

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

January 1 to 15, 2021

DIVERSITY DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Conservation Genetics of the Imperiled Striped Whipsnake in Washington: The striped whipsnake occurs across 11 western U.S. states and into Mexico but has experienced population declines in parts of its range, particularly in Washington. Researchers analyzed nuclear and mitochondrial DNA extracted mainly from shed skins to assess local genetic diversity and differentiation within and between the last known whipsnake populations in Washington. Microsatellite data analyses indicated that there was comparable genetic diversity between the two small, extant Washington populations, but gene flow may be somewhat limited. Scientists found evidence that Washington whipsnakes are most closely related to those in Oregon. This investigation into the whipsnake population genetic diversity and differentiation using shed skins as a source of DNA demonstrates a unique method for evaluating the status of secretive snake species that are difficult to observe or study. The genetic information provided may serve as an early warning of extinction risk caused by population declines and isolation while there is still time to implement conservation actions and measure their benefits. More information can be found here: http://www.herpconbio.org/Volume_15/Issue_3/Pilliod_etal_2020.pdf

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nothing for this installment.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this installment.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this installment.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this installment.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Region 6 Coordinator Montgomery attended classes in Puyallup.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia delivered equipment to instructors in Warden and Prosser and attended meetings to discuss the hunter education instructor database project. Garcia also scheduled four pre-service trainings and sent invitation emails and letters to instructor applicants that have not attended a pre-service training. The Inland Northwest Wildlife Council (INWC) was also contacted by Garcia about the National Hunting and Fishing Day (NHFD) event.

Region 6 Coordinator Montgomery worked with Region 4 Coordinator Dazey and Region 5 Coordinator Elliott for two days of staff member firearm training at Cowlitz Range.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

LANDS DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Nothing for this installment.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Lands 20/20: The agency has six projects involving seven counties now under public review before we move forward to grant applications. More than 95 percent of the 41 comments received to date are positive. Two weeks ago, Lisa Coffman (Real Estate) joined Lands Division Manager Cynthia Wilkerson and Jim Woods, the agency's Director of Tribal Affairs, in making a presentation to tribal representatives. It was very well received. The projects are: Ebsen Water Access (Asotin), Maloney Mountain (Columbia), Eyhott Island (Okanogan), Chester Butte (Douglas), Chehalis Wildlife Area (Grays Harbor), and Centralia Mine (Thurston and Lewis).

Mission Ridge Exchange: Real Estate Supervisors Elyse Woodruff and Karen Edwards, working with Chelan County's review appraiser, finalized the scope of work for the appraisal of the 780 acres of WDFW land in and around the Mission Ridge Ski Resort that is slated for exchange. WDFW is seeking to exchange land for better elk habitat in a more remote area at the north end of the Colockum Wildlife Area.

Water Rights: Water Rights Specialist Cynthia Knudsen has been helping real estate understand how water rights are created and lost, and the implications for our upcoming acquisitions. Last week she gave an excellent tutorial on the water rights in the Violet Prairie project.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

A Day in the Life of a Lands Agent: Elyse Woodruff and Lands Agents Jerrod Ploof, Albert Ramirez, Randy Carbery, Edie Thomas, Megan Zarzycki, and Alice Beals put together a PowerPoint presentation for the Quarterly Lands Division Meeting on December 15. It was full

of photos and information about all the kinds of things that lands agents do on a daily basis: permits, encroachments, meeting with landowners, buying land, and more. We enjoyed being able to showcase our work.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Novatus Workflow for RCO Grant Applications: Karen Edwards and Property Acquisition Specialist Sasha Medlen worked with Lisa Nelson (Lands Division) and the contracts shop to complete a new workflow in Novatus for Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant applications. Lisa and the contracts shop are very pleased with our efforts.

Grant News: Sasha Medlen (Real Estate) has made tremendous strides in the last month to complete all the state and federal interim grant reports for 2020. We appreciate her stick-to-itiveness on this task. Sasha also reports the successful conclusion of the RCO Heart of the Cascades 2014 Grant (#14-1090). This grant is now closed with her final report to RCO on January 12. Through this grant, Chad Buck and former members of the Real Estate Acquisition Team acquired 3,000 acres in Kittitas County from our conservation partners: Westdale LLC, NJK Timber Company, and The Nature Conservancy & the Knudson Family. The acquisitions provide recreation opportunity and high-quality forest and stream habitat on the east slope of the Cascades in the L.T. Murray and Wenas Wildlife Areas.

Real Estate Staff Training: We had two in-house trainings this month led by Elyse Woodruff: *How to Understand Easements* and *How to Make Your Own Maps in LIS*. Everyone participated and many of us can put the information to use immediately to improve our communications with each other and with our colleagues in the rest of WDFW. Elyse then gave the easements training to the planning team, too.

7) Other

Real Estate Staff Comings and Goings: We said farewell to our Manager Julie Sandberg and wished her a happy retirement on December 11. Staff members have appreciated that Lands Division Manager Cynthia Wilkerson immediately appointed Acting Manager Elyse Woodruff so we were ready to roll for the legislative session. We're all looking forward to the results of the manager's recruitment happening now.

Mary Baldwin's first day as the Property Management Coordinator (HQ) was January 4. She is a wonderful addition to the team and is progressing through her trainings very quickly. Region 2 Lands Agent Albert Ramirez resigned January 15. We wish him well and hope to see him back here someday. His position has been filled for three months by Chad Buck, our HQ Acquisitions Coordinator. The fact that we're all working remotely gave Region 2 the opportunity to have someone on board immediately. It's also a great cross-training opportunity for Chad. We'll begin the recruitment for a permanent position soon.

Real Estate Business Improvements: We've made many business improvements this month for the purpose of breaking down silos within the Real Estate team and finding ways to "create" time. We find that if we spend a little time on communications, we gain so much in return. Here are three examples:

- 1) Every morning, the 14 of us greet each other on Teams in our "Coffee Minute" with friendly messages, riddles, and photos of our work. Elyse started this on the Property Management side of the house last March and since December has expanded it to the whole team. It's a lot like the coffee pot gatherings that used to happen in our actual offices before COVID, but it's even better now because we can include all our offices statewide.
- 2) The Monday all-staff meetings have been changed from individual to-do lists into a collaboration; cross-trainings about topics we're researching and asking each other for help on something.
- 3) We've replaced weekly written reports with weekly one-on-one Teams calls. We've successfully replaced the drudgery and time consumption of having every member write a weekly report. It also cuts out the time needed to read all those reports! Every member of the staff talks with Supervisors Karen or Elyse (or both) for an hour every week. Out of these we can develop reports such as this one. This is much more fun and frees up so much time.

SCIENCE DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Suspicious Deer: Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock retrieved a dead deer from Republic. The deer was reported to be skinny and drooling. Turnock and Ungulate Research Scientist DeVivo performed a necropsy and found it likely the deer died of rumen acidosis.

Eagle Monitoring: Biologist Vekasy placed a deer carcass at planned trapping location for golden eagles. Vekasy observed the carcass a few days later, identifying at least five different golden eagles in the area, including three different immature birds that had visited the carcass. Trapping and radio-tagging is planned for next week. This project is focusing on immature wintering golden eagles to determine origin and long-term range use.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Damage Permit Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor McCanna held a meeting with district biologists, private lands biologists, and conflict specialists in Region 1. McCanna reviewed Washington Advisory Codes and Revised Codes of Washington regarding wildlife damaging private property. Information on how permits are used, meeting herd objectives while addressing damage, data management, and public access was discussed. McCanna will follow up on action items.

Elk Hazing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb spent three afternoons hazing hundreds of elk away from valuable haystacks along the Washington/Oregon border. On the third day, pyrotechnic hazing was no longer effective, and Kolb had to walk up to the groups of elk before they would start moving. Use of vehicles or ATVs for hazing/herding was not feasible due to very wet field conditions. A mid-week shift in weather appears to have displaced the elk from the area for the time being.



Hundreds of elk move away from a haystack and into Oregon following pyrotechnic hazing efforts

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Habitat: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley finished planting 2,000 native shrubs at a habitat project on a WDFW contracted Feel Free to Hunt property in Walla Walla County. Thorne Hadley spent time cleaning and putting away used equipment. They completed maintenance on shrubs that were planted last spring, removing plant protectors and weeding around the base of the shrubs to eliminate competing vegetation.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Okanogan County Mule Deer Captures: The contracted Hi Line Helicopter crew successfully deployed GPS collars on 11 new mule deer in the Methow Watershed with assistance from biologists Hansen, Fitkin, and Heinlen. This brought our study area sample size back up to nearly 100 animals. Part of the ongoing Predator-Prey Project, these radioed deer are foundational for the WA mule deer sightability model currently under development and are helping refine our knowledge of migration behavior for this sub-population. There were no mortalities or significant injuries to deer during the capture operation, and the deer appeared to be in pretty good shape at this point in the winter.



Collared mule deer on traditional Methow winter range – Photo by S. Fitkin



Capture helicopter returning for refueling – Photo by S. Fitkin

Chelan and Kittitas County Mule Deer: Biologist Comstock coordinated with Biologist Oates and Deer Specialist Hansen for capture logistics for the 2021 mule deer captures in Chelan and Kittitas counties. This year the goal is to redeploy 24 GPS collars retrieved from study animals that died during the initial year of the study. Data collected from the first year of the study showed that most mule deer in the Wenatchee Foothills were migratory. Biologist Comstock was interviewed by local naturalist, Susan Ballinger for a blog post about winter mule deer: <https://www.wenatcheenaturalist.com/curious-about-local-wintering-mule-deer/>.

Bighorn Sheep and Domestic Sheep: Biologists Comstock and Jeffreys joined the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' Wild Sheep Working Group for a presentation of an update to the Bureau of Land Management's Risk of Contact tool, which quantifies the potential risk of bighorn sheep foraging into domestic sheep grazing allotments. This information assists land managers and wildlife biologists in continuing efforts to prevent the spread of deadly *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (M. ovi), a bacterium commonly carried by domestic sheep that is often fatal to bighorn. The previous Risk of Contact Tool relied on an ArcGIS add-in, whereas the new version is built in with an interactive web-browser. This will make the modelling available on an open-source platform without requiring a commercial ArcGIS license. Currently this product is in beta-testing but should be available for public use by this spring.

Canal Escape Ramps for Grant County Mule Deer: Biologist Rowan created a list of potential materials for use as mobile deer ramps and created a simple canal survey protocol to search for entrapped deer. She also purchased materials and spent a couple days modifying and constructing a new mobile deer ramp for use in drained irrigation canals where these animals become trapped. We have been using mobile ramps made from wooden snow-fencing with

burlap hog-ringed onto the top surface. However, these are easily broken and their effectiveness for escape by deer when left passively is unknown. Rowan has proposed WDFW and the Mule Deer Foundation partner to create some new designs based on a list of specific criteria. If anyone in the agency wants to take a stab at a design, email Ella Rowan for the criteria list.



Examples of a newly constructed and modified mobile deer ramp, and a deployed ramp that has lost its burlap cover. Notice the steep 50' slick concrete canal wall deer cannot climb, and the icy foot of water still in the canal – Photos by Rowan

Ferruginous Hawks: Biologist Rowan reviewed survey time and volunteer information from year 2016 efforts, and compiled a map overlaying hawk and Washington ground squirrel survey areas for Manager Cotten. We are hoping to hire a technician to assist with various species survey work, and understanding logistical issues will help when making decisions.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Methow Wildlife Area Non-Hunting/Fishing Recreational Pressure: The Methow Wildlife Area is seeing daily recreational pressure that is considerably higher than traditional recreational pressures, which were already high. This very noticeable increase in snowshoeing, backcountry skiing, and fat tire biking is almost certainly having impacts to native wildlife including our migratory mule deer herds. For example, a large number of mule deer have vacated their preferred wintering grounds in the Golden Doe and have taken up residence in less preferable habitat further south, likely to get away from daily pressure from non-hunting recreationist. Similarly, staff members have noticed the Lester Road area of the Methow Unit is exceptionally busy. Currently, Lester Road is so heavily traveled that a person can simply walk up the unmaintained road for miles without any snow snowshoes due to the well beaten path being used daily. Both sides of the road are surrounded by wildlife area lands that were purchased for mule deer winter range, but very few deer appear to be present this year. It's expensive and difficult to measure recreational impacts to wildlife, but visual observations are leading local staff members to believe that unchecked recreation is causing migratory mule deer to displace to lesser habitats during their most susceptible time of the year.

In contrast to mule deer, wildlife area staff members have noticed cougars and bobcats seem to be far less concerned about the increased presence of humans. In fact, staff members have game camera footage of an adult and sub-adult cougar frequenting a high recreation use area at all hours of the day and night. Photos have shown the cougars openly moving about in the middle of

the day in between recreational groups hiking the area. Bobcats have also been witnessed in very close proximity to humans this winter.

Columbia Basin Regulated Access Areas: Weather has been warming up significantly, getting rid of iced over basins in the Regulated Access Areas. North Potholes Regulated Access Area ponds are gaining a good amount of water and all five hunt locations have ample water for hunter. Bird activity has pickup in the North Potholes area and Specialist McPherson has heard of several hunters having good harvest. Frenchman Regulated Access currently has been spotty on bird and hunter activity, Specialist McPherson has witnessed few days that would have provided good hunting opportunity if people were out that day. Winchester Regulated Access Area has stayed consistent with birds and hunters using the project. Cells A, E, and F have the best amount of water and the most bird use offering hunters good opportunity to harvest birds.

Columbia Basin Hunter Access Program: Biologist Hughes and Biologist Cook discussed different target areas to use Voluntary Public Access – Habitat Incentive Program (VPA – HIP) funds on potential Waterfowl, Habitat and Access Program (WHAP) sites throughout the Columbia Basin. Hughes spoke to Access Program Manager Strickland about potential ideas and opportunities for Region 2 to implement portions of the funds received specifically for waterfowl access. Hughes also confirmed that any agricultural sites would already be in compliance with cultural resources for the VPA grant received. Cook and Hughes are planning to secure waterfowl access to areas prior to next hunting season.

Water Access Beaver Issues: Assistant Access Manager Steele is waging war with a beaver yet again. This time the pesky critter is working hard to plug the outflow culvert at Herman Lake. A private landowner (rancher) downstream from this culvert depends on this water for his cattle.



3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Okanogan County Elk Depredation: Specialist Heilhecker visited a landowner who has elk eating his haystacks. The haystacks are partially tarped, but the tarps do not reach the ground. He hazed the elk using firearms and a predator call as noise deterrents without much luck. The elk would leave the haystack but bed down on his property only to return to the haystack. The landowner plans to build a shed for storage. Specialist Heilhecker issued one kill permit.

Chelan County Elk Depredation: Specialist Bridges continues to assist landowners with depredating elk on landowners' properties. As trust continues to build, so does the willingness of the landowners to work with hunters.

Chelan County Deer Depredation: Specialist Bridges has worked with a multitude of landowners in assisting with attempts to decrease damage to orchards from deer. Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements (DPCA) were pushed through contracting and permits were issued in a fashion that landowners were comfortable with regarding Covid concerns.

Landowner Project Support: Specialist Bridges continues to assist landowners with large scale projects (fencing, cattle guard, etc.) by providing technical assistance as needed. Communication with funding constituents has proven delightful, and we are awaiting spring conditions to allow some projects to begin.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Sinlahekin Thinning/Fuels Treatments: Sinlahekin staff members have been thinning areas within the boundaries of the Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration Project. Rod Pfeifle, Statewide Forester, developed the thinning prescription to remove conifers less than a 7" Diameter at Breast Height (DBH). Lop limbs from felled trees and buck the main stem into two or three pieces to lay low on the ground and decompose more quickly. The project is being done to achieve a desired future condition of Ponderosa pine with a mature stand stocking density of 20 to 25 trees per acre leaving Ponderosa pine when possible and western larch for species diversity. Douglas fir should be a minor component of the stand. Staff members will continue to treat areas as weather permits.



Top and Bottom – before and after photos of areas thinned by Sinlahekin Wildlife Area staff members – Photos by Wehmeyer

Similkameen-Chopaka Unit Fuels Treatments: Scotch Creek staff members continued thinning small diameter trees on the Similkameen-Chopaka Unit. The project area is approximately 60 acres and contains varying stem densities and age classes. The purpose of the project is to improve forest health, restore ecological function, and make the project site more beneficial to wildlife.



Forest Health/Thinning Treatment on the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area – Photo by Scotch Creek staff members

Potential Sinlahekin Prescribe Fire Projects: Manager Wehmeyer met with Matt Eberlein, Prescribed Fire Program Manager, to look over potential areas to reintroduce fire on the Sinlahekin. The main area they were looking at was along Sinlahekin Creek at the north end of the wildlife area to see if it would even be feasible or possible to reintroduce fire into that area. Reed canary grass (RCG) is a major component in the area, treatment with herbicide or other methods after burning and during native plant dormancy will be vital to help reduce the amount of RCG in the system and allow natives to flourish.

Sinlahekin and Chiliwist Seasonal Road Closures: Two roads on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area were closed for the winter starting January 1. Chiliwist Butte Road on the Chiliwist Unit of the wildlife area and Zachman Road on the Sinlahekin unit are closed until May 1, 2021 to reduce winter damage to the roads and reduce stress on wintering mule deer. One or both roads could reopen sooner, depending on conditions. Gates will block access to the roads and signs are posted to notify the public of the closure. Recreationists will still be able to access the areas on foot but are asked to give wildlife plenty of space.

Columbia Basin Russian Olive Removal: Specialist McPherson and Assistant Manager Cole coordinated an effort to remove more Russian olives and consolidate previously removed trees into piles for future burning. The expansion project connected to TD-1 has no more Russian olives to be removed so now the focus will be on pile burning to remove materials from the area. The expansion a few years ago looked like a Russian Olive forest and now, with years of diligent work by wildlife area staff members, the expansion is looking like a promising addition of wetland habitat to TD-1 project area.



Russian olive removal work in the expansion – Photo by C. McPherson and B. Cole

Douglas County Private Lands Habitat Restoration Planning: Private Lands Biologist Braaten was able to secure a timely late fall order for 3300 trees/shrubs for several small-scale habitat projects sites in north Douglas County. The Pearl Hill fire in Douglas County removed several miles of critical riparian habitat for sharp-tailed grouse and other wildlife. Trees and shrubs orders were able to be made in a timely fashion to have plants available for Spring 2021. Private Lands Biologist Braaten also secured permission from three different landowners affected by wildfire to complete restoration work within 10,000 acres in north Douglas County.

Private Lands Biologist Braaten is also coordinating with Olympia, regional and district staff members weekly on other planned project focused areas for using future state and private funds. However, planning/funding availability for these projects has been relatively slow and involved. Cultural resource surveys, plant availability, and project completion deadlines maybe timing issues that will delay projects. Most likely projects might be delayed until late 2021, 2022, or 2023 due to low nursery stocks and seed supplies in the NW. Staff member availability to complete timely large-scale projects is also uncertain. Private Lands Biologist Braaten will submit a 1500-acre project site in north Douglas County to focus on planting antelope bitterbrush for wintering mule deer.

Discussions about contracting with local nurseries to grow plants has been discussed to create stocks available to staff members. It also creates a noncompetitive arena to get what is needed for future projects.



Grass coming back after 2020 Pearl Hill wildfire in Douglas County – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

Biologist Hughes discussed various habitat restoration opportunities with a landowner who is interested in converting his wheat field into permanent wildlife habitat in the Badger Mountain area. The landowner is hoping to conservatively graze the property once habitat has established. Hughes reviewed the area closely and spoke to the NRCS and USFWS about potential funding opportunities for the landowner.

The landowner has a current application in with the Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI). Hughes encouraged the landowner to wait for a response on his SGI results because any habitat alteration he does has potential to make his application out of compliance. If he does not get accepted, there are additional funding sources that he can seek out for assistance in converting the field to habitat. Hughes also discussed management practices and timelines in establishing native permanent habitat.

Biologist Hughes checked on habitat projects that were planted last spring. Due to an extremely mild winter throughout the area, weeds are already coming up. Hughes is working with the operator on planning spraying and future mowing of the two habitat plots. Tree and shrub establishment is coming along very well.



Shrub rows planted last spring in rill irrigated plot – Photo by Hughes

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Douglas County – DNR signage: Private Lands Biologist Braaten worked with private landowners and DNR staff members to request attention to vehicle access issues on DNR internal access roads near sensitive sage grouse areas in Douglas County. DNR “No Unauthorized Vehicle” signs were posted to help limit vehicle traffic during sensitive times. Also, this signage will benefit people leasing these areas by reducing wildfire risk and noxious weed establishment along these public access points.



DNR “No Unauthorized Vehicle” sign posted in Douglas County to benefit sage grouse and landowners – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Methow Agriculture and Grazing: The Methow Wildlife Area is working on billing statements related to the 2020 grazing and sharecropping season. Additionally, the wildlife area is working in collaboration with various staff members to renew several agricultural leases and grazing permits. In addition to renewals, staff members are also educating themselves on new processes related to the grazing program that are designed to reduce conflicts between livestock and large carnivores.

Windstorm Damage on Similkameen-Chopaka Unit: Recent heavy winds flipped over one center tower pivot on the Similkameen-Chopaka Unit. A local irrigation specialist has inspected the 30-year old, seven tower system and is recommending total replacement.



Wind damaged center pivot irrigation – Photo by Scotch Creek staff members

Columbia Basin Grazing Lease Administration: The end of the calendar year is an important time for WDFW staff members who administer grazing leases. At the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area, for example, Assistant Manager Bechtold uses this time to review all grazing activities from the previous year, checks to ensure all forms have been completed, and begins the annual billing process. Over the past several weeks, Bechtold has mailed letters to all lease holders and has spoken with many of them personally. Aside from the usual business of lease administration, the content of these discussions included a variety of topics such as an upcoming lease renewal, road conditions, potential in-lieu services, and the coordination of a habitat development project occurring within one of the lease areas. These end-of-season reviews are an important step in maintaining long-term and mutually beneficial relationships between the agency and permit holders.

Columbia Basin Annual Agricultural Lease Reconciliation and Billing: Assistant Manager Cole completed the annual reconciliation and billing for nine agricultural leases administered by the wildlife area. The leases allow for certain lands owned or managed by WDFW to remain in production in a manner that provides benefit to the local agricultural-based economy as well as upland wildlife and the recreating public. Lease terms vary and range from cash rent to providing seasonal and permanent wildlife habitat and food opportunities, particularly for resident and migratory birds.



Unique Canada goose feeding in corn east of Moses Lake – Photo by C. McPherson



Nice day at Forde Lake, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area – Photo by Wehmeyer



Trumpeter Swans on Forde Lake, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area – Photo by Wehmeyer



Little snow on the Eder Unit looking towards Chopaka Mountain – Photo by Justin Haug



View from the Chiliwist Unit looking South – Photo by Justin Haug



Ice-free Palmer Lake – Photo by Justin Haug

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Managing Wildlife Populations: District 8 Wildlife Biologist Oates responded to three collared deer mortalities. Two were due to cougar predation and one was unknown. Collared adult does continue to die at an alarming rate in District 8.

Abnormal Deer Hooves: A hunter in Ellensburg reported abnormal hooves from buck mule deer he harvested in Klickitat county (GMU 382). WDFW statewide Wildlife Veterinarian Mansfield set up a diagnostic test with Colorado State University to screen for treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD). Biologist Oates shipped the samples. Test results indicated a severe case of laminitis. Steiner's strains were negative for spirochetes and lesions inconsistent with TAHD. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) was ordered just to make sure TAHD had not spread to deer.



Abnormal deer hooves

Cougar Harvests: District 8 Biologists sealed three cougars harvested locally. Cougar harvest has been low this year and all units are still open to hunting.

Elk Feeding: L.T. Murray Wildlife Area staff members are feeding approximately 700 elk at the Joe Watt and Robinson feed sites.



Elk still finding natural forage up on the hills



Elk awaiting their breakfast



Natural Resources Technician Blore feeding elk at Robinson Canyon, L.T. Murray Wildlife Area

Wenas Wildlife Area crews continued elk feeding at Mellote. Feeding remains a challenge; the feed site was one of the areas that burned hot during the Evan's Canyon fire, leaving loose soils and no vegetation. The warm, wet weather has compounded the problem and getting around in feed site is difficult at best. Weekend count was around 450 head of elk.

Wenas Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Stultz worked on cutting the recent purchase of sucker pipe to appropriate length for elk fence posts. The Wenas Wildlife Area crew will continue replacing burned elk fence near Mt. Vale as long as the weather allows.

The fencing contractor that's rebuilding elk fence has a crew are working their way west from the Mellotte area and a second crew that's west of the Calvert/Hoover corner working west towards Hardy Canyon.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber observed about 60 wild turkeys within the Snipes Reserve at the Sunnyside Unit. An estimated 18 toms were counted as they moved through the grass.



Turkeys at Sunnyside Unit

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Pond 3 Trail: Region 3 Access staff members worked on clearing the overgrown Pond 3 trail and made repairs to the fence along the trail that had been cut in several places.



Pond 3 trail before and after



Natural Resource Worker Ruiz repairing fence along Pond 3 trail

Sheep Company Shooting Range: Biologist Daling worked with Master Hunter volunteers to keep the Sheep Company Shooting Range stocked with target holders.

Yakima Construction Shop installed shooting benches at the improved Sheep Company range.



Some of the new benches installed at Sheep Company shooting range

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber has spent time in the field talking with waterfowl hunters and getting feedback from them about the waterfowl season and future wetland management ideas. The month of January has been a challenging time for waterfowl hunting due to the mild weather, but a few hunters have been successful with limits of mallards, widgeon, and a few pintails.



A hunter's decoy spread at the Phase 1 wetland of the Windmill Unit

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Youth Hunters Deployed to Assist with Kahlotus Deer Damage: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand checked on deer activity and damage in several winter wheat fields near Kahlotus. Strong numbers of deer continue to be observed and reported from damage permit holders in wheat fields near Lower Monumental Dam along the Snake River. Several youth hunters from the new Region 3 youth deer special permit hunt roster were provided hunting opportunities and filled their tags.



Successful Kahlotus Area Youth Hunters

Finley Horse Death: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand assisted Wildlife Officer Seiss with a site investigation of a horse that had to be euthanized by the owner from injuries the owner thought may have been from a cougar. After interviewing the owner, canvassing the area for evidence, and examining the nature of the injuries, the cause of injury was undetermined but thought unlikely to be caused by a predator.



Officer Seiss investigating a horse death

Tri-Cities Airport Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand located the last deer residing on the Tri-Cities airport and coordinated with USDA's Wildlife Services to lethally remove the animal. The deer was field dressed and delivered to a non-profit charitable organization in Walla Walla where the meat will provide nutritious meals to needy families.

Kahlotus Deer Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received a new deer damage complaint from a landowner farming winter wheat along the Pasco-Kahlotus Highway. A field visit was made to identify damage areas and develop lethal and non-lethal hazing techniques to minimize damage occurrence. The landowner is currently in consultation with family members to discuss the conditions of WDFW's Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement.



Winter wheat deer damage

Kahlotus Chicken Depredations: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and responded to a landowner near Kahlotus who experienced losing around 20 chickens in the past week. Chicken losses are not an uncommon occurrence in the area since the birds are free ranged and not cooped in the nighttime hours. Advice on husbandry was provided to the owner to protect the remaining flock.

Rattlesnake Hills Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored for elk activity on the Hanford National Monument and adjoining private lands. Recent reports from landowners and WDFW monitoring indicate no elk were observed outside of the Hanford Monument.

Landowner Hunting Permits: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand participated in discussions with hunt managers and District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra regarding modification in permit levels due to new ownership of land enrolled in the Silver Dollar Landowner Hunting Permit.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Esquatzle Coulee Shrub Planting Underway: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra assisted Sunnyside Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber on shrub planting on the Esquatzle Unit of the Sunnyside Wildlife Area. Following a large wildfire in 2019, funding for restoration was secured and the 200 shrubs planter were a small part of the larger upland restoration project.



Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber planting shrubs on the Esquatzle Unit

Wenas Wildlife Area Biologist Daling coordinated with volunteers, providing seed for the 50-acre post-fire restoration along lower Umtanum Creek. Volunteers, led by Deb Essman, spent several weekends using whirly-bird hand seeders to put out 2,200 pounds of seed. An additional 400 pounds of seed was spread near the Umtanum Falls trail by retired Habitat Biologist Renfrow and his wife.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber and District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra planted Golden Current and Woods 'Rose shrubs at riparian sites within the Esquatzel Unit. A total of 152 shrubs were planted. It was a great way to work and discuss future management ideas for the wildlife area. Thank you, Jason!



District Biologist Fidorra planting Golden Currant shrubs

New challenges with Greenstrip Pilot Project: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett continued to coordinate on the final Greenstrip Project. At this time, the project is ready to be seeded however the landowner intends to graze the field where the greenstrip is located. If the field is grazed a temporary “hot-wire” fence will need to be installed along all 3.75 miles of the greenstrip to keep out livestock. This temporary fence could cost upwards of \$4,000 in materials and would need to be installed and maintained. Hulett is working with all parties to find solution to this new challenge

5) Providing Education and Outreach

A freshman at William & Mary contacted Manager Babik for an interview regarding careers in the environmental field. Babik had presented to the student’s class during her time at Ellensburg High School several years ago. Babik was thrilled to learn she inspired this young woman to pursue a career in the field of environmental sciences and hopes her advice will help the student find her path.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Region 3 Private Lands Natural Resource Technician Byers gave birth to a healthy baby boy on January 18. She will be on maternity leave until further notice, at which time the Natural Resources Technician 2 position will move back to the Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area for seasonal duties there. Thanks to Trina for all her hard work this season with maintaining the Private Lands Access Program!

REGION 4

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 5

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

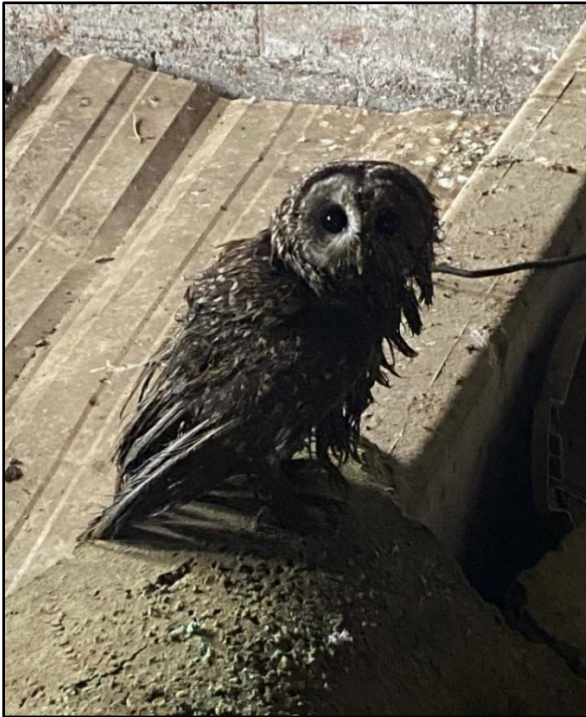
1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Dusky Canada Goose Survey: Biologist Wickhem conducted one dusky Canada goose survey on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area and Vancouver Lake in Clark County. Dusky geese are a subspecies of Canada goose that spend summer in Alaska and migrate through and/or over-winter in the lower Columbia River. Dusky geese are closed to recreational harvest due to low population levels. The purpose of the surveys is to count dusky geese observed and read alphanumeric codes on any red collared dusky geese. Wildlife managers survey the geese multiple times across their primary wintering grounds and use the data to generate survival estimates. Approximately 20 dusky geese were recorded along with several thousand cackling geese and a few Western Canada geese. About 75 swans (trumpeter and tundra) and thousands of sandhill cranes were also observed. Unfortunately, no collared birds were seen during this survey.

Rehab Raptors: This week Biologist Wickhem and Conflict Specialist Jacobsen were able to release an adult female bald eagle that they captured and took to a wildlife rehabilitator back on November 2. When the eagle was first brought in, it was diagnosed with wing fractures and mild lead poisoning. Thankfully, the staff members were able to treat her injuries, and she was released back into the orchard where she was captured. She eagerly flew off toward the White Salmon River, where many eagles congregate over the winter months.

The following day, Jacobsen received a call from a dairy farmer about a barred owl that had been sitting in his barn for more than 24 hours. The farmer was easily able to pick up the bird and put it in a cardboard box until Biologist Wickhem arrived to transport it to Rowena Wildlife Clinic. After spending more than a day in a dairy barn, the owl was wet and covered in cow manure. The staff members at Rowena gave it two baths to clean off the manure and have not found any significant injuries, other than a previously broken lower beak that has not healed correctly.

They will continue to monitor its health and experiment with different natural foods to make sure it can still properly eat. The farmer hopes the owl can be released back at the farm soon so it can help keep the rodents out of his grain barn.



Barred owl found in the dairy barn



Manure-covered barred owl getting an initial assessment by Rowena Wildlife Clinic staff members



Already looking better after a bath!

Monthly Winter Elk Count on Mudflow Unit: Biologist Stephens conducted the monthly count of elk on the Mudflow which is done from December through April. With mild winter conditions lately, the elk use was fairly light. There was 112 total, consisting of 85 bulls, 23 cows and 4 calves.



Bull elk on the Mudflow



Mudflow Elk Area

Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey: Biologist Stephens conducted a survey of waterfowl in District 10. The ground route of the mid-winter index survey has been discontinued in District 10 but in order to have pulse on winter waterfowl use in the district, a subset of some of the areas of historic high use in Lewis County were surveyed. Overall waterfowl use was very low in these areas at the time of the survey.

Grouse Wing Barrels: A total of 27 grouse wings were collected in three barrels during early September-early December, which is one fewer than was collected in 2019. Many of the public lands surrounding these barrels were closed during the first few weeks of September which may have contributed to the low collection numbers. The purpose of collecting hunter-harvested forest grouse wings and tails is to help evaluate changes in species composition, sex, and age of harvested grouse over time. A big thank you to all the grouse hunters who participated this fall!

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Access Sites: Access staff members Rhodes and McKinlay continue to keep access sites clear from all the winter debris and storm that came through the area. They have removed many fallen trees at several Region 5 access sites. The city of Kalama public works was very helpful at Kress Lake in removing a tree that had fallen across the entire width of the parking lot. Rhodes and McKinlay continue with leaf blowing, maintenance and repairs, and trash cleanup at all sites.

There continues to be an increase in the amount of garbage left at WDFW sites, note the picture below of trash at County Line Access where trash was dumped directly under WDFW's "Pack it Out" sign. Rhodes and McKinlay spent three hours of a day just picking up trash at Vancouver Lake Access with over 100 pounds spread out over entire length of entrance road.



Tree debris at Pekin Ferry, Beginners Hole, and Silver Lake Access Sites



County Line Access: Trash dumped directly under WDFW's "Pack it Out" sign

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Injured Dog: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to a report of an 80 pound dog that had been attacked by another animal twice over the last 1.5 months. The incident occurred in suburban Clark County in a fairly open area. Both times, the landowner let the dog outside at night for a brief period and then observed the dog getting attacked near the house by the unknown animal. The dog incurred scratch marks and what appear to be puncture marks on its body as a result of the attacks. Jacobsen discussed measures the landowner could implement to prevent additional attacks and placed a trail camera at the residence to monitor for animals potentially venturing into the landowner's yard.

Eagle Carcass Retrieval: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen picked up an eagle carcass that a member of the public reported along a popular (but now flooded) walking trail along Vancouver Lake in Clark County. No signs of trauma were evident on the carcass. The eagle carcass will eventually be taken to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Eagle Repository.



Deceased eagle near Vancouver Lake

Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with several landowners this week to sign their annual Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for deer and elk damage to commercial crops.

Coyote Concerns: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen spoke with a homeowner who was concerned about a coyote living near his property in urban Vancouver in Clark County. The homeowner believed that the coyote could be a threat to his safety and wanted to know what potential actions he could take. Jacobsen discussed coyote biology with the homeowner and provided information on the infrequency and unlikelihood of a coyote attack on humans. Additional advice was also provided. The coyote is not known to have behaved abnormally at this time or acted aggressively towards humans.

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey worked with landowners throughout District 10 to mitigate elk damage. Hazing supplies and landowner permits have been issued, and new Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements have been signed to address elk issues in new areas. Trail cameras were also placed at one property to determine the time elk are using the field. Cameras will be checked early next week.

Injured Goose: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a report of an injured Canada goose in Lewis County. The goose had been hiding under the tires of a semi-truck in a large gravel parking lot for most of the day. The reporting party said they had been able to approach the goose without it wanting to leave its cover. Aubrey observed the goose in the same spot as it was reported upon arriving to the scene, however, the goose came out from under the truck and flew away as Aubrey was assessing the situation.

Nuisance Geese: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey received complaints from neighboring property owners about the number of Canada geese in their fields eating grass. Aubrey encouraged the property owners to allow hunting access, but with the end of the season approaching, Aubrey also issued bird screamers and cracker shells to the landowners to haze the geese out of their fields.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Mount Saint Helens Wildlife Area - Alder Creek Bank Stability: Members of the District 10, District Team visited the site of the old rearing pond diversion structure on Alder Creek in the Hoffstadt Unit. The team consisted of Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald, Assistant Manager Wildermuth, Habitat Biologist Fornes, District Fish Biologist Holowatz, and Project Manager Crane from the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board (LCFRB). The intention of the visit was to monitor the erosion of the streambank next to the diversion structure and to discuss options on how protect the bank from additional erosion that would likely lead to the stream leaving its current channel and result in the loss of spawning habitat for coho and winter steelhead. Project Manager Crane has constructed many fish enhancement projects in the Toutle River watershed over the years, and his knowledge and expertise in protecting spawning habitat was valuable to have on the site visit. The group discussed potential project designs, funding options, and looked for available project material on site. The next set for the group will be to submit permits and proposals for funding, which will hopefully lead to construction of a project to stabilize the streambank and protect spawning habitat on a half mile stretch of the creek.



WDFW district team members, along with LCFRB Project Manager Crane survey the Alder Creek Project site

Klickitat Wildlife Area - Simcoe Phase 5 Fence Project Planning: Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven went to the Simcoe Unit to walk property lines and determine where fences already exist, and where fences need to be constructed. The existing fencing dates back to a time when ranchers divided the rangeland in a way that made sense for their operations at that time. VanLeuven found this fencing to be well maintained, but some of the property now owned by WDFW has no means of controlling livestock access. A few places exhibit signs of overuse, so

better protection for those areas will figure into the project plan. The overall scheme is to manage access by livestock for long-term health of the plant community and other resources, limit negative impacts to wildlife by minimizing the length of new fences, and control off-road vehicle activity by constructing fences along Box Canyon Road in key places. While working in Section 15, VanLeuven observed a uniquely sculpted oak tree that resembled a bonsai specimen.

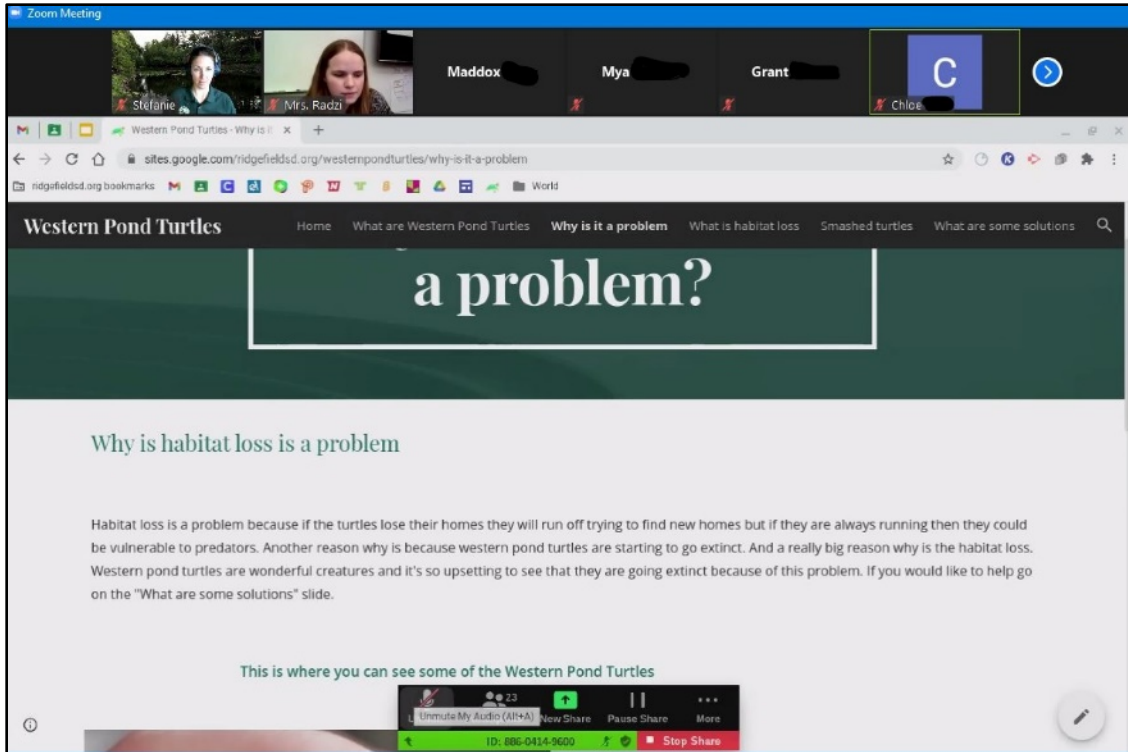


Bonsai oak tree

Forest Stand Improvement Treatment: Before the end of Natural Resource Worker Boyd’s appointment with WDFW, he worked on thinning small diameter trees from an area north of the Soda Springs Road to promote better health among the retained trees that provide important habitat for western gray squirrels. The work area is within a forest health treatment unit that was done in 2018. Due to the limited staff members available to do the project, the project is small in scale, but it serves as an example of the benefits to the stand if more of this work can be done in the future.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Fifth Grade Presentations: A fifth grade class in Ridgefield studied the western pond turtle in their science unit on ecosystems and the students were tasked with doing group presentations on threats to the turtle. Biologist Bergh was asked to listen to the presentations, provide feedback, and answer any questions. Threats identified included competition from non-native turtles, predation, habitat loss, and disease. The websites that the fifth graders constructed for their presentations were definitely beyond the skill level of a wildlife biologist and Biologist Bergh was impressed with the innovative solutions the students came up with to address the threats that these turtles face.



Fifth grade class projects on western pond turtles presented over zoom

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Brant Survey: Biologists Novack, Sundstrom, and Michaelis conducted a ground survey of Brant in Willapa Bay. These surveys have been ongoing since the mid-1980s. Brant numbers were down from the previous year but, within the normal range for January surveys.

Dusky Goose Surveys: Biologists Novack, Sundstrom, and Michaelis conducted the first Dusky Goose Survey of the year. Dusky goose numbers seem to be within their normal, although collared geese have been hard to find. WDFW biologists are utilizing the Survey123 application to obtain ancillary data on goose numbers by species and their seasonal use of the landscape.

Oregon Spotted Frog: Biologists Tirhi, Butler, Lands Manager Lowery, and WDFW Engineer Klavas met at a soon-to-be-acquired property in Mima in Thurston County to discuss and plan for a pond creation project at the site once purchased. The team walked the property, determined the most appropriate site for the creation of the ponds, planned the hydrologic data collection that will take place starting two weeks out, determined an approximate size and design for the two ponds (40' diameter each, to overlap), and discussed a recharge back up plan should the ponds not fill during excessive dry years given climate change. This was a very productive meeting and set the stage for getting this project started successfully. Region 6 Wildlife Program is grateful to be partnering with the WDFW Engineering Program and greatly appreciate their expertise and availability. Funding for the project is also generously provided through a grant from the Aquatic Species Restoration Plan (ASRP) Chehalis Basin Strategy (<https://chehalisbasinstrategy.com/asrp/>).

Trumpeter Swan Monitoring: The Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society Swan Monitoring Team continue their efforts to count swans in the Sequim-Dungeness Valley. One team conducts a count on the west side of the Dungeness River and the other team surveys on the east side of the river. The weekly survey is conducted on the same day and during the same time period.

The count for January 12, 2020: East Side Report: *“The East side did not have as many swans as the West, but we still counted 34 total (26 adults and 8 juveniles). Those we could get a good look at were all Trumpeters. 16 Swans (8 adults and 8 juveniles) were along Sequim-Dungeness near The Farm. The remaining 18 (all adults) were divided between 3 fields along Schmuck”.* **West Side Report:** *Banner swan count west today: total of 146; 118 AD Trus and 25 juv at Wheeler and 2 AD and 1 juv at Lamar. 1 tundra at Wheeler and the sandhill crane.*

OPAS 2020-21: survey to date		Total swans	Adult	Juvenile	% Juv
10/28/2020	east*	2	2	0	
	west	0	0	0	
	total	2	2	0	0%
* flying only					
11/03/2020	east	14	11	3	
	west	0	0	0	
	total	14	11	3	21%
11/11/2020	east	92	86	6	
* 1, Champion Pd	west*	16	14	2	
	total	108	100	8	7%
11/17/2020	east	0	1	0	
	west	150	128	22	
	TUSW, east	1	0	1	
	total	151	129	23	15%
11/20/2020	east	136	116	20	
DAWN	west	0	0	0	
	flying	3	3	0	
	TUSW, east	1	0	1	
	total	140	119	21	15%
11/26/2020	east	163	145	18	
	west	0	0	0	
	total	163	145	18	11%
12/01/2020	east	159	132	27	
	west	24	16	8	
	total	183	148	35	19%
12/09/2020	east*	214	179	35	
	west	32	23	9	
* +1 dawn fatality					
	total*	246	202	44	18%
12/14/2020	east	104	75	29	
	west	79	68	11	
	TUSW, west	2	0	2	
	total	185	143	42	23%
12/18/2020	east	128	106	22	
DAWN	west	62	43	19	
	TUSW, west	1	0	1	
	total	191	149	42	22%
12/23/2020	east	108	85	23	
	west	96	79	17	
	TUSW, east	2	0	2	
	total	206	164	42	20%
12/29/2020	east	87	67	20	
	west	107	90	17	
	TUSW, east	1	0	1	
	total	195	157	38	19%
01/06/2021	east	78	62	16	
	west	122	101	21	
	TUSW, east	3	3	0	
	TUSW, west	1	0	1	
	total	204	166	38	19%
01/12/2021	east	34	26	8	
	west	146	120	26	
	TUSW, west	1	0	1	
	total	181	146	35	19%

Swan counts from Oct. 28, 2020 to Jan. 12, 2021

Protecting Carrots from Swans (Update): The trumpeter swans that visit the Sequim-Dungeness Valley have shown a history of enjoying Nash’s prized carrots and other produce. Nash Huber has farmed the valley for decades. On November 24, 2020, the newly formed Carrot Protection Team (CPC) all met at the Wheeler Farm. Biologist Ament, Conflict Specialist Blankenship, and a few volunteers from the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS) deployed 200 poles with special reflective mylar tape in the field to prevent the swans from landing and feeding on the carrots. By mid-December the swans had not yet found the carrots this season, but several swan groups were flying by and it was likely a matter of time. While Biologist Ament was in Colorado for the holidays, she was advised by swan team volunteers that a few dozen swans were observed foraging on carrots at the Wheeler Farm. Farmer Huber was contacted and reported that he was finished harvesting carrots in the area where the poles were located. The decision was made to remove all the poles so that the increasing number of swans that would likely find the patch would not get “comfortable” being amongst the poles and flagging.

A total of 146 swans were counted in the carrot patch this past week taking full advantage of the remaining carrots that were deemed unsuitable for market. Biologist Ament is keeping in close contact with Farmer Huber. He has another very weedy patch of carrots at the Wheeler Farm where the poles may be deployed if requested.



Trumpeter swans observed starting to forage on carrots at Wheeler Farm

Trumpeter Swan Electrocutions: The month of December was a distressing month for trumpeter swans at the Kirner pond night roost site near Sequim. The power lines at the west end of the pond continue to be a hazard to swans when they depart from the pond each morning. Biologist Ament is grateful for the daily monitoring of this site by OPAS swan team dedicated volunteer Bob Phreaner. On December 3, 2020, Bob observed a trailing swan in a flock of 20 hit the power lines, fall to the road, struggle to stand but was then able to walk back down to the pond. This swan was monitored daily on the pond and was observed feeding and preening. By December 21, 2020 it had recovered enough from injuries and finally flew off with other swans in the morning. On December 9, 2020, Bob reported that another swan struck the power lines when departing the pond. He conveyed that the adult swan was in distress on the pavement. Biologist Ament responded promptly but the swan had died before she arrived. The swan was taken to Greywolf Veterinary Clinic. Cause of death was indeed confirmed as electrocution, but liver and gizzard samples were taken for lead testing. Ament contacted Clallam County PUD staff and requested that more diverters be placed on the power lines. The lineman crew arrived the next day and added 50 more diverters to the lines. Unfortunately, the following day another adult swan struck the wires. This swan recovered from the impact and flew off 35 minutes later, after returning to the pond. On December 28, 2020, a juvenile swan was observed flightless on the pond. Landowners at the pond reported that the swan appeared to have a fractured left wing. This swan was captured on New Year's Day. Biologist Ament arranged transportation to have an assessment completed at Clearview Animal Hospital in Snohomish County. Veterinarian Dr. Pardee recommended euthanasia due to the severe fracture and infection. The injury was most likely sustained from the swan hitting one of the power lines.



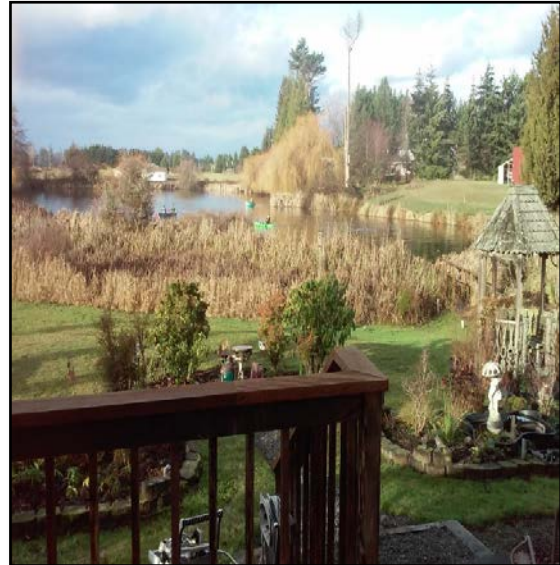
Bob Phreaner with dead swan



Injured swan that recovered from line strike



Juvenile swan with fractured wing that was rescued from Kirner pond



Various watercraft on Kirner pond during capture of injured swan

Power Line Conflict: After more swan electrocutions at Kirner pond, Biologist Ament has once again initiated discussions with Clallam County PUD to have these lines buried. There are approximately 350 feet of power lines at the west end of the pond. Since 2014, there have been eight confirmed swan mortalities from electrocution and three line strikes where the swans sustained major injuries. One injured swan was rescued and later recovered at a rehab facility, one injured swan recovered at the pond, and one swan with an injured wing was captured but euthanized. More intensive monitoring of the swan activity has documented that there have been more frequent line strikes but the swans escaped without serious injury. The local PUD has been kept informed of the hazards of these lines to swans and requests were made in 2014 and 2017 to have the lines placed underground. In 2017, the PUD provided an estimate of \$22,000 to have the lines buried. The PUD considers the request to be a “customer” project and expects to be paid for burying the lines.

The PUD has been responsive about putting diverters on the lines but electrocutions to swans will continue to occur unless these lines are buried. Biologist Ament and Swan Team Volunteer Bob Phreaner met again with PUD on site on December 10, 2020 and requested a new cost estimate. The estimate later provided was \$39,463. The estimate doesn't include trenching, permitting costs, easements, and cost to Wave Cable to convert to underground. Ament has been working with Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS) to help start a public campaign to generate funds for the project. She had a Zoom meeting with OPAS staff members on January 4, 2021 to discuss moving forward to secure funding. A short video is currently being produced. OPAS representatives recently met with PUD Commissioner Jim Waddell. They, along with Biologist Ament, also joined a PUD Commission meeting held on January 11, 2021. A letter is currently being drafted that will be provided to the PUD Commission. The letter will outline the issue and provide WDFW support to OPAS for their efforts to help fund the project.



Meeting with Clallam County PUD staff members to discuss swan/power line conflict



Clallam County PUD linemen respond to add more diverters to the lines

Fifty more diverters were installed but a line strike by a swan occurred the next day

Rescue of Injured Eagle/Gull: Biologist Ament was contacted by Enforcement staff members to assist with two injured wildlife calls. She was out of the area during both events but was able to seek help from volunteer Chuck Burnell. Chuck and (retired) wildlife rehabilitator Jaye Moore were able to capture an adult bald eagle that had an eye injury. This bird was transported to Center Valley Animal Rescue. An unknown species of gull was reported to be caught in the tall netting behind home plate at Civic Field in Port Angeles. Biologist Ament did not receive the e-mail message until the following day. After speaking with the reporting party (RP) on January 4, 2021, she contacted both Parks and Rec staff members and Chuck. They all were able to respond and found the gull still alive in the net. The “lucky” gull had no major injuries but was taken to Center Valley Animal Rescue. After receiving some hydration and care for a few days, it was released back to the wild.

Miller Peninsula State Park Meeting: On December 8, 2020, Biologists McMillan and Ament joined Habitat Program staff members and Program Manager Calkins for a Teams meeting to discuss the proposed state park development of the Miller Peninsula. In the ‘80s, there was state legislation passed that designated the northern portion of DNR’s ownership on Miller Peninsula to be protected to preserve the natural resources that make that area and the neighboring Protection Island so critical to the wildlife on the North Olympic Peninsula and the Straits and beyond. The land was later designated as a state park. Apparently, funding is now available to initiate development of the park for more recreational use. State Park staff members have been in discussion with Biologist McMillan about the proposed park development and are requesting wildlife and habitat information. Apparently, State Parks may have some limited funding available to gather information about wildlife species. A topic of discussion in the meeting was trying to determine exactly how WDFW should be engaging with State Parks. Both Habitat Program and Wildlife Program staff members will be gathering more information and will be back in contact with State Parks.

Wildlife Migration in the West Series: Biologist Ament attended the online series hosted by the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, National Wildlife Federation, and The Pew Charitable Trusts. This series included Arthur Middleton’s discussion about how migrations moving biomass across landscapes to Ellen Aiken’s points about “surfing the green wave” and Andrew Jakes’ fascinating look at how fences alter migration behavior. The forum was packed with great information for managers, policymakers, and non-governmental organizations alike.

Waterfowl Surveys Conversation: Biologist Ament requested a Teams meeting with Migratory Bird Section Manager Spragens to discuss several topics. She had contacted him previously to confirm that she and Biologist McMillan were not missing any assigned mid-winter waterfowl surveys. They discussed this topic and Kyle provided more information about the on-going efforts by USFWS to modify survey methods. He also expressed the need to have our district waterfowl locations from past surveys be more readily available in PHS. The two species of interest for surveys this season are swans and brant. The statewide 5-year survey of trumpeter swans was postponed until next year. A Mid-Winter survey of swans was requested for the Sequim-Dungeness Valley and is scheduled for January 20, 2021.

A few sites in District 15 may also be surveyed. Spragens pointed out that weather conditions were preventing a scheduled aerial survey for brant in Clallam County. A boat or ground survey of brant may be attempted if the flight is not able to be completed. Ament has contacted the USFWS biologist at the Dungeness Wildlife Refuge to see if refuge staff members may be available to join in a ground count of brant.

Waterfowl Event Planning: Biologist Ament participated in a Teams meeting with Diane Hilton from the Public Affairs Office. An online live Zoom event is being scheduled for the public on February 20, 2021. The Sequim-Dungeness Valley will be highlighted as one of three sites visited during the event. To emphasize WDFW partnership connections, someone from the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS) will be interviewed. Ament suggested that the WDFW Three Crabs site be considered but also mentioned Dungeness Landing County Park. She has contacted longtime local OPAS birder extraordinaire Bob Boekelheide to participate as the OPAS representative and he has kindly agreed.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Goose Hunter Checks: Biologist Michaelis spent two days leaving contact information with suspected goose hunters in north Pacific and Grays Harbor counties. A total of 10 hunters reported harvesting eight geese (Table 1).

Date	# of hunters	Cackling	Tav/Less	Western	Unknown	Snow	Total geese
Jan. 6	5	3	1				4
Jan. 9	5	2	1			1	4
Totals	10	5	2			1	8

Table 1. The number of goose hunters and geese reported as being harvested during two hunt days.

Due to Covid, geese are not being checked and measured in the field to avoid contact with the hunter(s). Hunters hunting ducks report low success in both counties. Both the inland and coastal goose seasons end this upcoming weekend (January 17).

Grouse Wing Barrels: Biologist Ament had installed grouse wing/tail collection stations at three locations in the district. All barrels had been checked for wings/tails every 2-3 weeks. She did have a barrel stolen at one location, but it was promptly replaced. All barrels were collected after the end of the grouse season (December 31). All barrels/signs were cleaned and are back in storage at the Dungeness Fish Hatchery. Biologist Ament has provided Small Game Specialist Garrison with the wing/tail counts for the season. See final summary table below.

District 16 Grouse Wing Barrel Collections	Date	Slab Camp Road	Cooper Ranch Road	Salmon Creek	District 16 Total
	Set-up August 31 and Sept 1	-	-	-	-
	Sept 1 to Sept 11	3w, 2 t	1w, 1t	0	4w, 3t
	To Sept 28/30	1w, 1t	11w, 1t	0	12w, 2t
	To Oct 23	1w	10w, 5t	3w, 2t	14w, 7t
	Nov 5			New barrel	
	To Nov 16	6w, 5t	3w, 1t	0	9w, 6t
	To Dec 3	1w	0	0	1w
	To Dec 31	0	0	0	0
	Total Collected	12w, 8t	25w, 8t	3w, 2t	40w, 18t

Pleasant Harbor Curb Stop Repair: At the Pleasant Harbor access, the anchoring steel on eight-wheel stops rusted away allowing them to be moved around the parking lot. Using a tow strap Natural Resource Operations Supervisor Mitchell and Natural Resource Worker Devin Walker repositioned and anchored them back in their original positions.



Sol Duc River Hatchery Site / Black Top Maintenance: After very heavy winds took down several trees and deposited huge amounts of debris on the asphalt, the site is back to new again.



Recent Flooding: Major flooding is still ongoing. In Grays Harbor several roads were closed and others impassable. At Keys Road, access to this site was closed. Ben Freimund drove around the back way to the site and was able to save the traffic counter that was under a foot of water, triple bagged, and still dry. Traffic counters at other sites were pulled and saved just in time as well.

Maintenance Mechanic Reeves and Natural Resourc Worker Mettler discovered a 15' wide x 90' long portion of the parking lot (Chehalis River So. Montesano site) had been washed away by flooding. Trees that stabilized the bank and barrier rock were gone, creating a dangerous situation. Barrier rock has been ordered and will be delivered tomorrow. In the meantime, while using what was available on site, Reeves pulled a tree portion out of the woods, dragged it over and blocking the effected area, and placed caution tape around the slide area. A crack noticeable on the bottom right will be blocked as well.





Other Work Performed: Maintenance Mechanic Reeves finalized and turned in his Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO)/ Boating Facilities Program (BFP) grant for the re-development of Chehalis Fuller Bridge site. Sink holes at the Duckabush and Aldwell sites were filled. Fallen trees, limbs, and debris were removed from several sites in the Region. A quarterly litter report was turned in to Ecology: October - December 29,025 pounds of trash were removed and disposed of from access areas, down from 40,900 pounds last quarter July – September.

Abandoned/Dumped RVs: The problem continues. Two new RVs showed up and are being worked on by Enforcement, Crocker Lake (left) and the Humptulips River (right).



Olympic Headquarters Cleanup: The Olympic Wildlife Area crew, Manager Gallegos along with Natural Resources Technician Van Blaricom, have been busy trying to surplus unused and/or unusable equipment and organize the Olympic Headquarters facility. There will be more surplus to come.

Elk River Unit Access: After completion of roadside mowing at the Grayland acquisition, the Olympic crew has also been improving the main access point at Grayland. To date, there have been 53 ecology blocks placed around the perimeter of the access area to allow only authorized vehicles inside, as well as two loads of crushed rock. There has been a kiosk and a wildlife area sign placed just outside the access point for public information to be posted. The main gate posts have been installed and the crew is waiting for concrete to set before hanging a swing arm. The Olympic crew has had some help from Bio's Warren Michaelis and Russel Nunez. Thank you, guys, for your help.



Storm Damage: After our latest rain/windstorm event, Manager Gallegos and Natural Resources Technician Van Blaricom surveyed areas for storm damage and standing water. There will need to be some clean-up when time allows, and water recedes.



Chehalis Wildlife Area Jan. 13, 2021



Wynoochee River Mitigation Unit 2C

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Lands 20/20: Biologist Novack was contacted by multiple landowners regarding the upcoming Lands 20/20 proposal for the Chehalis River Floodplain area near Elma. All of these landowners are within the proposed 20/20 envelope and each expressed interest in passing their properties into public ownership.

Forest Health Assessment: Biologist Tirhi requested and received a site condition review for an Oregon white oak/coniferous forest on a soon-to-be-acquired property in Mima from WDFW Forester Tveten. As usual, Tveten provided an outstanding summary of his observations of the 10 acres of forest and other associated habitats at this site, including current conditions per forest type and recommendations for forest enhancement. WDFW is indebted to the skillset provided by Tveten.



Oak woodlands that would benefit from understory cleaning (not the English Holly on the right photo)



Oak woodlands that need thinning – Photos by Tveten

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this installment.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

New Volunteer: Biologist Ament was contacted back in November by a graduate from Colorado State (Go Rams!!) in 2017 with a degree in Biological Science with an Ecological concentration about volunteering for WDFW. She and her partner live between Port Angeles and Sequim. She presently works (online) for an environmental consulting company from Colorado but hopes to find more of a field biology position. Biologist Ament has consulted with the WDFW volunteer coordinator and Human Resources staff to address Covid concerns. The new volunteer has registered as a WDFW volunteer, been provided training documents, watched required on-line Covid trainings, and will be able to initiate some volunteer activities soon.