fun competition.

**Mentored Spring Turkey Hunts:** Region 3 Coordinator Garcia continued to organize mentored spring turkey hunts. To date, 65 of the 76 people that are registered for hunts have been assigned mentors. We have had reports and photos back from a number of the mentors and mentees about their hunts.



*Tod Fiscus and Tod Fiscus Jr. with some nice birds*

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia worked with National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) to finalize the plans for the two-day turkey workshop happening May 4 and 5.

**Take Your Child to Work Day:** Region 5 Coordinator Elliott helped offer activities for the first organized celebration of Take Your Child to Work Day in the Ridgefield regional office. Four hunter education instructors volunteered their time to run the Laser Shot and an archery shoot. The event was well received by kids and parents.



## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia visited hunter education classes in Walla Walla, Easton, and Twisp. All the classes complied with policy, and were very well conducted. The instructors were appreciative to see the coordinator at their classes.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia attended the Washington Hunter Education Instructor Association (WHEIA) meeting on Sunday April 28. WHEIA continues to work on improvements that will benefit instructors and the department.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia had a phone conference with Thomas Ryle and Kelly Riordan about mentored turkey hunting. Items discussed were future plans and how to continue growing the program.

Region 5 Coordinator Elliott has been providing significant phone and in-person assistance to instructors and teams. There have been a number of out-of-the-ordinary issues that have come up recently where our policies stopped just short of dealing with that exact situation. Coordinator Elliott has worked with the chief instructors and other staff members to ensure we handle things in a consistent manner and with the good of the program and the agency in mind.

Region 5 Coordinator Elliott worked with a chief instructor, Hunter Education Division Manager Whipple, and several members of WDFW Enforcement Program to resolve an issue with a student in a traditional hunter education class.

Division Manager Whipple is working on the implementation plan for Senate Bill 5148 that was passed by the legislature and recently signed by the governor. The bill requires the Fish and Wildlife Commission to adopt rules allowing hunters to wear fluorescent pink in addition to fluorescent orange. Beyond the rule making process, implementation will require a fair amount of public outreach and education.

Hunter Education Division personnel met with the department's Hunter Education Instructor Advisory Committee on April. 27. The committee represents over 1,000 volunteer hunter education instructors and advises the agency on hunter education matters. Agenda topics included student statistic, National Hunting and Fishing Day, hunter education classes in Spanish, the addition of fluorescent pink as a legal color to wear while hunting, the possibility of allowing .22 center fire caliber for deer hunting, etc. The committee meets roughly quarterly. Meeting agendas and notes can be found at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/advisory/heiac#meeting-calendar>.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this reporting period.

**LANDS DIVISION**

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

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nothing for this reporting period.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Relative to post-WDFW website launch needs, Outreach Specialist Janet Anthony worked with GIS Specialist Ian Trewella (Wildlife Program Science Division), Public Affairs staff members, Region 6 administrative staff members, wildlife area managers, Lands, Services, and Operations Section Manager Paul Dahmer, and Water Access Site Manager Shane Belson to address multiple issues with web content for wildlife area unit webpages. This included fixing typos and redundancies, coordinating access to pdfs for hunting dog trial information for Scatter Creek Wildlife Area units and a hunting guide for Skagit Wildlife Area units, and providing wildlife area manager contact information. Ian worked on the technical end to get these updates on the website with IT and Public Affairs. The revised web content became public facing on April 24.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this reporting period.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

**Annual Fire Fighter Training:** Annual fire fighter refresher training was completed for the year on April 17 with the last class taught at Nine Mile Falls. Nearly 80 fire fighters from Washington State Parks and WDFW attended trainings. "One of the best turnouts we have seen" said Eberlein, WDFW Prescribed Fire Program Manager.

**Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TRES) on WDFW Lands:** On Sunday, April 28, the Cascadia Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (TRES) started in central Washington. Students came from Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Colorado, Montana, California, Maine, and British Columbia and collaborated performing prescribed burns on WDFW, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, and private lands around Roslyn. The training helps teach students how to reduce wildfire risk and restore forests. The training also provides opportunities for students to learn planning, implementation, communication and outreach, monitoring, and fire behavior.



*Morning briefing with the TRES group on the WDFW Hutchins burn April 30, 2019*

**2019 Spring Prescribe Burn Season:** WDFW's burn season started April 22 on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area with a 70-acre unit burnt. Each unit has a set of unique objectives to achieve. In some locations, residual logging slash is present and the intent is to consume up to 70 percent of the material on the ground leaving only the larger woody debris from logging. Other sites may require a lighter burn to reduce natural vegetation build up. The intent is to re-invigorate natural vegetation like shrubs and grasses by stimulating growth to enhance forage for wildlife and reduce potential damage from future wildfires.

**Prairie Restoration:** WDFW staff members met on the North Rocky Prairie and Scatter Creek Wildlife Area units in western Washington to look at different prescribed fire units and discuss objectives, which range from forest and prairie habitat improvement to wildfire risk reduction. The Scatter Creek Wildlife Area was the location of a larger wildfire two years ago, that damaged private and state lands.





*WDFW personnel discussing prescribed fire objectives on the North Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area*

**Forb Plugs Monitored:** Vegetation Ecologist Merg returned to the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area to monitor a subset of the around 2,000 forb plugs planted last Fall in a prescribed fire unit shortly after it was burned by the prescribed fire team. Merg marked more than 300 of the plugs to follow through the growing season. Although forb plugs cost many more times as much per individual as forb seed, establishment is so low from seed that it may make sense to use forb plugs in our restoration projects.



*Forb plugs marked for monitoring on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area*

**Ecology Aquatic Weed Control Grant:** Statewide Weed Management Coordinator Hiemer conducted preliminary sampling of Mattoon and Lavender Lake in Kittitas County for aquatic vegetation. Mattoon's plant community was starting to grow with coontail, native/hybrid milfoils, Eurasian watermilfoil and *Elodea* in descending order of dominance. Lavender, which was treated in 2018, had only *Elodea* and *Chara* present.

**Weatherly PCT and Forest Restoration Projects:** Forester Ashiglar scheduled another two weeks of thinning work for the Washington Conservation Corps crew. The crew is doing a great job thinning trees less than six inches diameter in fields that are converting to pine and Douglas-fir forest. Ashiglar also began looking at logging systems and flagging units for the Weatherly Forest Restoration Project scheduled for summer 2020. The contracts for local cultural resource surveys are in the process of being signed.



*Young pine stand thinned and piled along the elk fence off Fitzgerald Road on the Weatherly Wildlife Area*

**Project Layout in the Olympic Wildlife Area's Morgan Marsh:** Foresters Matt Ruggirello, Brian Mize, and Rod Pfeifle along with the Forest Management Team Lead Richard Tveten, laid out a non-commercial thinning project on the Kitsap Peninsula in the Olympic Wildlife Area's Morgan Marsh. Dotted with wetlands, the project area consists primarily of Douglas-fir plantations. A non-commercial thinning of trees seven inches and under will accelerate the progression of this forested area to a more complex ecosystem. A potential treatment in the area will accelerate the growth of new cohorts (groups) of a variety of different tree species. A more structurally and biologically diverse forest will provide a valuable change to the monoculture plantations and suburban sprawl of the surrounding neighborhoods.





*Douglas-fir trees in dense, plantation conditions crowd each other for resources in areas between wetlands. Leave trees will benefit from a thinning treatment that will increase residual tree diameter as well as species and structural diversity.*

**Mount St. Helens Project Compliance:** Foresters Matt Ruggirello and Rod Pfeifle conducted a timber sale compliance visit on the Mount St. Helens commercial thinning project. Work continues on schedule for the project. By removing trees of diverse species and sizes, loggers are creating a more structurally and biologically diverse forest. This treatment will accelerate these stands' trajectory toward a mature stand condition. Over time, this will result in greater amounts of downed wood, large snags, greater species diversity, more canopy classes, and larger diameter trees. Work will continue on the project with a hopeful conclusion in mid-June.



*Thinning treatments above the Mount St. Helens debris flow on the St. Helens Wildlife Area*



## 5) Providing Education and Outreach

**Field Ecology Student Field Trip:** Vegetation Ecologist Merg lectured in, and helped to lead, a field trip to Palouse Prairie sites for students in Eastern Washington University's field ecology course. The trip concluded in several prairie remnants on Steptoe Butte.



*Eastern Washington University field ecology students looking for rough fescue (*Festuca campestris*) atop Steptoe Butte*

**Envirothon:** Forester Ashiglar was asked to participate as the forestry expert at the SE Washington High School Envirothon competition. The students had thoughtful answers on the exam and enjoyed trying out forestry equipment.



*Forester Ashiglar watches SE Washington Envirothon team take her forestry exam*

## **6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

**Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT):** WDFW and our partners in the PILT Coalition (including leadership from the Washington Association of Counties, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition, and The Nature Conservancy) made significant strides this legislative session in funding our obligation to counties related to our land ownership.

The Washington State Legislature approved our 2019-21 funding request of \$762,000 to fully cover all PILT payments for the 13 counties currently opting in to the program. This is the first time PILT has been fully funded since the Legislature froze payments in 2011.

The Legislature also approved our recommendation to transfer PILT payments from WDFW to the State Treasurer's Office. This change will help improve equity and efficiency in the PILT payment process, align the payment process with how they are done for the Department of Natural Resources, and implement one of the key findings of a Department of Revenue report.

A few of the coalition's PILT recommendations were not approved by the Legislature this year, including:

- Removing the requirement for counties to choose between receiving fees, fines, and forfeitures or PILT.
- Using a standardized calculation method for PILT that we developed in partnership with the Washington Association of County Assessors; and
- Extending PILT payments to the 26 counties not currently opting in to the program.

**Operations and Maintenance for Newly Acquired Lands:** We received \$311,000 to be used for operations and maintenance on lands acquired in 2017-19. This is a great step forward in recognizing and receiving funding of the operations of lands we purchase through capital budget funds. The calculations were made at \$13 an acre with a note that we are assessing the real per acre costs of our lands. The expectation is to use the new per acre estimates in the future. In fact, we have already integrated those calculations into our 2018 grant applications, which will make next biennium's budget request for this maintenance-level request much simpler. Maintenance-level requests are generally automatically funded as part of our base budget, so we are hopeful that this signals a shift in our chronic operations and maintenance underfunding for newly acquired lands.

**Forest Health Funding:** The Legislature re-appropriated \$1.5 million and added \$2 million in new capital dollars to address forest health work on WDFW lands. With an additional \$1.5 million in timber revenue and over \$.5 million in State Lands Restoration funds, Lands Division has \$5.5 million available to maintain existing forest health staff levels during biennium 2019-2021. We are committed to keeping our current forest health staff intact.

**Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) Funding:** The capital budget funds \$85 million for WWRP. Additionally, there is just shy of \$5 million for the State Conservation Commission to partner with us on some of the Simcoe land acquisition in Klickitat County.

Here are the WDFW projects funded, it is a phenomenal collection of wins for Washingtonians and our mission – over \$14 million in state investments.

Acquisition total: \$10.6 million  
Restoration total: \$2.1 million  
Development total: \$1.6 million

Critical Habitat Category (\$8.1 million total):

Cowiche Watershed (addition to Oak Creek Wildlife Area; mule deer and elk migration, neotropical birds, 100s of butterfly species, salmonids, and numerous other species) - \$4 million for 4,488 acres

Oregon spotted frog conservation (138 acres fee title, 59 acres conservation easements) - \$1.1 million

South Sound Prairies (additions to South Puget Sound Wildlife Area) - 900 acres prairie, oak woodland, and 30 acres of wetland for Mazama pocket gopher and Puget blue butterfly - \$3 million

Riparian Category:

Grayland – (addition to Elk River Unit of the Johns River Wildlife Area) - \$ 1,408 acres with over 2.5 miles of streambank and over 1,00 acres of freshwater and estuarine wetland habitat. Supports waterfowl, shorebird, elk, deer and marbled murrelet.- \$1.5 million

Water Access Category:

Nemah Tidelands – 103 acres including 1 mile of undeveloped shoreline for recreational harvest of oysters and hard shell clams and waterfowling- \$1 million

State Lands Development and Renovation Category: (\$1,640,000 total)

Ebey Island Recreation Access Development - \$232,000  
Nisqually River Water Access Redevelopment - \$290,000  
Lake Tahuya Public Access Development - \$310,000  
Shumaker Grade and Snyder Bar Access Improvements - \$260,000  
Blue Lake (Wannacut) Access Development - \$223,000  
Roses Lake Access Redevelopment Phase 2 - \$325,000

State Lands Restoration and Enhancement Category: (\$1,592,492 total)

Back Rock Lake Shrub-steppe Restoration - \$212,490  
Quilomene Wildlife Area Restoration - \$93,172  
Rock Creek Cleman Ridge Forest Restoration - \$296,161  
Scotch Creek Riparian Restoration - \$92,400  
Sherman Creek Forest Restoration Prescribed Burning - \$460,000  
L.T. Murray Teanaway Valley Unit Restoration - \$207,500  
Wenas Watershed Enhancement - \$230,769

Other Miscellaneous Funding:  
Wooten Wildlife Area Improve Flood Plain  
\$60,000 reappropriation  
\$1.5 million more funding

Edmonds Pier Renovation: \$154,000

Snow Creek Reconstruct Facility:  
\$25,000 reappropriation  
\$143,000 more funding

Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Fire Damage:  
\$1.25 million reappropriation

Toutle River Fish Collection Facility:  
\$6,775,000 (\$805,000 for real property and easement acquisition)

Minor Works – Access Sites:  
\$400,000

Lake Rufus Woods Fishing Access:  
\$1 million reappropriation

Leque Island Highway 532 Road Protection:  
\$220,000 reappropriation

**Wildlife Funding Meeting:** Vegetation Ecologist Merg attended a meeting between WDFW, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to discuss a draft Memorandum of Understanding through which Bonneville Power will continue their funding of WDFW mitigation projects for the federal dams on the Columbia River. The planned increase of mitigation funding for Wildlife Areas was discussed extensively, focusing on how the increased funding ought to be allotted among the lands originally purchased with mitigation funds from BPA and lands purchased with non-BPA funds. Bonneville is drafting a letter to WDFW to formalize its commitment to the funding increase; WDFW will conduct further analyses to determine where those funds can be best spent given BPA's preference for spending on lands that it purchased.

**New Diamondback Airboat:** Les Holcomb took delivery of the new Diamondback airboat that was purchased through an Ecology Oil Spill Equipment Preparedness Grant. Daniel Zimmerman and Russell Nunez completed the USFWS airboat training module at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge as part of an Ecology Oil Spill Equipment Preparedness Grant.



## 7) Other

**Second Lands Archaeologist Hired:** Please join the Lands Division in welcoming Maurice Major, our new lands archaeologist, to the WDFW lands team. Mo's duties will include consultative services to WDFW staff members on archaeology and cultural resource issues, as well as developing and implementing cultural resource management strategies for a wide variety of WDFW projects. Mo comes most recently from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), where he was the aquatic lands archaeologist, performing similar duties to those he will assume at WDFW. He possesses a diverse background of work experience, including eleven years of experience with DNR, extensive experience as an archaeologist in the private sector, four years as a cultural resources manager for Hawaii State Parks, and seven years with the Bishop Museum (in Hawaii).

**Cultural Resources Work Group:** Paul Dahmer and Kat Kelly, with sponsorship from Jim Woods, requested support from the executive management team to establish a cultural resources work group to develop department policy and procedures to protect and manage cultural resources. The group would remain in place with periodic meetings as needed to facilitate coordinated, consistent consultations with tribes and to share knowledge and provide learning opportunities around cultural resource management.

## **SCIENCE DIVISION**

### 1) Managing Wildlife Populations

**PSEMP Data Processing:** IT Specialist Bill Simper made progress on automating the creation of raster data to display statistical results of Puget Sound Ecological Monitoring Project annual aerial shorebird surveys in a web map.

**Mardon Skipper:** Biologist Jenkerson incorporated 310 site polygons and over 10,000 U.S. Forest Service detections into the web search and data mining (WSDM) database.

**Hunting Regulations Database and Webmap:** IT Specialist Whelan launched version 3 of the Hunt Regulations Webmap application and pushed this year's regulations data into our Production SQL Server database.

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Big Game Hunt Unit maps:** IT Specialist Talmadge produced a full set of approximately 150 large-format Game Management Unit (GMU) [maps](#) for the 2019-20 hunting season. In addition, approximately 85 small-format [maps](#) were created for special hunts (e.g., deer areas, elk areas, moose units, etc.) and published to the website. The digital GIS layers for the 2019-20 big game hunt units were also documented and published to the Washington State Open Data Portal for public download.

## 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this reporting period.

## 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

**Wildlife Area Weed Control:** IT Specialist Trewella worked with Biologist Dave Heimer on the design, testing and deployment of a mobile field data-collection solution for capturing weed treatment/application information on WDFW managed lands. Field data is synced and organized within a central database to: facilitate ease of access, improve data visualization and streamline mandatory reporting.

**Land Information System (LIS):** IT Specialist Wiersma continues to document the critical physical and functional characteristics of the current LIS system (data, tools, processes). This work will provide the foundation for evaluating and prioritizing the necessary LIS project enhancements (database design, workflows, applications, products, etc.) required to support the WDFW Lands Showcase and Recreation Strategy, moving forward.

## 5) Providing Education and Outreach

Research Scientist Michael Schroeder organized and conducted a weekend fieldtrip with Dr. Lisa Shipley and a group of students from Washington State University March 29 through 31, 2019. The group was able to stay at the Whisper Lake Lodge, a property managed by The Nature Conservancy in Douglas County. Michael was joined by Wildlife Area Manager Dan Peterson, and Wildlife Biologist Brian Zinke in the Sagebrush Flat area of Douglas County. The focus of the fieldtrip was shrubsteppe, greater sage-grouse, pygmy rabbits, and other shrubsteppe obligates. The fieldtrip was successful in a number of areas despite problems with access due to late winter snow, excessive water and mud, and road washouts.





*Photo of Brian Zinke showing the fieldtrip pygmy rabbit pellets*

**6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this reporting period.

**7) Other**

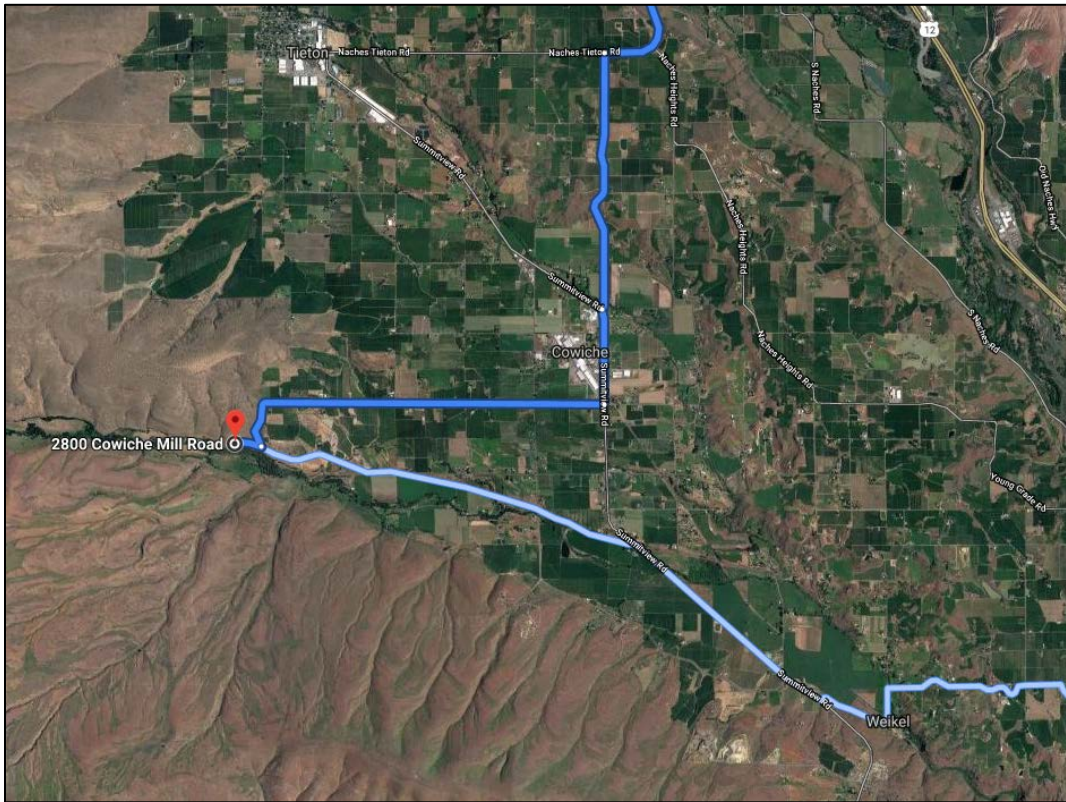
**“Data-Driven” Website Content:** IT Specialist Trewella continues to refine web content and improve interactive mapping capability on WDFW’s new website. This new technological framework modernizes content management and improves content delivery to highlight the recreation and conservation opportunities on WDFW managed lands. Wildlife area maps now contain facility information (e.g., parking, restrooms, campgrounds, kiosks and primary access roads). A “Getting There” feature was recently added, so the public can easily access driving directions and maps to specific wildlife area units (screen shots below).



**Getting There**

- [Cowiche Mill Road - Open in Google Maps](#)

City of Yakima, Bureau of Land Management, Esri Canada, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, USGS, MET... Powered by Esri



## **DIVERSITY DIVISION**

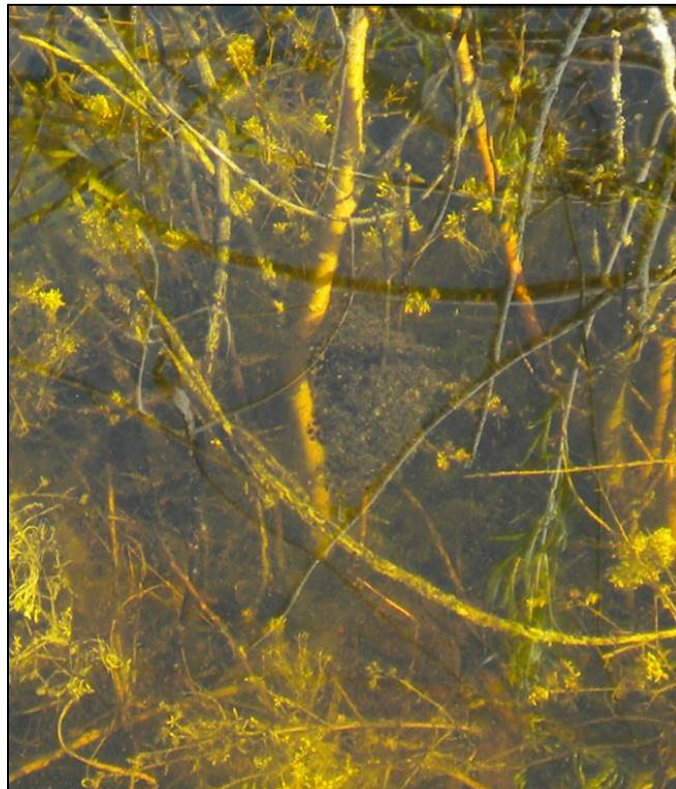
### ***HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:***

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

**Northern Leopard Frog Recovery:** Biologists Hallock, Grabowsky, Rowan and Dougherty continued surveys for northern leopard frogs at the Potholes Wildlife Area. In April, nine egg masses were found from five different ponds. A small portion from each egg masses was removed and taken to Oregon Zoo for head starting. To date, 540 eggs have been delivered. After metamorphosis, these head-started frogs will be released at a reintroduction site in the Columbia Basin. This project is funded by a Competitive State Wildlife Grant (C-SWG) that was awarded for northern leopard frog conservation and recovery in Washington, Idaho, and Canada.



*Northern leopard frog*



*Northern leopard frog egg mass*





*Northern leopard frog eggs getting acclimated at Oregon Zoo*

**Short-eared Owl Surveys:** Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan continued to coordinate volunteers who are conducting surveys for short-eared owls in eastern Washington (the Western Asio flammeus Landscape Survey, or WAFLS). The project is running smoothly now that the extensive and deep cover of snow has melted away. There have been several inquiries from volunteers about data entry, as the process is somewhat more complicated than in 2018. This is the second year of this project in Washington. Seven other western states are also involved in the project (California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming). At least 660 volunteers participated in the project across all eight states in 2018.



*Part of a survey route visited during a short-eared owl survey in eastern Washington* - Photo by Jonathan Berman

**Spotted Owl Management:** Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan participated in a conference call of the Barred Owl Science Team (BOST). Joe is a liaison to this group, which focuses its science and management discussions and activities to the state of California.

**Vehicle Collision Mortality of Owls:** A concerned citizen reported seeing about 50 dead owls along Highway 395 between Ritzville and Pasco on March 15. He did not stop to identify the owls after the first encounter, so we are uncertain about species composition. The main aggregation was about 20 to 30 dead owls over a distance of about two to three miles a few miles north of Pasco. This occurred during the period when snow blanketed eastern Washington. We do not know if this is a regular mortality hotspot, or if this mortality was related to the snow, which may have resulted in owls foraging in narrow snow, melt strips along the highway shoulder. It is also possible the owls were scavenging dead horned larks. Large numbers of horned larks were using road edges at that time. A researcher in Idaho indicated that large numbers of barn owls are killed each year in collisions with vehicles in that state.



*Dead barn owl observed along Highway 395 between Ritzville and Pasco on March 15, 2019 -*

Photo by Cole Smith

**Translocation of Sharp-tailed Grouse from British Columbia to Washington:** The sharp-tailed grouse was historically an important gamebird in Washington. Following many years of range contractions and population declines, the grouse is now listed by the state as an endangered species. The British Columbia Fisheries and Wildlife Program of the Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations provided a permit to capture up to 40 sharp-tailed grouse in areas of clear-cut forest where they are abundant for a few years, but decline as the forest regenerates.

During April 13 through 26, 2019 biologists with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) lead an effort to translocate sharp-tailed grouse from the 70-Mile House, British Columbia area to Okanogan County, Washington. Participants included Research Scientist Michael Schroeder, Wildlife Biologists Derek Stinson, Jeff Heinlen, Michael Atamian, Scott Fitkin, Carrie Lowe, Sidra Blake, Jim Olson, Bryan Dupont, Ellen Heilhecker, and Chris Sato, Veterinarian Dr. Katy Haman, Colville Confederated Tribes Wildlife Biologists Oz Laspa and Jarred Erickson, Douglas County PUD Wildlife Biologist Jason Schilling, Okanogan Conservation District Biologist Allisa Carlson, National Wild Turkey Federation Biologist Dominic Bachman, retired British Columbia Wildlife Biologist Doug Jury, BC Rec. Fisheries and Wildlife Programs Deputy Regional Manager Dave Reedman, and BC Rec Fisheries and Wildlife Programs biologist Shauna Jones.



The translocated birds included 19 females and 19 males, with approximately half fitted with radio transmitters. The logistics of the translocation have been improved so that birds can be released approximately 10 hours after they are captured, despite the extended processing time, long travel distance (300 miles), and international border crossing. Birds will now be monitored for movement, habitat use, productivity, and survival. Translocations such as these are important for augmenting populations and for maintaining genetic diversity.

Participants in the sharp-tailed grouse translocation included (from left) Wildlife Biologist Michael Atamian, Research Scientist Michael Schroeder, Wildlife Biologist Jeff Heinlen, Wildlife Biologist Carrie Lowe, Wildlife Biologist Sidra Blake, Wildlife Biologist Derek Stinson, Douglas County PUD Biologist Jason Schilling, Wildlife Biologist Scott Fitkin, and Wildlife Biologist Jim Olson.

The transmitters included two solar PTT transmitters donated to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife by volunteer Leslie Robb. Here a translocated male sharp-tailed grouse is wearing one of the new high-tech transmitters.





*Male Sharp-tail displaying at a trapping site (lek)* – Photo by S. Fitkin



*Female sharp-tail close-up* – Photo by S. Fitkin



*A translocated male sharp-tail wearing one of the new high-tech solar transmitters*

**White-nose Syndrome/Bat Management:** Biologists Tobin, Anderson, and Smith radio tagged two bats, long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*), and either a little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) or Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*; species are difficult to distinguish visually) in the Snoqualmie River watershed in King County. Biologists were able to locate two new roosts for each bat over the course of the radio transmitter's life span (7 days). Bats were being radio tracked as part of an effort to learn more about the roosting ecology of bats. This will guide strategies for white-nose syndrome surveillance and population monitoring.



*Radio transmitter attached to a bat in the Snoqualmie River watershed area in King County*

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this reporting period.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this reporting period.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this reporting period.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

**Produced Material for eBird Northwest website:** Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan drafted a short article for the eBird Northwest website. The article is a brief overview of Red Knot occurrence and conservation in the Pacific Flyway with an emphasis on Washington.



## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

**WDFW Private Lands Workshop:** Private Lands Access Program Manager Ciera Strickland and Farm Bill Coordinator Mike Kuttel Jr. facilitated a two-day workshop in Moses Lake with the private lands wildlife biologists. Maci Yungdahl and Carissa Bourdon gave a presentation on public disclosure and records management best practices. Additional discussions covered a wide array of topics including:

- An update on conservation opportunities through the 2018 Farm Bill
- Developing a resource “toolbox” for the private lands biologists
- Environmental review requirements including ESA Section 7 and cultural resources review
- Training needs
- Private lands access contracting options
- GIS tools
- Changes to private lands access signs
- Updating the private lands access and conservation pages on the WDFW website

## 7) Other

Nothing for this reporting period.

## **REGION 1**

### 1) Managing Wildlife Populations

**Deceased bald eagle:** Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch and Manager Juli Anderson found and recovered a dead adult bald eagle along the county road on April 24. They spotted the animal between the east Swanson Lake and the historic schoolhouse while finishing a waterfowl survey. The bird was fresh enough to still have both eyes intact. Two half-dollar sized holes were noted in its back. The eagle was bagged and frozen, and Fish and Wildlife Officer Curt Wood was notified of the find. Wood will pick up the animal and deliver it to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for further inspection.



## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Rustlers Gulch Wildlife Area Trailhead Improvement:** Sherman Creek Wildlife Area staff members installed rail fencing around the single vehicle parking area at the Holly Road trailhead of Rustlers Gulch Wildlife Area. The fencing will improve utilization of the parking area by recreationists. A portion of the fencing is shown below:



Sherman Creek Wildlife Area personnel were joined by the Region 1 North Water Access Manager Daniel Dziekan, to install a gate for management access at the Beaver Creek trailhead of Rustlers Gulch Wildlife Area. Ongoing maintenance and improvements have made both of these parking areas more useful for recreationists who visit Rustlers Gulch to use the trails.



**Staying Sharp:** Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock prepared for upcoming black bear hair corral work. The biologists bristled with barbed wire while measuring out strands to create hair corrals. This survey effort will result in a black bear density estimate for part of District 1, an estimate that has never been calculated for this area. The information gained will help WDFW manage black bears and provide helpful data for recommending spring and fall harvest guidelines.





*Stacks of coiled barbed-wire for black bear hair corrals*

**Bamboozled by Bambi:** Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock investigated white-tailed deer mortalities for two deer in north Stevens County. The does were collared during the last two winters as part of the ongoing Predator-Prey Project, a collaboration between WDFW and the University of Washington. A large piece of this project involves understanding what causes adult white-tailed does to die. There are a host of ways that a deer can expire. When a deer dies, biologists are alerted by the GPS collar they place on the deer, and they go to the location where a deer has potentially died and investigate to find out what happened. On one day this spring, Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock investigated a mortality, they arrived at the last GPS point to find nothing. These GPS collars also emit a very high frequency (VHF) signal that biologists can use to hone in on the collars when they are relatively nearby. Upon searching the area and finding nothing, Prince and Turnock started tracking with VHF. The signal took them all the way back to their truck where eventually they saw the doe on an old skid trail very much alive and well. This can happen on occasion, GPS collars are set to send a mortality signal when they have not moved for a set amount of time, typically 4 to 12 hours depending on the species that is collared. These are known as false mortalities, since the GPS collar informed you the deer was dead but the deer is actually alive and still hanging around.

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

**Fladry:** Natural Resource Technician Seitz hung fladry around a 10-acre calving pasture in the Stranger Pack territory.



**Wolf Presentation:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman gave a presentation at a local elementary school to fourth graders about wolf biology, ecology, and management.



*Westerman answering questions from fourth graders about wolves after the presentation*

**Cloverland Elk:** Natural Resource Technician Heitstuman hazed and monitored elk in the Cloverland area. This was the last partial week of Heitstuman's seasonal herder/hazer positions. Heitstuman met with several Cloverland area producers to relay information on elk movements and to thank them for their help and cooperation through the winter hazing season. Heitstuman observed one large herd of over 200 elk on the edge of the Smoothing Iron Wildlife Area and several smaller herds throughout wildlife area and private lands surrounding Cloverland. Heitstuman also retrieved a Zon Gun that had been deployed in the area earlier in the hazing season. Heitstuman went above and beyond expectations and played a crucial role in preventing crop damage and coordinating efforts with producers, during an abnormally late winter in the area. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade will pick up where Natural Resource Technician Heitstuman left off and will address elk issues in the area as they arise.

**Calf Killed:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley met with a rancher 10 miles west of Walla Walla regarding a possible calf depredation. After talking with the owner on site and a complete investigation on the dead calf, we were able to determine a human and not a predator killed the calf. The rib cage was clearly cut open with a knife and the hired hand said “the heart was removed from the calf and someone had cut a two to three inch hole out of the center of the heart, and then they placed the heart back in the chest cavity.” Everyone agreed this was most likely some kind of a cultic type killing of their calf. Last year on the same day, two calves from the same allotment in the same field were killed when someone cut out their tongues and left them to die.



*Dead calf*

#### 4) Conserving Natural Areas

**Shrub Planting:** Private Lands Biologists Baarstad, Gaston, Thorne-Hadley and two volunteers from the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council planted shrubs and trees north of Almira. Approximately 1400 were planted as part of an Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) farm bill contract with the landowner.





*Volunteers and Private Lands staff members planting multiple species of trees and shrubs along a riparian corridor*



*Private Lands Biologist Gaston and Thorne Hadley making holes for trees and shrubs*

## **5) Providing Education and Outreach**

On April 17, U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Spokane Wildlife Biologist Jason Lowe hosted a tour of Swanson Lakes and BLM's adjacent Twin Lakes recreation area. The focus was on cooperative projects implemented on the ground, to benefit prairie grouse populations. Attending were two BLM Portland office representatives, Swanson Lakes Assistant Manager Mike Finch, and WDFW Commissioner Dr. Kim Thorburn. The group also visited with two utility company employees while in the field, who discussed predator perch deterrents placed on power poles.



**Whitman County Envirothon:** Private Lands Biologist Gaston administered the wildlife station test at the Whitman County Envirothon. The test covered wildlife topics including species identification, multiple choice biological questions, and current wildlife topics.



*Private Lands Biologist Gaston administering the wildlife test to one of the competing teams*

**Turkey Scoring:** Private Lands Biologist Gaston met with a hunter at the St. John office to score his harvested turkey. The turkey was taken in southern Whitman County and was scored as the ninth ranked Rio Grande typical gobbler in Washington.





*Hunter displaying his recently harvested and scored gobbler*

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this reporting period.

7) **Other**

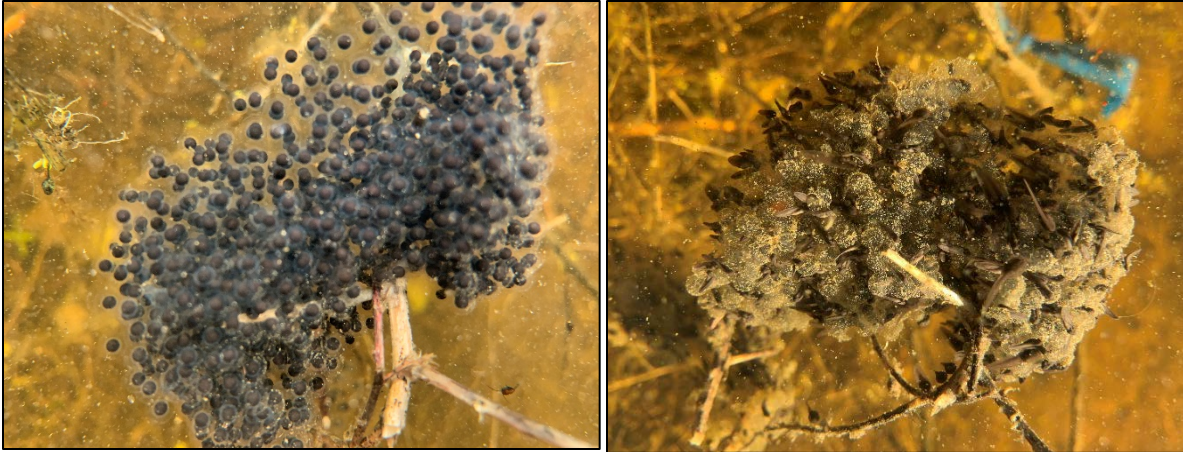
Nothing for this reporting period.

**REGION 2**

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

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Northern Leopard Frog Surveys:** Biologists Grabowsky, Rowan, and Hallock continued the search for northern leopard frogs egg masses. Numerous frogs were seen and heard, and numerous egg masses were found in one specific area. Pacific treefrogs have also begun laying and their egg masses have been found in numerous ponds already. In total, Biologists Grabowsky, Rowan, and Hallock have recorded eight individual egg masses at the northern leopard frog field site. The development of these eggs has accelerated as spring has progressed and the water temperatures have steadily risen. Many of the eggs discovered early in the week began hatching as tadpoles by the end of the week.



*The photos illustrate the differences between freshly laid eggs found on April 19 (left) and tadpoles hatched from the same egg mass on April 24 (right) - Photos by Emily Grabowsky*



*Northern leopard frog habitat and an egg mass - Photos by Ella Rowan*

**Translocation of Sharp-tailed Grouse from British Columbia to Washington:** The sharp-tailed grouse was historically an important gamebird in the state of Washington. Following many years of range contractions and population declines, the grouse is now listed by the state as an endangered species. During April 13-26, 2019 WDFW biologists lead an effort to translocate sharp-tailed grouse from the 70-Mile House, British Columbia area to Okanogan County. Participants included Research Scientist Michael Schroeder, Wildlife Biologists Derek Stinson, Jeff Heinlen, Michael Atamian, Scott Fitkin, Carrie Lowe, Sidra Blake, Jim Olson, Bryan Dupont, Ellen Heilhecker, and Chris Sato, Veterinarian Dr. Katy Haman, Colville Confederated Tribes Wildlife Biologists Oz Laspa and Jarred Erickson, Douglas County PUD Wildlife Biologist Jason Schilling, Okanogan Conservation District Biologist Allisa Carlson, National Wild Turkey Federation Biologist Dominic Bachman, retired British Columbia Wildlife Biologist Doug Jury, British Columbia Recreational Fisheries and Wildlife Programs Deputy Regional Manager Dave Reedman, and British Columbia Recreational Fisheries and Wildlife



Programs Ecosystems Biologist Shauna Jones. The translocated birds included 19 females and 19 males, with approximately half fitted with radio transmitters. The transmitters included two solar PTT transmitters donated to the WDFW by volunteer Leslie Robb. Improved logistics the birds to be released approximately 10 hours after they are captured, despite the extended processing time, long travel distance (300 miles), and international border crossing. Birds will now be monitored for movement, habitat use, productivity, and survival. Translocations such as these are important for augmenting populations and for maintaining genetic diversity.



*Week one participants in the sharp-tailed grouse translocation included (from left) Biologist Atamian, Research Scientist Schroeder, Biologist Heinlen, Biologist Lowe, Biologist Blake, Biologist Stinson, PUD Biologist Schilling, Biologist Fitkin, and Biologist Olson – Photo by WDFW*



*Female sharp-tail close-up – Photo by S. Fitkin*



*Scientist Schroeder banding a sharp-tail prior to translocation* – Photo by S. Fitkin

**Release Pen Relocation:** Coordinator Gallie, Biologist Zinke, regional, district, Private Lands, wildlife area staff, and Nature Conservancy Hunter Steward volunteers relocated temporary release pens in preparation for the 2019 reintroductions in Beezley Hills and Burton Draw recovery areas. The goal of the release pens are to acclimate relocated kits to their new site in the wild, limit initial dispersal, where they are most at risk to predation, and encourage burrow development on site. Once burrows are established, the fencing will be removed and the rabbits “fully” wild and on their own. This method boosted post release survival to over 30 percent last year compared to the long-term average of about 10 percent.





*Release pen set up on Chester Butte Wildlife Area*

**Okanogan Remote Camera Monitoring:** Biologist Fitkin retrieved data from a remote camera deployed on a natural salt lick over winter. This camera helps monitor mountain goats of the Hancock Ridge herd in the Methow goat unit. This winter it documented one of the radio-collared mountain goats from the Olympic National Park translocation effort. This animal travelled several miles from the release site to the lick and appears to have integrated with the resident animals along with its mother.



*Radioed translocated mountain goat kid in the upper Methow* – Photo by WDFW remote camera

WDFW volunteer Fischer checked remote cameras deployed as part of ongoing research projects in the Methow study area. The two cameras documented a radio-collared cougar and a radio-collared bobcat from the Predator-Prey Project and Meso-Carnivore Projects respectively. These projects are looking at relationships between predators, and relationships between predators and their prey.



*Radio collared cougar (top) and bobcat (bottom)* – Photo by University of Washington/WDFW remote cameras

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Okanogan Watchable Wildlife:** Spring is a great time for wildlife and wildflower viewing in the Okanogan District. Animals are particularly active this time of year (foraging and breeding). WDFW wildlife areas in the area, Methow, Sinlahekin, and Scotch Creek, offer many scenic opportunities.





*Black bear female with yearling cub foraging on spring beauty* – Photo by S. Fitkin



*Displaying male dusky grouse on the Methow Wildlife Area* – Photo by S. Fitkin



*Mountain goat still sporting a full winter coat in the Upper Methow Watershed* – Photo by S. Fitkin



*Northern flying squirrel peering from flying squirrel box; I love it when a plan comes together*  
– Photo by S. Fitkin

**Spring Mule Deer Surveys:** Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen completed annual spring mule deer composition counts, classifying almost 1400 animals. These surveys help us estimate over-winter fawn mortality and give us an index of recruitment. This year’s data produced an estimated over-winter fawn mortality of 43 percent, which is significantly below the long-term average of 52 percent and the lowest since the Carlton Complex fire. In addition, anecdotal observations of improved shrub recovery in the burn area suggest winter forage availability and landscape carrying capacity are on the increase.



*Mule deer on Methow Valley spring range* – Photo by S. Fitkin

### 3) Conserving Natural Landscapes

**Duck Nesting Ecology Project:** Biologist Rowan drafted a project protocol and site selection options for a pilot project that will use drones to locate nesting ducks in dense vegetation. Drones may prove to be the most efficient tool to help WDFW better understand waterfowl use of uplands in the Columbia Basin, and results could help direct habitat management actions.



**Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration Project – Phase 3:** The WDFW North Central Burn Team was able to successfully prescribe burn approximately 70 acres on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. The area that was treated was commercially harvested in the summer of 2017. The team was able to get excellent consumption of the fuel on the harvest unit. They will be revisiting the area throughout the week monitoring any hot spots.



*Prescribed burn consuming timber slash on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area* – Photo by Haug

**Artesian and Black Lake Feasibility:** Lands Operations Manager Finger, Water Access Manager Harmon, and Ducks Unlimited Engineer Heck primed and started the new siphon installed in the East Low Canal to begin efforts to test the feasibility of restoring wetland habitats by a combination of groundwater recharge and, if all goes well, direct water delivery to the basins over a 1.7 mile journey. The 18-inch siphon took about an hour to fill with a two-inch trash pump but is now functioning flawlessly and sending water on its way. Two wells have been monitoring ground water levels over the past couple years and the group is very anxious and excited to observe how these efforts will influence ground water levels. Specialist McPherson monitored water levels. Tracking water movement and duration of filling will provide helpful information about how water moves through the landscape. This new water was found to be immediately attractive to waterfowl Specialist McPherson has already observed mallards, northern shovelers, pintail, green winged teal, and cinnamon teal using the project area.





*24-hour difference in water levels at the Black and Artesian lakes project* - Photo by C. McPherson



*Dengle, Harmon, and Heck watch the siphon in action while some kind of weird ominous cloud hangs above* - Photo by Rich Finger

**Scotch Creek Shrub Plantings:** We received 800 native trees and shrubs from Derby Canyon Natives this week and planted them on three units of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area. Species included water birch, quaking aspen, wild rose, and ocean spray. Enhancing riparian areas benefits all species of wildlife with additional food and cover. The water birch in particular were six to eight feet tall in gallon pots, and should establish well.



*Planting on the Charles and Mary Eder units* - Photo by Medina





*Planting on the Tunk Valley Unit.* – Photo by Medina

**Beaver Relocation Permitting:** Pursuant to RCW 34.05.313, WDFW is rolling out a pilot beaver relocating permitting program. Under this new program, beaver relocators are required to be permitted and to have access to a beaver holding facility in which to house beavers temporarily once they are removed from a site. Under the policy, the permittee is required to meet with the district biologist prior to beginning trapping operations. Currently Trout Unlimited has two beaver relocator permittees and operates a beaver holding facility in partnership with USFWS at the Leavenworth Fish Hatchery. Biologist Comstock visited the beaver holding facility and met with Trout Unlimited’s representative to review the terms of the permit, discuss operating procedures and the procedure for managing obviously sick or injured beavers. Biologist Comstock followed up with Sara Kindschuh and Veterinarian Dr. Haman to discuss concerns regarding potential for beavers to act as vectors for chytrid fungus and aquatic invasive species.

#### **4) Providing Education and Outreach**

**Mule Deer Foundation Project at the Golden Doe Unit:** With approximately \$3300 donated by Hunting Washington Forum volunteers from Okanogan Trails Mule Deer Foundation, Okanogan Lands Operations Manager Haug and Methow Wildlife Area Manager Troyer planted 1,000 bitterbrush plugs over approximately 100 acres of shrubsteppe burned by the Carlton Complex fire. The area near Frasier Creek had significant bitterbrush populations before the fire but burned severe enough that repopulation of the shrub is absent in many areas. Replacing bitterbrush in these burned areas is a high priority to improve wintering habitat for mule deer. In addition, over 125 wildlife friendly shrubs (serviceberry, chokecherry and blue elderberry) were planted on the Golden Doe Wildlife Area. The funds also purchased native bunchgrass seed which will be planted this fall in an abandoned dryland field.





*Wildlife Area Manager Troyer and Mule Deer Foundation volunteers ready to plant bitterbrush plugs - Photo by Haug*



*Troyer planting bitterbrush under a bitterbrush 'skeleton' burned in 2014 - Photo by Haug*

**North Central NRCS Local Working Group:** Private Lands Biologists Braaten and Hughes attended the local working group meeting in Chelan. Approximately 25 people attended and voted on 2020 EQUIP funding pools and discussed funding percentages for Chelan, Douglas and Okanogan counties. Braaten and Hughes pitched to allow fifth funding pool. After discussion, wildlife habitat was voted by group as fifth funding pool and received 10 percent of available estimated EQUIP funds in 2020. This translates to potentially \$25,000 available for EQUIP projects in 2020. Funding priorities on 2020 EQUIP wildlife projects will be focused on wildfire habitat restoration and/or an interest in putting in habitat for pollinators.

**Lewis Butte Volunteer Trail Work:** Over the weekend, a volunteer trail crew was led by the Methow Valley Trail Collaborative (MVTC) to tie up some loose ends at Lewis Butte. They spent much of Sunday finishing a few connections towards the top of the butte as well as fine-tuning some newly constructed switchbacks and tread. There is one tiny section that may still need attention at the very top, but after the completion of the traverse trail earlier this month, Lewis Butte officially has a complete loop. On the backs of our amazing volunteers and with guidance from experts within the MVTC, Lewis Butte has become one of the most popular trails in the Methow Valley and is now built with a sustainable design that will last generations. Next up, Riser Lake! Join the Methow Wildlife Area and the MVTC on May 19 for a fun filled day of trail construction!



*Volunteers hard at work on the Lewis Butte Trail. This trail is officially a complete loop with only one or two areas that may need additional work in the future, but for now, it is open for your enjoyment!* Photo by Methow Trails

**Fire Ecology and Prescribed Burn Talk at Okanogan High School:** Okanogan Lands Operations Manager Haug and Prescribed Fire Manager Eberlein made a fire ecology/prescribed burn presentation for Ms. Trout's biology class at the Okanogan High School. The presentation focused around the history of fire suppression, why wildfires are becoming more severe and who using prescribed burning can reduce wildfire severity while providing a variety of beneficial biological affects within the ecosystem.



*Waterfowl observed during the field tour* - Photo by Dougherty



*Rough-legged hawk hovering over Scotch Creek* – Photo by Haug





*Short-eared owl in flight above the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area (notice the transmitter)* – Photo by Haug



*Sharp-tailed grouse in flight with transmitter after release onto Scotch Creek Wildlife Area* – Photo by Haug



*Western meadowlark on the Golden Doe Unit* – Photo by Haug



*Northern harrier hawk in flight over Scotch Creek Wildlife Area* – Photo by Haug



*Lenore Lake spring wildflowers* – Photo by Haug





*View from Big Bend Wildlife Area looking north* – Photo by Haug



*Douglas' Grasswidow in native perennial – Douglas County* – Photo by Braaten

### **REGION 3**

Nothing for this reporting period.

### **REGION 4**

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

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

**Oregon Spotted Frog Egg Mass Survey:** District Biologist C. Moore secured permission to access four private properties in the Black Slough area to complete Oregon spotted frog egg mass surveys. The survey crew included District Biologists C. Moore and Waddell, Whatcom County Amphibian Monitoring Program Lead Scientist Nyman, and four volunteers. All were richly rewarded with the discovery of a new oviposition site, which supports more Oregon spotted frogs than the other four known Black Slough sites combined. A total count between 123 to 140 individual egg masses found at seven different locations within the new site was found. The three other properties were also surveyed on the same day. Public outreach about Oregon spotted frogs and securing access to expand next year's survey will occur over the coming months.



*District Biologist C. Moore collects data at the site of an Oregon spotted frog egg mass*

**Leque Island Fish Monitoring:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw spent a day with Stillaguamish Tribe and Skagit River Systems Cooperative Fish Biologists sampling the Leque Island restoration area for fish use, prior to the site being connected to the surrounding river and bay. The site is currently dominated by species that can withstand poor water quality, low dissolved oxygen, and high temperature conditions though a few juvenile chum salmon and other estuary species were found. Following restoration, we expect the fish composition will shift to be dominated by estuary dependent species.



*WDFW provided a Marsh Master vehicle to traverse the site and haul gear to sampling locations. Biologists captured fish using a beach seine technique, shown in this picture*





*Biologists captured a few juvenile chum salmon at Leque Island*

**Index Town Wall Peregrine Falcons:** Biologist Hamer located a pair of peregrine falcons utilizing a nest ledge on the Index Town Wall. The Index Town Wall cliffs are very popular for rock climbing, but peregrine falcons also nest on the cliff ledges during the spring and early summer. Monitoring efforts and climber reports helped to locate the falcons. Once falcon nest areas are located, WDFW works with Washington State Parks and the climbing community to implement temporary climbing closures in the immediate nest area. The climbing community and Access Fund have been very proactive and supportive of this management strategy, which helps to maintain climbing access while protecting falcon nests during the breeding season.

**Waterfowl Breeding Population Surveys:** Biologist Hamer served as an aerial observer for the statewide Waterfowl Breeding Population Survey. The survey is conducted throughout the state, along fixed-width transects, from a Bell Jet Ranger helicopter. The annual survey estimates the states breeding waterfowl populations and results aid migratory bird season setting and bag limits.

**State Listed Common Loons:** District 12 worked with headquarters personnel as well as Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) staff members to deploy area common loon platforms. Common loons are state listed as sensitive as well as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need under the Washington State Wildlife Action Plan. More information can be found here:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/gavia-immer>

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/swap>

Biologists Smith and Blatz deployed multiple platforms at territories within area private timberlands. Biologist Anderson worked with SPU to deploy platforms on the Chester Morse Reservoir. Loons were present at one of the territories and harassing nesting Canada geese. Eight days later, SPU staff members reported loons on one of the platforms, copulating. Things are in swing!



*Common loon platform on the Chester Morse Reservoir, King County. Ready for occupants*

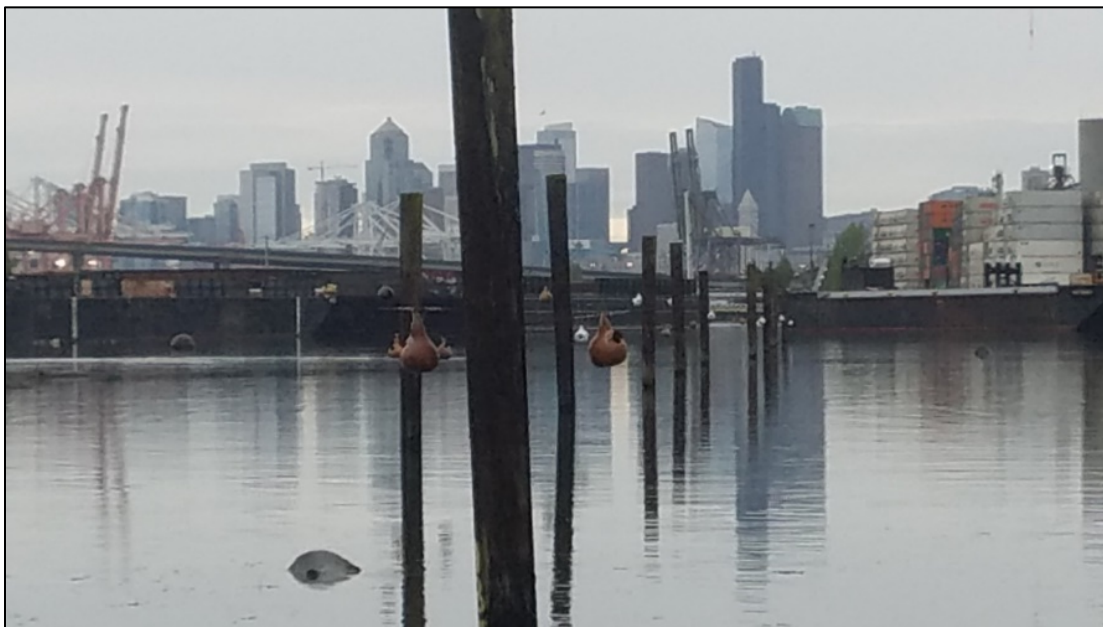


*Common loon platform with newly installed drinking water canisters filled with closed cell foam to support proper platform floatation*



*Common loons on the masonry pool of Chester Morse Reservoir copulating. This was captured eight days after the launch of the platform - Photo by Seattle Public Utilities*

**Western Purple Martin – Species of Greatest Conservation Need:** Biologists Anderson and Smith assisted volunteers with maintenance of the largest purple martin colony in the district. This colony was established by Kevin Li many years ago, prior to his passing. It has continued to expand via efforts of regular volunteers with support of WDFW in providing boat access and occasionally supplying new plastic gourds when funding allows. The colony had an approximate 93 percent occupancy in 2018 with over 30 nest sites (mainly gourds). Nest boxes are not a good option for urban areas with non-native house sparrows and European starlings who harass and can kill the adults or young purple martins. This season we removed the remaining nest boxes from years back and put up new gourds in place. This is the first year that no starlings were already occupying some structures and needed removal as remaining rickety boxes were not in good shape and are now gone. Only two martins were present and they immediately took to “cleaned” gourds.



*Newly maintained purple martin gourds in the Duwamish Waterway, Seattle*





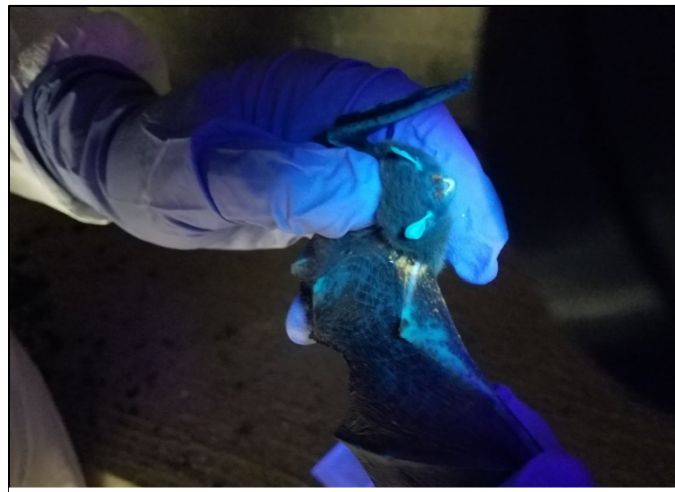
***Don't bother with purple martin nest boxes when non-native house sparrows or European starlings are in the area! Support natural cavities in trees where possible – snags are a one-stop wildlife hotel and/or buffet for many wild***



***Why we do this – a male purple martin with an insect lunch for young at the nearby Shilshole colony - Photo by K. Starke, 2011***

**White-nose Syndrome Monitoring/Bat Management:** District 12 retrieved three dead bats and transferred them to Biologist Tobin.

Biologists Tobin, Salzer, Anderson and Smith teamed-up for a pilot effort examining spring emergence activities and roost habits of bats as they leave from winter hibernacula. So far two bats have successfully been captured and a transmitter placed on them (one little brown/Yuma myotis and one western long-legged myotis). Both bats were successfully tracked in the Cascades via vehicle and foot efforts. Two volunteers assisted WDFW in providing for tracking coverage during the life of the transmitter (around seven to eight days).



***A little brown bat field sign of white-nose syndrome (orange color)***



*Biologist Tobin checking a mist net for bats*



*A western long-legged bat (*Myotis volans*) roosting in an expansion gap of a bridge*



*Bat with newly affixed transmitter. Note the “happy” bat is baring his teeth*

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt:** More bear sign continues to appear in the hills as the weather warms up. Multiple bear scats and peeled trees were observed in the hunt unit. No hunters have reported as successful yet.



*A freshly peeled tree in the North Skagit spring bear hunt unit*

**Samish River Unit Parking Area:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw met onsite with Department of Ecology personnel and WDFW permitting staff members to discuss the proposed parking area, wetland impacts, and compensatory mitigation options. The group dug a test pit and characterized the wetland.



Biologist Smith fielded calls regarding concern of overpopulation of deer on Vashon-Maury Island (GMU 422). The hunter asked if there may be any ability to provide for a third or fourth deer in harvest given the population dynamics of black-tailed deer on area islands. Smith discussed recent liberalization of the second tag option for GMU 422; any tag, longer season of Aug 1-Dec 31, and 200 permits available. For reference, the 2019 big game pamphlet can be found here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02063>



*A doe in GMU 490 on April 22*



*Canada goose nest with clutch of eggs - soon to be ushered out by returning pair of territorial common loons. Life is hard... find a new nest site!*

Biologist Anderson fielded inquiries regarding health concerns of deer on Vashon (GMU 422). The reporting party relayed that there appear to be a good number of deer with hair loss syndrome (HLS). Generally, deer in the district that have signs of HLS in spring have made it through the leaner winter period and clear the louse and effects of it. This was passed along to the hunter. The hunter also inquired if the department ever culls animals that show HLS - no, WDFW does not as of current.

### 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman responded to several deer complaints in the Edgemore neighborhood of Bellingham. Reports that deer have become aggressive towards dogs when people in the neighborhood have been out for walks. One landowner was concerned as deer were aggressive in the back yard of his residence and have been particularly hard on landscaping plants and trees. The residents contacted were provided information to help deter deer from the back yards and provided information on how to best protect themselves and their pets.



*Deer browsing to arborvitae in Bellingham*

### 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

**Ebey Island Grant Application:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw worked with Habitat Program staff members and partners to submit a grant application to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that included a funding request to develop a master plan for WDFW's Ebey Island property. This request would supplement funding WDFW will receive from the state Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program.

**State Take of Wildlife Needs:** Biologist Anderson consulted with a number of entities regarding active osprey nest management. One entity was Sound Transit regarding the SR520 Light Link project and an adjacent nest that needs to be altered and moved. Anderson provided needs to meet state regulation to Sound Transit so they could move through due diligence conversations with King County. Anderson was contacted by Sound Transit in regards to another project and issues with potential take of protected birds.



*A new osprey platform on Vashon Island that provided for retention of the territorial pair that has been excluded from an adjacent cell tower. This platform is on a Douglas fir – quite natural compared to a pole and platform enhancement* - Photo by T. Otto

Biologist Anderson consulted with Seattle Department of Transportation regarding operations, maintenance, projects, etc. and consideration of state wildlife regulations and take authorization to manage conflict situation with various wildlife (mainly birds, small mammals and some furbearers such as raccoon). Anderson also consulted with Seattle City Light on the same topic.

**Elk and Deer Conflict:** Biologist Smith followed up and worked with landowners incurring damage from elk and deer.

#### **5) Providing Education and Outreach**

**WOW Waterfowling Workshop:** Biologist C. Moore and Waterfowl Section Manager Spragens assisted Washington Outdoor Women (WOW) with their annual Waterfowling Workshop held at French Creek Hunt Club. Participants participated in activities geared towards teaching them a little bit about everything they need to know about duck hunting. These included shooting clays, duck calls, decoys, cleaning birds, hunting regulations, and waterfowl identification. Moore led the Tips for Lady Waterfowlers session, which focused on what gear you need, where to hunt, and how to build confidence. Spragens assisted hunter education instructors with shooting clays and shotgun patterning. Together, the two taught how to clean harvested birds, how to identify waterfowl, and Washington waterfowl regulations.





*Biologist C. Moore at the end of her session with one of four groups she worked with during the workshop. More than 25 participants attended this event - Photo credit: WOW*



*Biologist C. Moore and Waterfowl Section Manager Spragens teach WOW Waterfowling Workshop participants about waterfowl identification and hunting regulations - Photo credit: WOW*

## **6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

**Private Lands Access Program Workshop:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard and Private Lands Technician Otto attended the Private Lands Access Program workshop in Moses Lake. This was a great opportunity to learn from other Private Lands staff members from across the state, and see what approaches they take to different problems.

## **7) Other**

Nothing for this reporting period.

## **REGION 5**

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

**Western Pond Turtle Trapping:** Biologists Wickhem, Bergh, Burlingame, Holman, and Assistant Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Steveson participated in western pond turtle trapping efforts at a site in Klickitat County that included setting hoop traps and basking traps (over twenty hoop traps were deployed along with more than a dozen basking traps). The team is targeting reproductive females as part of a study investigating the effects of shell disease on reproductive success. Once captured, the female turtles are CT scanned to confirm they are carrying eggs, and to assess disease severity. Each female then receives a radio transmitter that is glued onto her carapace. During the nesting season, these females will be tracked multiple times per day in order to find their nests and determine how many eggs are laid. In addition to reproductive females, the team also collected hatchlings for microbiome swabs and any new, wild turtles so they could be measured, marked and entered into our database. Trapping will continue for two more weeks, or until all 18 transmitters are deployed.



*First hatchling of the season! Biologist Burlingame and Assistant Manager Steveson loading traps and setting a hoop*

**Golden Eagle Monitoring:** Biologists Wickhem, Bergh, and volunteer Anderson surveyed for golden eagles at a historical nesting site in southern Klickitat County. This site has been proposed as a potential location for an energy development project and the crew wants to determine if the area is still used for nesting, since the nest has not been monitored in several years. On this visit, they observed one juvenile golden eagle, three prairie falcons, several red-tailed hawks, a Swainson's hawk and a few kestrels. The site is likely not occupied by a breeding pair since the historical nest appears to be in disrepair, and only one juvenile golden eagle has been observed in the area after two surveys. Volunteer Anderson will make one more visit to the site in the coming weeks to confirm the territory is unoccupied.

**Prairie Falcon Nest Territory:** Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven noted an auidial observation of a prairie falcon along the Klickitat River this week. The information was forwarded to biologists, who are checking to see if this is an unrecorded site.

**Oregon Spotted Frog Surveys:** Biologists Bergh, Burlingame, Hallock, and Department of Natural Resources staff members conducted the annual Oregon spotted frog survey at the Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve sites. Fewer egg masses than normal were found and those that were found were far along in development or already hatched out. It appears that the development to tadpole stage was accelerated this year, not just in Trout Lake, but also at Conboy National Wildlife Refuge. Unfortunately, this means that the count of egg masses will not be accurate as an unknown number of egg masses already hatched and disappeared. The exact cause of the rapid development is unknown, but it could be due to the late spring and longer daylight hours allowing for more time in the day exposed to warmth and light.





*Oregon spotted frog egg mass that is starting has been to hatch out*



*Oregon spotted frog egg mass that stranded on land due to lowering water levels*

**Oregon Spotted Frog Survey:** Biologist Wickhem conducted surveys for Oregon spotted frogs on private land outside Trout Lake over the last week and a half. Unfortunately, six egg masses were found at this site, meaning a minimum of only 12 frogs occupy the site. However, recent beaver sign was observed, which is very exciting news! In the past, beavers have dammed a creek at the site, flooding a low-land area and creating excellent egg-laying habitat. Hopefully this beaver will become a permanent resident, and the frog populations will increase in the future.



*Oregon spotted frog tadpoles hatching from their eggs*

**Deceased Deer:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Officer Nelson investigated two dead deer next to a residence in Klickitat County. The deer were in different stages of decomposition and had apparently died at different times. However, cause of death was not determined from the carcasses.



*Two dead deer in various states of decomposition adjacent to a residence*

**Limping/Dead elk with TAHD:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen received several reports of limping or dead elk that exhibited symptoms of treponeme associated hoof disease (TAHD). Jacobsen entered these reports on the online TAHD reporting tool (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/diseases/elk-hoof>) and communicated with Hoof Disease Coordinator Garrison regarding the sightings.

## 2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

**Turkey Hunting Season on the Klickitat Wildlife Area:** The spring turkey hunting season kicked off April 15. Hunter turnout has been lighter than usual due to the Monday season opener. Hunter success is anticipated to be higher than average, as the season opening coincides with the beginning of courtship activity for the birds this year.

**Turkey Hunters:** Officer Nelson and Wildlife Conflict Specialist/Private Lands Biologist Jacobsen patrolled a large tract of industrial timber property in Klickitat County for turkey hunters. The property is currently enrolled in the WDFW Feel Free to Hunt private lands access program. Seven groups of turkey hunters were checked, and two hunters successfully harvested turkeys that morning. Jacobsen discussed the importance of good stewardship practices on the property to help ensure access opportunities for hunters in the future.

**Spring Wildflowers:** Wildflowers are blooming on the Klickitat Wildlife Area, with early flowers being observed at the higher elevations and mid-season flowers appearing at lower elevations. A bumper crop of magenta-colored grass widows was in full bloom on the Simcoe Mountains Unit in mid-April. These are among the earliest spring wildflowers. In addition, balsamroot, showy phlox, upland larkspur, and Oregon anemone were just beginning to bloom along Soda Springs Road. Note: this is a very rough road, best enjoyed as a hiking trail.





*Balsamroot and showy phlox blooming along the lower section of Soda Springs Road*

**Cowlitz Wildlife Area Peterman Trail Maintenance:** Assistant Manager Vanderlip and Tacoma Resource Lands Coordinator Russell cleared approximately a mile and a half of debris and downed trees from the trail on the Peterman Ridge Unit; more work is needed. As part of the licensing requirements of the Cowlitz hydroelectric project, Tacoma Power constructed 20 miles of trail. The trail is open to non-motorized traffic only and is accessible year-round. The views from the trail can be spectacular as the photos below show.



*View looking south towards Riffe Lake*



*View looking southeast towards Mount Adams*

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

**Cougar Sighting:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen received a report of a cougar observed near a residence and cattle operation in east-central Klickitat County. Jacobsen contacted a livestock producer to advise him of the sighting.



**Cougar in Town:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen received a report of a cougar observed near a residence within city limits in western Klickitat County. Jacobsen arrived on the scene but was unable to locate the cougar. However, a flock of turkeys was observed at the location of the cougar sighting, which was the most likely reason the cougar was inhabiting that area. Jacobsen went door-to-door in the area to advise residents of the sighting, provide recommendations on living in cougar country, and to distribute WDFW cougar brochures along with his contact information in case the cougar was sighted again. A very short time later, one of the landowners that had just been contacted called Jacobsen to report that the cougar was walking through his yard.

With the assistance of Biologists Bergh and Wickhem, Officer Bolton, and Student Officer Beltz, along with city police and a local houndsman, the cougar was eventually located and treed a short distance away from where the observations occurred. Unfortunately, the cougar turned out to be the same animal that was captured in town in November. At that time, the cougar was ear-tagged and relocated dozens of miles away on public land. However, the cougar made its way back to town and was observed on a porch in January of 2019 and again during this incident. Due to its apparent lack of fear of humans and return to town after the initial relocation, the cougar was euthanized at the scene. This area often becomes a natural funnel for cougar movements due to the nature of the surrounding topography and features, as well as the abundance of urban turkey and deer in town. Each year cougars are regularly observed moving through or along the margins of town and usually leave the area without incident.



*Turkeys observed in the vicinity of a cougar sighting. When the cougar was initially observed, it was seen within 20 yards of this flock of turkeys and moving towards them*

**Cougar:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to a call about a possible cougar sighting in Mineral. The reporting party reported he heard a cougar “snarl” at him in the dark. He could see eyes shining in a tree in the light of his flashlight. The next day he reported to Conklin he saw cougar tracks on top of deer and elk tracks. He was concerned for the safety of the public since this area is near the lake in Mineral and there are many anglers that would be fishing over the weekend. When Conklin arrived she asked the reporting party to show her the tracks before formulating a plan to potentially address the safety issue. Conklin identified raccoon, deer, elk and domestic house cat tracks. There were no cougar tracks identified on the property.

**Bear Complaints:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and WDFW Enforcement officers received several complaints from Clark County residents regarding bears getting into trash, compost, and bird feeders. Advice was given to the landowners regarding removing attractants. Staff members will continue to monitor the complaints to identify problem areas.

**Sick/Injured Raccoon:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen received a report of a raccoon exhibiting aberrant behavior as it wandered across a golf course during mid-day, and then took shelter under a residence. The raccoon appeared to be limping and dazed. Jacobsen advised to landowner to leave the raccoon alone or to contact a Wildlife Control Operator if the raccoon started causing issues under the house. Advice was also given on how to handle and dispose of a dead raccoon if this raccoon succumbed to its injuries.

**Elk Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist (WCS) Jacobsen received several calls regarding elk causing damage to crop fields and fences, now that the snow has finally melted off these and surrounding areas. Jacobsen also received a report of a spike elk that had gotten tangled up in a fence and died several days ago. Woven-wire fence topped with two or more strands of barbed wire has been found to lead to the highest number of wildlife-entanglement incidents, which was the case in this scenario with the spike elk. A device on hazing options and wildlife-friendly fencing was provided to the landowners, and Jacobsen will continue to work with these individuals to deter the elk from causing damage.



*Elk tangled in a fence* - Photo courtesy of the landowner and used with permission

**Elk Complaints:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to several complaints regarding elk damage to pastures and fences in Amboy. This group of elk ranges from 50 to 100 animals, receives relatively little hunting pressure, and tends to hang out among the small pastures and houses in the Chelatchie Prairie. Jacobsen will visit the area next week to enroll landowners in Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements and to assist with elk hazing in the area. Elk complaints from the White Salmon area in Klickitat County were also received this week. In addition, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to an elk complaint on agricultural lands in Mineral.

#### 4) Conserving Natural Areas

**Cowlitz Wildlife Area Kosmos Vehicular Trespass:** With the lake at low levels, vehicular trespass “off- roading” is becoming more prevalent around Riffe Lake. The activity is unlawful and places lawful public access in jeopardy. The Cowlitz Wildlife Area consists of land owned by Tacoma Power and managed by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Cowlitz Wildlife Area manages the lands around the lake down to an elevation of 756 feet above sea level. The lake level in the picture below is at 697 feet above sea level. The trespass shown in this photo started on the Kosmos Unit of the wildlife area and continued down onto the lakebed to lands owned and managed by Tacoma under the Cowlitz FERC License. The wildlife area has a responsibility to address these issues and employ measures such as gates and closures to ensure that activities like this do not occur.



*Vehicle tracks can be seen driving out onto the exposed lakebed*

**Klickitat Wildlife Area Soda Springs Unit Shaded Fuel Break Maintenance:** Assistant Manager Steveson met with Stewardship Crew Leader Tane from Mount Adams Resource Stewards (MARS), a local non-profit community based organization that supports healthy forests, to discuss the shaded fuel break maintenance project on the Soda Springs Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area. A project site visit was conducted in which the scope of the fuel break maintenance project was discussed as well as the stewardship crew’s capabilities.

Maintenance work began in late April for the MARS crew for a duration of two weeks. A masticator contracted through State Parks will also begin work on the fuel break maintenance project. Klickitat Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Steveson spent time working alongside the Mount Adams Resource Stewards forestry crew as they began on the shaded fuel break maintenance project. Steveson gave a thorough overview of the project and conducted quality control as the crew followed the prescription of the project. This fuel break was originally developed in 2012, and now needs tree pruning and brush clearing to restore its effectiveness.



**Klickitat Wildlife Area Seasonal Road Closures Lifted:** Gates on three roads on the Soda Springs Unit were opened the evening of April 14, in time for the opening of turkey hunting season. The gates restrict vehicle traffic on remote parts of the Wildlife Area to protect wildlife from disturbance during winter when living conditions are difficult, and to protect road surfaces from damage while they are soft.

## 5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

**USFS presentation:** Biologists Bergh gave a presentation at a field visit of the western pond turtle site on USFS property for all of the Wildlife Program leads for all of the Washington and Oregon national forests. She presented information on the status of western pond turtles in Washington and at the site as well as how WDFW has collaborated with the USFS on various aspects of the western pond turtle project.

**Visit to Larch Correctional Center:** Biologist Wickhem and Coordinator Pushee of the Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) visited western pond turtles that are being cared for by inmate technicians at Larch Corrections Center (LCC) in Yacolt. The turtles were captured at a study site in the Columbia River Gorge last July and sent to the Oregon Zoo to be treated for shell disease. Once treatment was completed, they were transferred to LCC to recover from treatment until they are ready for release sometime this summer.

Transferring the turtles to LCC allows the Oregon Zoo to use their limited space to care for other animals, and gives inmates at LCC an opportunity to learn about this state listed species. The inmate technicians are responsible for feeding, changing out water, and closely monitoring the health of each individual turtle. On this particular visit, all turtles were active, eating regularly and maintaining a healthy weight. This is a good sign that they are on schedule for release.

The SPP is a partnership between Evergreen State College and the Washington State Department of Corrections that allows incarcerated individuals to participate in environmental conservation projects. For more information, please visit: <http://sustainabilityinprisons.org/>.

**“Be Bear Aware” Fliers:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen mailed out approximately 550 fliers advising residents in Trout Lake to “be bear aware” and to remove sources of bear attractants such as bird feeders, outdoor pet food, and garbage, as bears have now emerged from hibernation and will likely be looking for food in the area. The community of Trout Lake routinely has issues with bears getting into garbage cans and bird feeders in the spring.

**Turtle Basking Structures:** This winter a student contacted Biologist Bergh about doing his eighth grade project on something to benefit western pond turtles, so Biologist Bergh suggested he build some basking structures. The student built three triangle-shaped basking structures out of 2x4s and attached floats to the bottom. The structures were anchored by concrete blocks and installed at two ponds at a site used by western pond and western painted turtles in Skamania County.



*Eighth grade student kayaking to install basking structures*



*Basking structure ready for turtles*

**Conservation District Presentation:** Biologist Bergh and Habitat Biologist Johnson gave a presentation at the board meeting of the Underwood Conservation District in White Salmon. The Director of the conservation district requested information on priority topics and species that WDFW works on in the area and how those, in turn, might affect priorities for the conservation districts work.

**Conflict Program:** Wildlife Conflict Specialists Conklin and Blankenship provided a presentation on the Wildlife Conflict Program to WDFW Enforcement student officers. Various subjects were covered such as teamwork between Conflict and Enforcement programs on dangerous wildlife, nuisance wildlife, livestock depredations, and wildlife captures. The presentation was well received.

**FFA State Natural Resources Contest:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen arranged and facilitated the wildlife identification portion of the Washington State Future Farmers of America (FFA) Natural Resources contest. Approximately 15 different high schools brought FFA natural resources teams to compete in the annual contest. The winning team will go on to compete at the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis in the fall. At the wildlife identification station, students were required to identify 50 wildlife specimens from scat, tracks, skulls, hides, and mounts.



*Wildlife identification station at the FFA State Natural Resources Competition. The “skulls” tables on the left were particularly challenging*



*FFA students from various schools competing at the wildlife identification station*

**Reader Board Installation:** Klickitat Wildlife Area staff members installed four new reader boards this week. One is located along Grayback Road, one is placed along the North Breaks Road, and two on the Soda Springs Unit (one is along the access road to the Canyon Creek Campground and the other is at an intersection along the Soda Springs Road). These are designed to provide a better, quality presentation of information material and signage. By clustering the information on a reader board, it will make it more convenient for visitors to gather pertinent information about the area, especially in regards to camping, rather than scattered locations that can be easy to overlook.





*New reader board installed on the Soda Springs Unit*

## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this reporting period.

## 7) Other

**Abducted Porcupine:** Biologist Bergh was contacted by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife office in Clackamas about a juvenile porcupine that had been taken from a barn near Goldendale, placed in someone's truck as a joke, and ended up in Portland. The porcupine was about to be released in Portland when a Good Samaritan stepped in and brought it to the ODFW office. The porcupine was likely less than two weeks old and would not be able to survive without its mother. It was transferred to a wildlife rehabilitator and will eventually be released back in the wild. This is a very sad story and a good reminder to NEVER take wildlife out of the wild. If you have a concern please contact your regional WDFW office and if you find an injured animal, contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/injured-wildlife/rehabilitation/find>



*Juvenile porcupine being transported to a wildlife rehabilitator*

## **REGION 6**

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

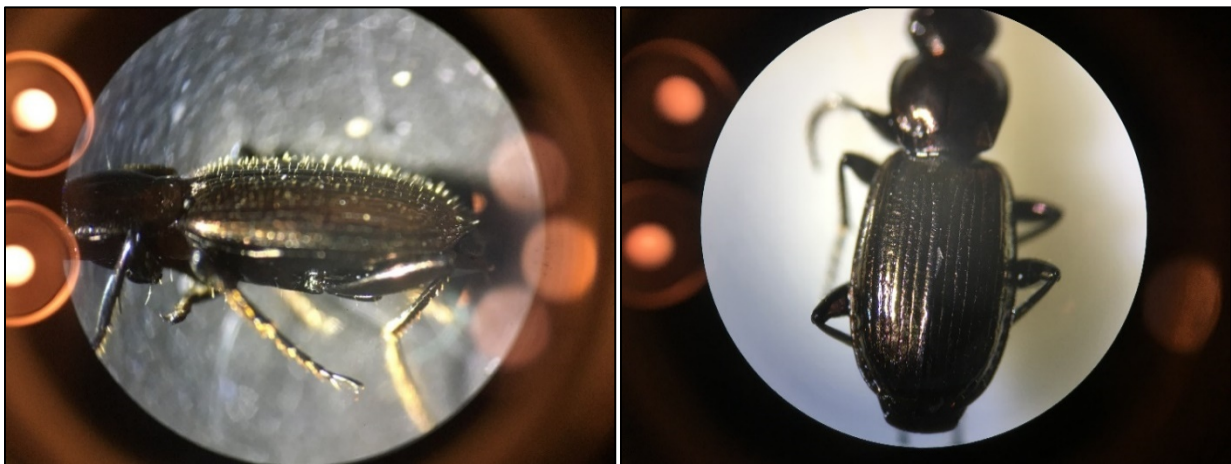
#### **1) Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Clearwater Road Closure:** After consulting with DNR, it was decided to open the gates a few days early this year since there were volunteers already in the area working on the Matheny Habitat Project. One crew set off Sunday afternoon to open the gates. They reported a great trip, seeing one bear, four deer, over 50 elk (not including the valley elk), around 12 grouse and, as a bonus, one fisher. WDFW appreciates the longstanding support of the volunteers and DNR's cooperation in managing this area to minimize disturbance to wildlife in this area.

**Bog Beetles:** These surveys are focused on two priority and rare beetles that primarily inhabit bogs: *Agonum belleri* Hatch (a ground beetle) and *Eanus hatchi* Lane (a click beetle). The surveys for *belleri* consist of finding the appropriate sphagnum habitat and then either:

- Treading--gently pressing on the sphagnum mat until beetles float or climb out;
- Sweep-netting—sweeping surrounding vegetation vigorously with a hand held butterfly net to capture flying insects.
- Pitfall trapping—placing cups with preservative in habitat where beetles are likely and waiting for beetles to fall into trap.

Volunteer Terry spent time creating a list of sites in District 11 with high potential to contain sphagnum bog and visiting these to confirm. Following this, Biologist Tirhi and volunteer Terry do a complete survey using the techniques above. The team surveyed several sites in the district last season with no success (many beetles located but none of the target species and no quality habitat). The first survey for 2019 was successful with the team finding and confirming two *belleri* at a sphagnum bog in Pierce County. The team will be returning to the site to attempt to locate *hatchi* and collect any samples from pitfall traps.



*Suspected Agonum belleri* collected from site in Pierce County as seen thru compound microscope showing characteristic elytra (small hairs) on back. Sample awaiting confirmation

– Photo by J Terry 2019

**Bats:** Biologist Tirhi and Butler have begun bat monitoring and sample collection in District 11. With the assistance of headquarters, species lead Tobin, Biologist Blatz and volunteer Terry the team attempted to capture big brown (*Eptesicus fuscus*) bats from a maternity colony under a bridge in Tacoma. Unfortunately, the site has become a homeless oasis since last trapped 10 years ago and is no longer safe. For this reason, the team will not be returning to this site but will find a replacement colony in addition to the four to five other sites, it is scheduled to monitor and collect data from in 2019. This does not include the list of sites reported by the public that need confirmation as being used routinely as a roost by bats. The monitoring is to assess status of colonies and to track the impact of white-nose syndrome in Washington bats

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/diseases/bat-white-nose>.





*White nose syndrome can cause severe wing damage in bats, which is one of several methods used to confirm the disease once bats are trapped and inspected by knowledgeable staff members*

**Taylor’s Checkerspot Distance Point Count Survey Preparation:** Two occupied Taylor’s checkerspot sites west of the Elwha River are monitored by WDFW using a distance point count method. This method was initiated in 2018, surveyed by two field staff members, Biologist McMillan and Biologist Ament. The 2019 season will include two additional surveyors, Biologist Bell and Biologist Murphie. The survey routes were set up for conducting surveys, including marking the points in the field and making measurements of slope and obstructed percentages. Surveys were initiated with at least one protocol survey being accomplished at all routes.

The results of the counts will be analyzed later, but the raw counts are shown below:

Survey Route	# Points	Survey Date	Count	Survey Date	Count
Northern Site	91	25-Apr-19	to be reported	29-Apr-19	75
Southern Site - West	52			28-Apr-19	160
Southern Site - Jenny	34			26-Apr-19	48
Southern Site - Parallel	20			29-Apr-19	9
Southern Site - Ridge Road	60			29-Apr-19	14
Southern Site - Lower East Road	21			30-Apr-19	6



*Biologist Gary Bell and Biologist Bryan Murphie assist with setting up point stations for Taylor's checkerspot surveys at the southern site – Jenny and Parallel Routes*

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Dumpsites:** Natural Resource Technician Tupen visited many different timber company lands that allow free public recreation access. Tupen cleaned up many dumpsites and target shooting trash on these properties and took note of larger dumpsites that will require more help to clean up.





**Cosmo Park:** Master hunters, Natural Resource Technician Tupen, and Biologist Harris cleaned up a wildlife-viewing site along the Hoquiam River again. Vandals once again pulled rocks out of the way and dumped trash. A master hunter brought his tractor to replace the rocks and load heavy items for disposal. Ecology blocks were placed to discourage further abuse. The property is owned by the Chehalis River Basin Land Trust and is a popular place for people to fish, launch canoes and kayaks, and to just take a break. While on site, Biologist Harris spoke to one couple from California who saw the River and just had to find a place to stop and take some pictures.





*Master hunter using a tractor to push rocks back into place*



*Ecology blocks in place to hinder further vandalism*



*A view across the Hoquiam River from Cosmo Park*

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

**Injured Elk:** Natural Resource Technician Tupen responded to a report of an injured elk that had been seen laying in a field for four straight days. Upon arrival, Tupen could not locate the elk. However, he was able to find a pile of fresh looking elk hair near the edge of the field. We suspect a bear or cougar resolved the issue for us.



*A pile of elk hair near the area where an injured elk had been reported*

**Predator Sightings in Residential Areas:** Natural Resource Technician Tupen has spoken with several different people about black bear, coyote, and cougar sightings in the last week. In the cases of the coyote and cougar sightings, the animals were seen passing through residential areas, but were not causing problems or acting aggressively. Tupen advised the concerned callers on cougar and coyote safety. In the case of black bears, Tupen talked to a landowner that had a black bear destroy some of her outdoor storage cabinets and ate all of the canned goods inside. Tupen advised the landowner to stop storing food outside, as it is a major attractant for bears this time of year. Natural Resource Technician Tupen advised the landowner to call back if the bears continue to destroy her property once all attractants are removed.

**Aberdeen Cougar:** A few reports of cougar sightings came in from the same area that was featured by KOMO news recently. Most were reporting the same picture and video used on the news report. Biologist Harris received another third hand report from the Aberdeen Police Department Animal Control Officer.

**Ocean Shores Cougar:** Biologist Harris received a report from Ocean Shores Police Department (OSPD) of a cougar in Ocean Shores. The cougar was observed by an OSPD officer. The cougar reportedly ran when it discovered it had been seen. Overall, the cougar has not caused any problems and is hopefully assisting with the deer and raccoon population issues.

**Coyote Time:** It is that time of year again. Biologist Harris received several reports of coyotes reportedly acting aggressively. In all cases it had been more of a defensive behavior, indicating pups nearby.



**Beaver Problems:** Natural Resource Technician Tupen was notified that beavers had begun building a dam that is starting to pool water on the roadway of a private timber company's land. Tupen visited the site and placed a fair amount of bear hide near the dam to try to ward the beavers off. This site is one of the areas bear hide is normally used. Something happened to the hide as most was removed.



*The start of a beaver dam under a low bridge on timber company land that allows free public access*



*Strips of bear hide that will hang just above the water and hopefully deter the beavers from continuing to build their dam*

**Bear Problems:** Biologist Harris is starting to receive more reports of bears getting into bird feeders and garbage cans. So far, advising people to remove attractants is working.

**Elk Carcass:** Natural Resource Technician Tupen received a call from a woman who had an elk die in her yard. The caller was unable to move the animal herself, so Tupen assisted in removing the carcass.

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

**TransAlta/Centralia Mine:** Biologists Tirhi and Holman, Regional Manager Calkins, and Lands Manager Lowery participated in a tour of TransAlta's Centralia Mine property that straddles Thurston and Lewis counties. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and see areas of the mine that WDFW may be interested in purchasing after mining reclamation for the creation of a new wildlife area. Discussions and meetings with continue.





*Landscape view of one area of the TransAlta mine showing variety of habitats available to wildlife*

**Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Management Plan:** Staff members from all programs participated in the first of several internal planning team meetings on the update to this wildlife area management plan. At this meeting, the group reviewed comments and suggestions provided at the public open house, worked on creating a vision for the wildlife area, and discussed the status of each of the priority topics and then broke into topic focus groups to draft planning objectives and measurable activities. More on the wildlife area can be found here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/wildlife-areas/scatter-creek-wildlife-area>

**Matheny Habitat Project:** Twelve volunteers participated in the Matheny Habitat Project this past weekend. Four of whom were on light duty so they opted to stay at the cabin and conduct repairs and maintenance. One worked on getting hours caught up in CERVIS from group sign in sheets. Another volunteer was in charge of call in and out radio monitoring for the field crew. So the lawn is mowed, some deck repairs were made, and habitat improved. Overall report is the volunteers had a good time.



*Volunteer preparing to make habitat accessible to larger species.*



*Volunteer at work*





*Finished product*



*Field crew*





*Volunteer entering volunteer hours into CERVIS from group sign up sheets*



*A volunteer explains why he should have measured twice!*

**West Twin River 20/20 – Coastal Wetlands Grant Pursuit:** Biologist McMillan completed the wildlife species occurrence list that was requested by the USFWS. The list was provided to Biologist Zitomer to include in the grant proposal.

**Olympic/Wynoochee:** With the start of spring and the growing season upon us, we are seeing lots of new growth in the game fields. The Wynoochee Mitigation is recovering well with signs of recent elk grazing as well as elk sightings. On the Olympic Game Fields we are also seeing new growth and signs of elk grazing. We hope that these areas will continue to entice the elk herds and keep them off farmlands where they have been heavily scrutinized. Our hopes are that the producers, as well as conflict specialists, will have some relief.



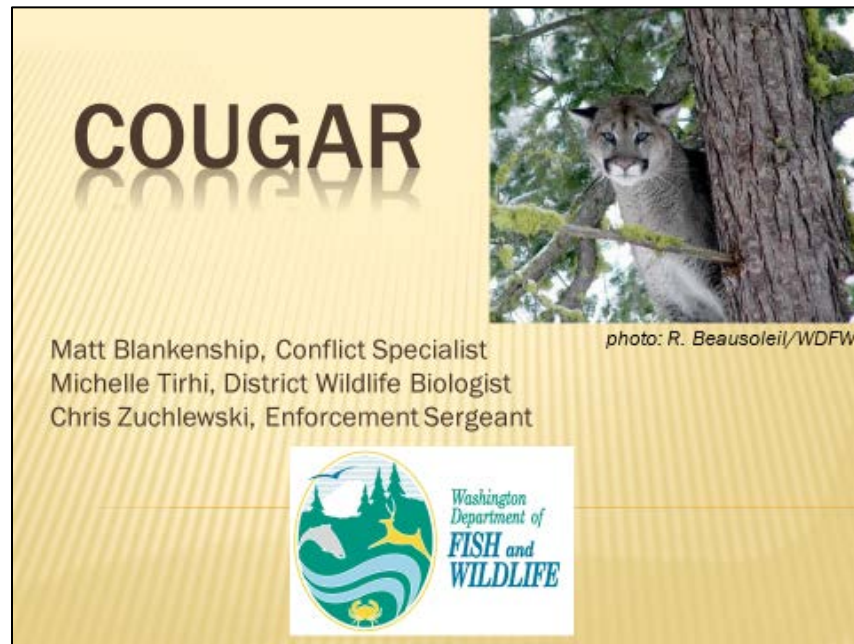


As we finish with our equipment maintenance, we will be moving on to cleaning elk forage areas such as downed trees and limbs, road maintenance, and getting prepared to re-farm unit two of the Wynoochee Mitigation units. Our soil sampling began this week, these samples determine nutrient needs and specifications of fertilizers needed in the fall. The mission of the Olympic Wildlife Area staff members is to ensure high quality elk forage during the winter months as well as public recreation and hunting opportunities



## 5) Providing Education and Outreach

**Cougar Education:** Biologists Blankenship and Tirhi along with Enforcement Agent Zuchlewski presented on cougars at the Olympia REI to an audience of approximately 50 people. Information included biology, ecology, nuisance cougar, living with cougar, and enforcement of cougar regulations. The presentation was very well received and the staff members were kept after with several questions by audience.



## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this reporting period.

## 7) Other

Nothing for this reporting period.