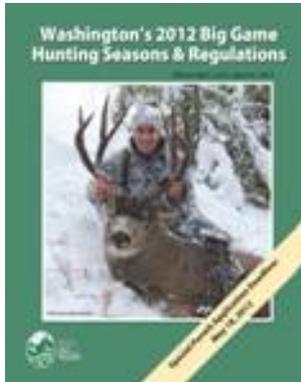


Wildlife Program

Week of April 9–15, 2012

WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.



Hunting Pamphlet Photo Contest – Youth Hunting: For the 2012 Hunting Pamphlet cover photo, Assistant Director Nate Pamplin decided to host a contest to select a quality photo of a youth with a big game animal. An eblast was sent to all deer and elk license buyers from 2010, 2011 and 2012, totaling more than 68,000 hunters. For a picture to be eligible for the pamphlet the image must be of a youth 1) under the age of 18; 2) wearing appropriate blaze orange and following all hunter safety practices; and 3) with a harvested big game (deer, elk or bear) animal. The image must be tastefully composed, high resolution, print-quality.

After the eblast was sent, the photos came pouring in! Most of the photos were added to the Youth Hunting section of the WDFW Photo Gallery, which climbed from one page to 50 pages in the week!

Final judging of the hundreds of entries submitted by hunters from across the state was held, narrowed down to the top 49, then members of the Department's Executive Management Team were invited to select their top five choices. From these, two were selected by Assistant Director Pamplin to be presented to Director Phil Anderson for the final choice.

The young hunter who was chosen is Vancouver's Cody Hawken, a 15-year old archer with a trophy mule deer. Cody was hunting the Chelan Wildlife Area with his father, David, and brothers Jake and Riley. The photo was taken by his father, David Hawken.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE



Reardan Lake: Soon the brown and white watchable wildlife binocular signs will lead travelers to a unique 277 acres of wetlands, grasslands, and channeled scablands that supports more than 200 species of birds and serves as an important stop-over for many migratory birds. Chuck Gibilisco, Watchable Wildlife Lead stated "this special place for wildlife will now become a special place for travelers and visitors to the town of Reardan near Spokane." Gibilisco and Mike O'Malley are working with Madonna Luers and Howard Ferguson of Spokane Region to develop and mount new interpretive panels and the final brown and white highway directional signs that lead migratory tourists to encounter migratory birds will soon be in place. Reardan Lake serves as the headwaters of Crab Creek a major tributary of the Columbia River and this area had been scheduled for subdivision before the Inland Northwest Land Trust and Spokane Audubon Society secured the property. The Trust, Audubon, Ducks Unlimited along with the City of Reardan and Reardan Chamber of Commerce, have committed to cooperatively preserve and develop this valuable ecosystem and wildlife-

viewing site. The town of Reardan and others are planning for a special spring ribbon cutting ceremony for the site. Click on the following link to learn more about Audubon's Reardan Lake http://birdweb.org/birdweb/site/reardan_-_audubon_lake/10

The Whale Trail: Chuck Gibilisco met with the Executive Director of The Whale Trail (WT) and other (WT) planning team members to discuss new accomplishments of the organization and make recommendations for future outreach and education related to whales and marine mammals. The meeting was held at the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center and complex featuring classrooms, a visitor center, a community building and a "tree house," all sustainably built. The City of Bellevue and Pacific Science Center offer year-round education about wetlands and nature for adults, youth and families at the center. The Whale Trail is exploring a new outreach effort to more broadly connect with people who all reside in a watershed and generate impacts that reverberate through ecosystems eventually reaching the marine life of the Sound and beyond. A new poster artistically depicting this connection will be a part of the outreach effort. Staff at the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center also indicated an interest in learning more about the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife citizen science and watchable wildlife activities and projects.

WildWatchcams – Heroncam: What is bad for the eagles and the WDFW eaglecam might be good for herons and the WDFW heroncam. Chuck Gibilisco and Chris Anderson continued to work with KING 5 TV to obtain a direct streaming video feed to the Lake Washington eaglecam; however the eagles most likely will not be nesting at the Lake Washington nest site this year. Next option, a direct feed to the heroncam monitoring 30 some great blue heron nests (Seattle city bird) and at the Seattle Parks and Recreation first designated 'Wildlife Park' - The Kiwanis Park and Heronry. Here among the towering maples are two tree-top remote controlled cameras and a microphone capturing the constant action and sound of a 30 plus nest urban heronry. Stay tune for the news at five and latest action from the Kiwanis Heronry.

Wildlife Rehabilitation: This past week, Sarvey Wildlife Care Center in Snohomish County underwent abrupt staff changes and ceased admitting any new wildlife patients. Tricia Thompson and Ericka Thomas (Region 4 Wildlife Rehabilitation Coordinator) visited Sarvey to offer assistance and assure compliance within this change. Because the remaining staff is very experienced in wildlife rehabilitation, and we know the facilities thoroughly, permits can be issued right away to two of the current staff members in order for a WDFW permitted wildlife rehabilitator to be on site. Sarvey is again up and running for wildlife rehabilitation.

Scientific Collections Permits: Tricia Thompson compiled reviews, approved, and sent in for permit six SCP applications, reviewed and sent 13 more out for comments.

One of the SCP applications required the permanent removal of 50 band-tailed pigeons from southwest Washington. As an example of careful SCP application review, Don Kraege, the affected District Biologists, and the band-tailed pigeon researchers in the area determined that the eventual lethal collection of these birds, being used for captive behavioral studies and then killed for museum studies, would interfere with current research. In addition, the collection of 50 birds from one locale was determined unacceptable. Therefore, the permit was conditioned to prohibit collection of band-tailed pigeons in Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, and Klickitat Counties and no more than 10 birds to be removed within a 50-mile radius, due to potential impacts on local breeding populations.

The question of body-gripping traps for mole research emerged on an SCP application inquiry. After some conversation on the issue, Sean Carrell made the very useful clarification that NO,

common body-gripping mole traps may not be used on moles even for research collection, and the body-gripping traps that **can** be specially permitted for research are inappropriate for use on moles; therefore, moles may not be lethally trapped for research.

Falconry: Tricia Thompson sent out two new falconry packets; issued two new falconry license application approvals, and issued three falconry renewal licenses. Tricia also updated the falconry database.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Wildlife Outreach Volunteers: Chandler submitted the first draft of the simplified guidelines for WDFW staff to work with volunteers to Mike O'Malley, Outreach Manger for review. James is currently preparing to evaluate Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grants as a member of the ALEA review panel.

LANDS DIVISION

Statewide Range Ecologist: Jeff Burnham has accepted the position of Statewide Range Ecologist in the Land Stewardship and Operations Section of the Lands Division. Jeff will be starting in July, and working from the Yakima Regional Office. He has a B.S. and M.S. in botany and ecology from Brigham Young University and Utah State University respectively, and seven years of experience in range monitoring working primarily on the Sagebrush Treatment Evaluation Project throughout Utah, Idaho and Nevada. Jeff will work with land managers implementing agency goals and objectives towards rangeland management. He will provide assistance on grazing plans and associated Ecosystem Standard evaluations, and will design and perform resource monitoring and assessment efforts to measure impacts of management activities on Wildlife Areas.

SCIENCE DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Washington White-tailed Deer Project (WWP): Three mortality signals, one from a GPS collar worn by an adult female and two ear-tag radios worn by female fawns, were received and investigated last week. The GPS radio-tagged doe lived on the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge and was killed and partially consumed by a cougar. One of the female radio-marked fawns was tagged near Addy; the cause of her death is undetermined. The death of the other female fawn captured in Grouse Creek is currently under investigation.

Columbia Plateau Wildlife Connectivity Project: The final version of the mule deer focal species account was completed and posted on the project's internet site last week. Joanne Schuett-Hames, Sonia A. Hall, and Leslie Robb did an excellent job from start to finish on this project.

Sage-grouse Translocation: During the last week in March, Mike Schroeder, Mike Atamian, Mike Livingston, and Luke Lillquist translocated 38 greater sage-grouse from southern Oregon to the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. The effort was aided by additional biologists in Olympia (Derek Stinson) and Region 1 (Howard Ferguson, Juli Anderson, and Mike Finch). There also was participation and support from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (particularly

Autumn Larkins and Dave Budeau), Yakima Training Center, Bureau of Land Management, Washington State University, and volunteers. The translocation is part of a long-term effort to re-establish a viable population of sage-grouse in Lincoln County.

Black-tailed Deer Research: Agency and Makah Tribal biologists completed black-tailed deer doe captures for 2012. Thirty-six of a planned 32 does were captured and fitted with GPS tracking collars and vaginal implant transmitters (VITs). Captures exceeded those planned because collars from early mortalities were redeployed. There have been 2 collar failures (low battery). Twenty-three of the currently deployed collars receive radio signals from their respective VITs and transmit the status of the VIT (expelled/not expelled) to the office via satellite/email.

Western Governors Association (WGA) Crucial Habitat Mapping Initiative: John Pierce and Audrey Hatch attended the WGA States Technical team meeting in San Diego. John is team leader of the WGA Landscape Integrity Workgroup and reported on status and timelines for Landscape Integrity Workgroup products in preparation for the WGA Wildlife Council meeting at the end of May. Audrey is team leader of the WGA Species and Habitats of Concern Workgroup and reported on status and timelines for her workgroup products in preparation for the WGA WC meeting.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Washington State University Fieldtrip: On March 31, Mike Schroeder (Research Scientist), Dan Peterson (Wildlife Area Manager), and Ann Winters (Assistant Wildlife Area Manager) led a fieldtrip of about 17 wildlife graduate students from Washington State University. The fieldtrip toured Douglas County with a focus on greater sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse. Some of the topics discussed included habitat selection, connectivity, natural history, and management of Wildlife Areas (Dormaier, Chester Butte, and West Foster Creek).

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Golden Eagle Survey: Surveys and Forest Wildlife Section biologist Gerry Hayes and Science Division Scientist Jim Watson identified WDFW survey and research priorities for golden eagles related to energy development in an effort to pursue funding through the Multistate Conservation Grant Program.

Spotted Owl: Joe Buchanan met with other members of the Northern Spotted Owl Implementation Team technical team to communicate with Brian Woodbridge (USFWS) about modeling to evaluate the value of volunteer conservation actions for Spotted Owls. The team was able to identify ways to reduce the number of potential model scenarios while still allowing for broad understanding of the potential ecological value of different possible conservation measures.

Wildlife Program Plan: Elizabeth Rodrick and Biologist Chris Sato spent considerable time comparing the spreadsheets that were done for the 2010 Wildlife Diversity Action Plan workshops with the spreadsheets that were done for the 2011 Conservation Initiative workshops. They then determined how this information might be used to inform the new Wildlife Program plan.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Gray Wolf Management: Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd attended the Three Rivers, Republic, and Newport Ranger District Spring Grazing Permittee meetings on 3 consecutive days. Topics were discussed included the WDFW Depredation Workshop, WDFW trapping efforts, kill permits, wolf distribution, carcass disposal, cattle loss, lack of weight gain, and current wolf protection. Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd discussed wolf sightings with various residents in District One.

Washington Ground Squirrel Monitoring: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy checked a historical Washington ground squirrel site on Hatch Grade near Wallula Gap with Mike Denny. We found a few old burrows, but did not hear or see any ground squirrels. We did see a badger in a burrow. We also checked historic ferruginous hawk nest site in old locust tree, no birds on nest, but pair of ferruginous were soaring overhead. Followed-up with a visit to a larger site just across the border in OR, also found old burrows but did not see or hear any ground squirrels. Weather was sunny and warm with light winds, Mike thought squirrels should have been active. Plan a follow-up visit in May to check for occupancy.



Sharp-tail Augmentation: WDFW biologist Derek Stinson brought seven grouse from Idaho the evening of Wednesday, April 11 to Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. He, tracker Randall McBride, and Wildlife Area Manager (WAM) Juli Anderson released the birds at a sharp-tail lek the next morning.



Derek Stinson w/sharp-tailed grouse, 4/12/12

Establishing, Enhancing and Maintaining Habitat: Biologist Merg hauled equipment for a collaborative field project between WDFW and Pheasants Forever to establish still more brood habitat in the greater Packer Creek area. Volunteers prepared the site for a work weekend at the end of April in which several hundred trees will be planted along a currently denuded riparian zone. The landowner also burned two former crop fields in the vicinity (**photo**) so that these may be prepared for seeding to native grass and forbs this autumn.



Chief Joseph Wildlife Area – CAG Meeting: David Woodall and Bob Dice conducted a Citizen’s Advisory Group (CAG) meeting at the Asotin County Library on Thursday evening. Seven CAG members attended the meeting and most of the questions/comments were related to recent WDFW land acquisitions on Asotin County. One CAG member brought up a talked about proposal to close Cougar Creek County Road and was adamantly against the concept. Other members asked when final results would be available from WSU on the ecological integrity portion of the pilot grazing project. Even though turnout for the meeting was low, we met for two hours.

REGION 2

Region 2 – Okanogan, Douglas, Chelan, Grant and Adams Counties

Regional Wildlife Program Manager: Matt Monda

DISTRICT BIOLOGISTS

District 5: Grant / Adams District - Rich Finger / Vacant

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Wetland Projects: Biologist Finger checked on the water control structure at Mansfield Pond to measure current water levels and rate at which the pond fills during early spring. Fortunately the structure has remained debris free during the last few checks and the pond is filling at a rate of about 1.8” per week. Western Canada geese are paired up and potentially nesting on islands. About 75 Lesser Sandhill Cranes and 30 American White Pelicans were using the pond in addition to a variety of diving and dabbling ducks.



District 6: Okanogan District - Scott Fitkin / Jeff Heinlen

Weather Conditions: Typical spring conditions – Temps from 20s to 60s, some clouds, some rain, some sun. The snow is going fast at lower elevations.

Weekender Opportunities: The general spring turkey season opened Sunday. Snow limiting access somewhat at upper elevations of turkey range particularly in the Methow Watershed.

Ice is now at least partially off all lakes at lower elevations and waterfowl are plentiful and viewing is good. Great Birding in general with many species becoming quite vocal.



Barrows goldeneye pair.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Deer Management: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen completed mule deer surveys in PMU 21 (Western Okanogan County). We classified close to 2900 deer and came up with an overall fawn:adult ratio of 34:100 and an estimated over-winter fawn mortality of 50%. This is slightly below average fawn mortality and translates into a roughly stable or slightly increasing deer population. Biologist Heinlen saw one other individual (an adult) with hair loss in the same area he observed the fawn with similar symptoms last week. Otherwise we have seen no other hair loss deer anywhere else in the district. Whatever the cause, it seems to be an isolated incident at this point. We will try to make an attempt to sample one of the infected animals this week.



Methow Mule deer

Gray Wolf Management: Biologist Fitkin and US Forest Service contract staff checked remote cameras deployed in an effort to monitor Lookout Pack activity and gather data on pack status. Cameras yielded many wolf photos at three different sites including several photos of two wolves traveling together that may be a mated pair. All photos appeared to be of these two animals; whether or not the pack contains other members is still unknown. We will be monitoring the area closely over the next couple of months for any evidence of pups.



Lookout Pack wolf pair

Bald Eagle Management: Bald eagles are now sitting on nests incubating eggs which provide an opportunity to document nest activity. Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Heinlen opportunistically surveyed bald eagle during other duties. Of 5 nests surveyed, 4 were found to be occupied. Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Heinlen received a report of a dead Bald Eagle within the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Biologist Heinlen documented the eagle and collected the carcass. The eagle is being submitted to the USGS National Wildlife Health Center in Madison Wisconsin to try to determine the cause of death.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Bighorn Sheep Presentation: Assistant Wildlife Biologist Heinlen was asked to give a community presentation at the Highland Wonders First Friday Lecture Series hosted by the Okanogan Highland Alliance. This is the second year of the lecture series and has proven to be quite successful. Biologist Heinlen gave a presentation of the history and current management of Bighorn sheep within Okanogan County to approximately 100 people. The presentation was well received with many complements after the presentation.

District 7: Chelan / Douglas District – David Volsen / Jon Gallie

Weather Conditions: Snows levels are still along the crest of the Cascades. Spring has arrived at low elevation with green up under way. Recent warm weather has initiated blossoming along riparian areas and the first balsamroot are showing up on warm hillsides.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE.

Prescribed Burning: Biologist Volsen worked with the USFS Entiat Ranger District on a planned prescribed burn unit in Murdock Canyon. The 133 acre unit has been slated for a burn this spring. According to agreements between WDFW and the USFS, the ranger district contacts WDFW for an OK relative to mule deer concentrations and use of the winter range prior to moving forward with a burn. In previous years, the Forest Service has delayed initiation of burns based on our evaluation of winter range use. The amount and distribution of functional winter range varies in Chelan County from year to year based on snow levels and the timing of green up. During wet springs, as opposed to late snow springs, burning windows do not overlap winter range use. However, when spring weather allows for dry conditions, there are possible overlaps with deer use and burning windows. While the crest of the Cascades is still accumulating snow, the lower elevation winter ranges are relatively snow free this spring, allowing deer to access a much larger area than other springs. A site evaluation showed that deer were using the unit, but were not limited to the unit boundaries to find forage opportunities. A letter was sent to the Entiat Ranger District giving them the go ahead for the burn.

Planned spring prescribed burning unit in Murdock Canyon, Entiat River drainage



GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Mule Deer: Biologist Gallie began spring deer composition counts in Chelan County this week. The goal being to look at adult and fawn ratios and presumed winter kill severity. Due to mild winter conditions, we do not expect to see much winter kill impact. While only 5 of the 13 routes have been completed, ratios look normal, 43 fawns per 100 adults. Spring counts also allow for the identification of Hairloss syndrome that is present in the Chelan County herd. Thus far, hairloss has been documented in on each route (this has not increased known distribution), with approximately less than 4% of the observed deer show obvious symptoms.

A Chelan County mule deer exhibiting characteristic signs of hair loss syndrome.



SPECIES RECOVERY

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery - Penny Becker

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Reintroduction Infrastructure Work: Becker and Eidson worked to build the more protected nursery area for the newly emerged kits in the large enclosures. We worked with the Washington Conservation Corps crew on 4/9 and 4/10 on the nursery and relocating the soft release enclosures. The nursery was finished on 4/13 including fence panels previously used at WSU's breeding facility, a net top, bird spikes to prevent perching raptors and an electric net fence. We transferred six kits to the new area, while one more evaded capture that day. The remaining kit will be transferred next week and then future litters moved out of the large enclosures as soon as they emerge from natal burrows.



The completed nursery (top) and Becker (left) and Eidson (right) transferring pygmy rabbit kits into artificial burrows in the nursery.

Methow Wildlife Area Complex - Tom McCoy / Rob Wottlin / John Haegan

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Moose: Once again, you never quite know what you are going to see from one day to the next. On Monday the 4th, the Methow HQ received the first “I have a dead.....MOOSE.....in my yard – “Would you please come take it away” call. Given how difficult it is to remove a deceased, mature moose, Rob Wottlin took the tractor down to the land owner’s property on E. Chewuch Rd. and, with considerable effort, hauled it away to an appropriate disposal site. The land owners were most grateful.



Wells Wildlife Area Complex –Dan Peterson / Ann Winters / Fidel Rios

Weather Conditions: Lows in the 40's, mid to upper 60's for highs. Sky conditions varied from mostly sunny to clear.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE



Washout Repair – Bridgeport Unit: Monday and Tuesday, Natural Resource Technicians Brad Zabreznik and Angel Hastings completed the repair of a large gully that spring runoff created in a 30-acre restoration field we seeded last fall. Using the tractor and disc they were able to fill and level the gully that was approximately 5-foot deep, 4-feet wide and 100 feet long.

Once the area was reseeded with native grasses and forbs, they then installed jute erosion control matting, acquired from the Methow Wildlife Area. They also used the same material to create 'jute rolls' to help slow the velocity of future runoff events. They finished up by seeding the area again.



Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex – Greg Fitzgerald / Brian Cole / Roger Nelson

Weather Conditions: Mild spring weather this week, with highs generally mid to upper 60s, lows upper 30s to mid 40s; generally windy with gusts to 28 mph.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Middle Crab Creek Habitat Enhancements: Wildlife Area staff got started on the dense nesting upland habitat enhancements associated with the Supplemental Feed Route in the Middle Crab Creek reach through the Gloyd Seeps Unit. Approximately 250 acres of abandon agricultural ground will be treated for cheat grass control for 2 years (chemical fallow), followed by planting a variety of native grasses and forbs to provide nesting habitat for waterfowl attracted to the perennial water created by the Supplemental Feed Route, and several upland bird species.



Supplemental Feed Route test Oct. 2006, dense nesting habitat plot along upper pond edge.

Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Complex - Jim Olson / Brian DuPont / Mike Nelson

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Sharp-tailed Grouse Lek Surveys: Manager Olson completed the first round of lek surveys on Scotch Creek and Chesaw. One lek on Chesaw had 19 total birds, compared to 24 last year. The total of 3 leks on Scotch Creek had 25 birds, compared to 30 last year. The conditions are perfect but numerous Northern Harrier hawks and Short-eared owls are flying the ridge tops every morning, causing disruption of lekking activities. Some leks had to have 2 and 3 visits to get a reliable number due to some mornings with zero on the lek.

Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Complex - Dale Swedberg / Justin Haug

Weather Conditions: For the week daytime temperatures ranged from daytime highs ranging from 55 to 69. Nighttime temperatures ranged from 26 to 40. No measurable precipitation. Snow persists at higher elevations on north slopes and more shaded areas.

Weekender Opportunities: Bird watching – A pair of **Greater White-fronted geese** are still spending time on the east end of Spectacle Lake - for more information call Loomis Kwik Stop – 509.223.3126.

New arrivals include ruddy ducks and common loons. Numerous Sandhill cranes and Canada geese have been observed flying northward on their springtime migration to their breeding grounds.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Volunteer Trail Maintenance: Assistant manager Haug met with representatives of the Okanogan County Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen to discuss the clearing of the Sinlahekin trail this weekend. A total of 11 people assisted in the trail maintenance with a significant amount of work done south of Blue Lake near Hunter's Camp. This is an annual event that helps a great deal to keep this trail clear. Their work on the wildlife area is very valued.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration – Phase 1 –NRCS WHIP Project: Assistant manager Haug met with Stan Janowitz with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to perform field compliance on our Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) portion of the Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration Project (SERP). The areas surveyed were those hand thinned or slash treated by our crews after harvest was completed. He was satisfied by the areas he surveyed and need to come back once more to inspect additional acreage.

PRIVATE LANDS - John Cotton / Eric Braaten / JoAnn Wisniewski

Weather Conditions: Highs for the week were in the sixties and lows in the thirties with two nights below freezing. Predictions for next week are for the low temperatures to stay above freezing.

Weekender Opportunities:

Rare Douglas county waterfowl sighting - Wood ducks



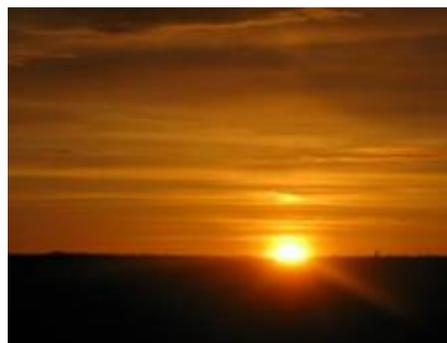
Shrub-steppe Swans



GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Douglas County Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse Lek Counts: Private Lands Biologist Braaten spent several early mornings counting grouse. Private Lands Biologist Braaten spent one morning with a Washtucna High school student who was meeting a job shadow requirement. We were able to count around 30 Sage grouse and 15 Sharp-tailed grouse.

Sunrise in the shrubsteppe



Job shadow opportunities



State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE): Biologist Wisniewski received the data forms for the new 2012 SAFE sign up from Foster Creek Conservation District and began preparing them for dispersal to biologists who will be responsible for conducting the vegetation surveys.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): Biologist Wisniewski, Natural Resource Workers Osborne and Steele installed a shrub planting for an EQIP contract south of Othello.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wenas Muzzleloaders Annual Shooting Areas Cleanup: On Saturday, the Wenas Muzzleloaders coordinated the annual cleanup of the Sheep Company shooting area. The wildlife area provided two large dumpsters for the effort. Temporary discover passes were also provided for those that needed them and volunteer vouchers for those interested in pursuing a free discover pass. Turn-out was much lower than in past years, possibly because the muzzleloader's notice to the local paper got misfiled and so didn't get printed.



Sheep Company Shooting Area Clean-up

Wenas/Cowiche Fire Contract Meeting with DNR: Manager Confer Morris, Assistant Manager Taylor, and Oak Creek Manager Huffman attended a meeting with Regional DNR fire staff to discuss creation of a new fire contract for the shrub steppe portion of the Wenas W.A. and the Cowiche unit of the Oak Creek W.A. This portion of the Wenas W.A. averages 6-8 human-caused fires each year making it imperative to get a contract for fire response back in place before fire season.

Rattlesnake Mountain Acquisition: District Wildlife Biologist Mike Livingston continued working on the RCO grant application for the 14,000 acre Rattlesnake Mountain project. He wrote a three page description of the biological and public benefits of the project. He also

participated in a meeting with Region 3 Director Tayer, Benton County Commissioner Bowman and Community Development Coordinator Fyall to discuss details for a field tour of the project site with local legislators and county commissioners. Benton County is a long-term, major supporter of the acquisition.

Biologist Livingston did a field trip to the Rattlesnake Mountain project site to collect photographs and record plant and animal occurrences for the RCO application. He located a previously undocumented large Townsend's ground squirrel colony. The squirrels were burrowed into a cut bank of eroded deep soil.



Townsend's Ground Squirrel

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Oregon Spotted Frog Survey: Biologist Bohannon and crew resurveyed occupied Oregon Spotted Frog breeding sites to get a final tally on egg mass numbers. Many of the egg masses have recently hatched and the tadpoles are still swarming in the jelly. The total number of egg masses at one site was 375; however, many recently or nearly hatched tadpoles were stranded so mortality at that site is expected to be high. The big discovery of the week was spotted frog use of two large ponds on a property along the Samish River. Several adult and juvenile Oregon Spotted Frogs were captured and egg masses (some were fresh and some had hatched) were located in the shallow margins of the ponds. The ponds had not been surveyed previously due to the presence of a bull, which has since been moved.



Recently hatched Oregon Spotted Frog tadpoles in Whatcom County (photo by Les Meade)



Male Oregon Spotted Frog captured near a fresh egg mass at a pond in Whatcom County (photo by Les Meade)

Upper Skagit Wolf Surveillance: Biologist DeBruyn made another attempt to retrieve video images from remote game cameras installed in the upper Skagit River. Snow was still an issue but he did manage to access three more cameras (no wolf images) on the B.C. side and install two more on the upper Skagit River where it diverges from the road.

Bald Eagle Secondary Poisoning Consultation: Biologist Danilson began his review of a plan that is intended to eliminate rats at a local chicken farm that was condemned. The primary focus of this plan is to ensure that exposure of wildlife (raptors in particular) to secondary poisoning is minimized.

Breeding Pelagic Cormorant Surveys: Biologist Cyra compiled known, suspected, and potential breeding locations of Pelagic cormorants for an upcoming survey in the northern Puget Sound. Systematic surveys for this species have not been performed in the past and anecdotal evidence points to a decrease in the breeding population in the Salish Sea, or at least a shift from known sites and established breeding time.

Great Blue Herons Nesting in Marymoor Dog Park: Biologist Anderson has received several reports of heron nesting in Marymoor Dog Park, in Redmond. Anderson followed up and found this new, likely satellite colony to the large Lake Sammamish State Park colony, right in the middle of the dog park. It is right along the slough to the lake. King County has fenced the area off nicely. A number of dog owners and local birders and photographers were there and wanted to discuss the colony, as well as other area wildlife.



A satellite great blue heron colony to the large Lake Sammamish State Park colony located in the middle of the dog park.

Osprey Nest Management: Biologist Anderson also received word of occupation of an osprey pair at the new Ballard Locks/Commodore Park nest pole. This pole was erected as part of a voluntary mitigation agreement with Burlington Northern, under the WDFW Wildlife Interaction Rules (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/rules/>). Pictures of the osprey can be seen on a number of area blogs:

<http://www.myballard.com/2012/04/11/ospreys-have-returned-to-the-ballard-locks/>

<http://ballard.komonews.com/news/urban-wildlife/738678-new-nest-and-perch-welcome-back-resident-ospreys>

<http://shipslog.org/2012/04/11/osprey-pair-return/>

Peregrine Falcon Urban Eyrie –SR 520 Floating Bridge: Biologist Anderson is working with local peregrine observers and volunteers, as well as WSDOT biologists, to confirm use of the Evergreen Floating Bridge (now under construction) by a new, seemingly nesting, peregrine pair. Field efforts and bridge access are being looked into now to confirm this use. Below picture from observer Martin Muller:



Photo: Martin Muller

Wildlife Access

Access area manager Hacker worked on removing windblown trees from the property boundary fence on Lake Armstrong. Region 4 access staff also removed several dead alder trees from the Loma Lake access. Several large alders on this sites turn-around were removed. Access staff continued to prepare upland lake sites for seasonal openings.



GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Elk Surveys: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn worked with tribal partners to complete the second round of late winter elk survey flights. These surveys are conducted each year and are used to inform decision making regarding harvest management for the North Cascades elk herd. A total of 504 elk were observed during the day and half of flights. The preliminary look at the data suggests that the overall population estimate from this survey was higher than the survey two weeks ago. Bull:cow and calf:cow ratios were lower during this second round of surveys, but still meet population objectives. Further analyses will be conducted to better understand how this data relates to long-term population trends.



Group of elk from the North Cascades herd during aerial survey (photo by Chris Danilson)

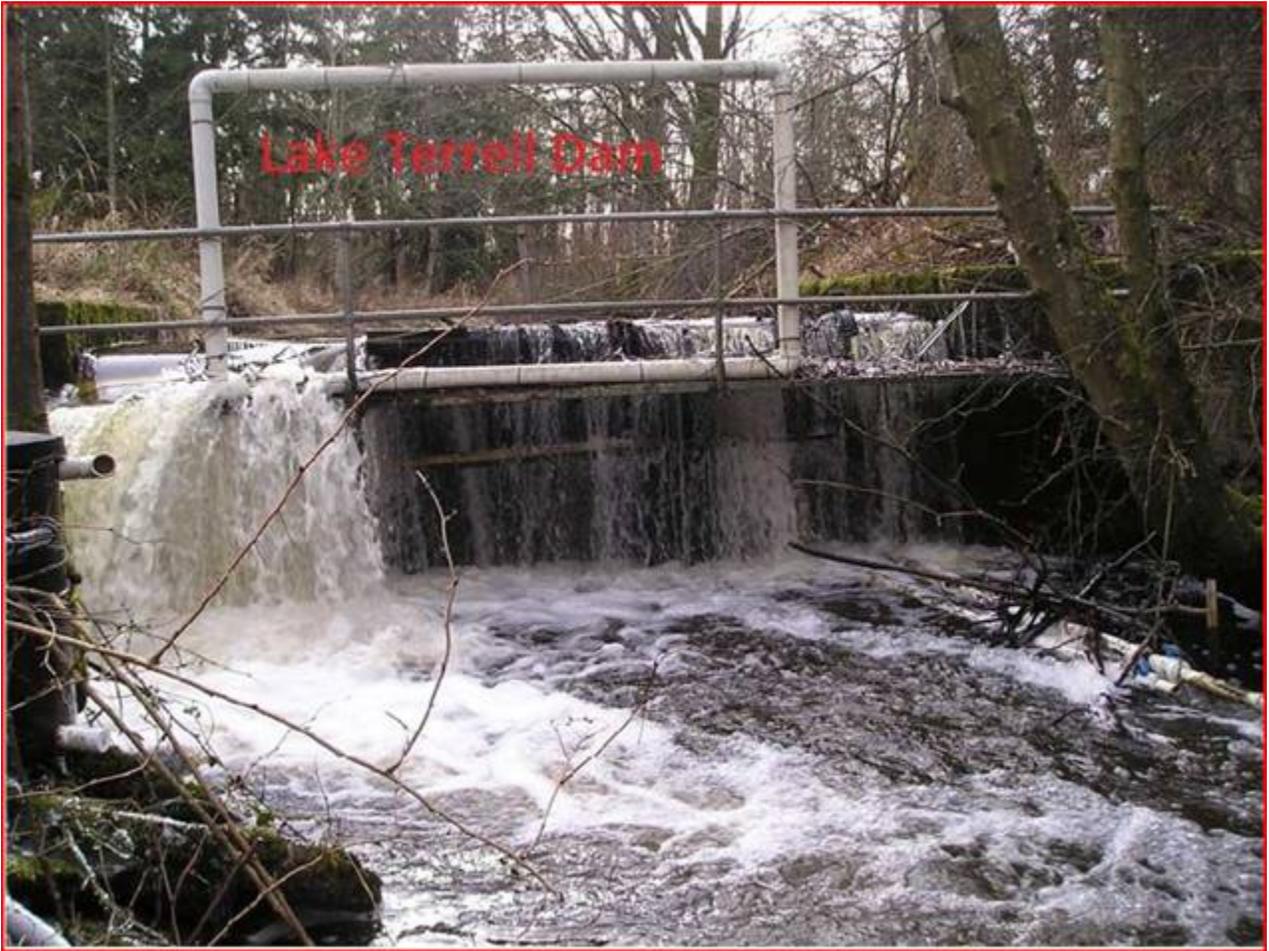
Discovery Park Learning Center Heron TV: Biologist Anderson continues to assist Watchable Wildlife staff in efforts to establish a long-term TV at the Discovery Park Learning Center. This TV will display the local Kiwanis Ravine Heron Cam, as well as other area wildlife cams that both WDFW has established, and Seattle Parks and Recreation have interest in establishing. The Kiwanis Heron Cam can be viewed here, herons are now showing eggs:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch/heroncam/index.html>

Anderson also discussed the above heron cam establishment with King 5, which is working to offer internet viewing of this camera on their web site as well. Anderson provided history of the colony and collaborative efforts to establish the camera with local partners including Heron Habitat Helpers, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Olympia Systems, Canopy Conservation LLC., OneNetPlace, as well as others. King 5 is working on informational summary and will soon provide a new site for folks to tune-in to the WDFW heron camera.

Wildlife Areas

Tennant Lake Unit: Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo attended an onsite meeting with contractors for the Port of Bellingham's wetland enhancement project on the Tennant Lake unit. This project is mitigation for expansion of parking lots that affected wetlands at the Bellingham Airport. Silt fences went up this week with Phase One of the project's construction set to start next week.



The Lake Terrell Dam Remodel Project scheduled to take place this summer will remodel the riser board dam to provide fish passage to an additional 2 miles of stream habitat in Bradley Creek that flows into Lake Terrell. It will also allow more water to be released into Terrell Creek during the summer months, and provide easy control of the lake water levels during flood events.



A saw-whet owl was found nesting in nest box on the Whatcom Wildlife Area.



Natural Resource Tech Deyo finished checking and repairing wood duck nest boxes on the Lake Terrell and Intalco Units of the Whatcom Wildlife Area. Technician Otto taught Technician Deyo how to band the ducks already using the boxes

South Padilla Bay: Skagit WA staff is coordinating with Private Lands Biologist Roozen regarding planting plan for this seasons Waterfowl Quality Hunt Units on the South Padilla Bay properties. NRS Meis took additional soil samples at the South Padilla Bay property included in the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program.

Skagit Headquarter: Regional Staff to include Belinda Rotton, Greg Meis, and Brian Williams hosted a tour of the Wiley Slough Restoration project for Congressional Representative Rick Larson. Puget Sound Partnership coordinated the visit with other Skagit Watershed Council Members, Shirley Solomon, Ed Conner, and Steve Hinton. County Commissioners, Ron Wessen and Sharon Dillion were also in attendance. Brian Williams provided a project summary and overview to the group focusing on partnerships and the adaptive management process.

Bird watcher numbers are good. The Snow geese are still in the Fir Island area and continue to utilize the Reserve and Skagit Bay Estuary and neighboring farm.

Wildlife Access



Access area manager Hacker filled potholes and reshaped the parking lot at the High Bridge river access site. The boat launch ramp at the site was also cleared of river deposits.

Private Lands/Access

Private Lands Access Agreements for Deer Hunting: Biologist Roozen continued to work on private land deer hunting access on Whidbey Island.

Pheasant Release Site: Biologist Roozen and technician Otto continued work on a new pheasant release site. Roozen continued site evaluations of new proposed areas and discussing hunt and property details with landowners.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Wildlife Management

King County Comprehensive Plan Update – WDFW Technical Assistance: Biologist Anderson provided information and clarification to King County staff regarding new wildlife management recommendation updates in their comprehensive plan. Anderson is working with WDFW Environmental Planner Theresa Nation to ensure that any language incorporated into the

new comprehensive plan update meets desired needs of the county and does not conflict with state wildlife laws.

King County Common Loon Monitoring and Banding Efforts: Biologist Anderson is working with WDFW Contracts staff and Regional Manager Link to finalize needs for the upcoming banding efforts breeding loons in King County this summer. Washington state is on the southern edges of the common loon's west coast range in North America. In fact, the southernmost nesting loons are in south King County. King County actually has the most territories of loons in the state. WDFW has implemented a lead tackle ban on area fishing lakes that have breeding loons and regular fishing recreation. More information regarding the small population of loons in Washington and WDFW efforts to provide for this species while avoiding conflict with recreational users can be found here:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/loons/>

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis graded the boat launch entry road and parking area.

Cherry Valley Blow Down Clean-up: Manager Paulson started the process to remove the 4 blown down trees near the north access of Cherry Valley. With a little help from Access Manager Hacker, Manager Paulson limbed and removed one of the 4 trees. The trees were a frequent spot for trash dumping. Hopefully the removal of the trees will eliminate the opportunity.

Whatcom Wildlife Area: Manager Kessler held the annual Citizens Advisory Group Meeting for the wildlife area. Six people attended the meeting representing five user groups and one coordinating agency.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Wildlife Management

Radio Training: Biologist Cyra provided the required state radio training and assigned call numbers to several new staff. Radio training and a call number is required for all users per our contract with the Department of Natural Resources.

Aircraft Emergency Egress Training: Biologist Cyra along with Biologists Jeffries and Evenson and Scientific Techs Oliver and Clark participated in an aircraft egress training sponsored by the Department of Interior's Interagency Aircraft Training. Classroom session covered the unique aspects of water ditching and escapement and survival details. The practical session in the pool allowed participants to experience and practice egress in a controlled environment. This basic session should be encouraged for all staff that fly over water – marine, lake, or river. Discussions are under way to provide for more comprehensive training through the military or a private contractor for those staff that participate in extensive low level marine surveys.



Biologist Evenson in the dunker trainer



Dunker going into pool



Submersion into pool



Escape!

Motor Boat Operator Training: Biologist Milner spent 3 days training to be a trainer for the Department's Motor Boat Operator Certification training. Emphasis was on operating jet boats, inventorying training equipment and planning dates and locations for upcoming training sessions.



Milner learning the feel of a jet boat on Lake Merwin.

Region 4: Region 4 staff attended Regional Directors Meeting and Wildlife Program breakout session.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Peregrine Falcon Survey: Biologist Anderson conducted a peregrine falcon survey to satisfy the monitoring requirement as per the Endangered Species Act following the delisting of peregrine falcon. This site surveyed is located in Skamania County and is one of two nesting territories being monitored in the district. Both sites in District 9 are occupied by peregrine falcons this year and will be monitored in May to follow up on nest success.

Oregon Spotted Frogs: Biologists Anderson and George and Olympia Biologists Hallock and Allen conducted Oregon Spotted Frog surveys at the Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve. This week's survey was a follow-up to other efforts over the past month to evaluate egg mass production as an indicator of population health. Preliminary results indicate that this year egg mass numbers were one of the highest in the past ten years. An exceptionally wet March that provided abundant flood water from Trout Lake Creek set up ideal conditions in traditional breeding areas. Very little stranding and freezing occurred, reducing mortality of this year's egg mass production.



Trout Lake Oregon Spotted Frog Survey

Western Pond Turtle Management: Biologist Holman began work to prepare for the 2012 western pond turtle field season. Preparing field equipment, data forms, scheduling, etc., along with discussing data management with Olympia Staff were all conducted. This year's field season will include a mark-recapture effort at the Sondino site, an effort to capture hatchlings for head-starting, bullfrog control, release of last-years head-start turtles, habitat enhancements, and environmental education.

Golden Eagle Survey: Biologist Stephens conducted a golden eagle survey near the John Day dam to determine if golden eagles are currently occupying this historic nest site. This territory is of interest to biologists because of its proximity to wind turbines. No golden eagles were seen during the survey; however, several other raptor species were seen, including: red-tailed hawks, a prairie falcon, osprey, American kestrels, and a sub-adult bald eagle.

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area:

Oregon anemones: While searching for a possible Golden eagle nest in a side canyon off the Klickitat River Canyon, Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven found a population of unusual flowers, at least for this area. Oregon anemones are vivid purple and easy to identify. They are mainly known to occur in the western part of the Columbia Gorge and higher elevations. It was surprising to find them blooming in an oak grove next to the Klickitat River.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Wildlife Areas

Shillapoo Wildlife Area:

CAG Meeting: Wildlife Area Manager Calkins and Assistant Manager Hauswald gave a presentation this past week to the Shillapoo Wildlife Area Citizen Advisory Group, updating them on the Wildlife Area Management Plan and the work that has been accomplished on the area over the past two years. There was a very good turn out with most representatives attending the meeting. There were representatives from Bonneville Power Administration, Ducks Unlimited, Washington Waterfowl, Pheasants Forever, USFWS, Vancouver Wildlife League, Vancouver Audubon, Vancouver Diking District, Clark County Weed Management, and WDFW staff. Thank you to all of those that attended the meeting.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Other

MOCC Training: District Wildlife Biologist Miller spent 3 days in annual training as an instructor for Boating Safety for WDFW. Topics included curricula updates, professional standards, equipment and supplies inventory and organization, schedule for 2012 classes, and instructor proficiency training. The training was held in the Woodland area on Lake Merwin and the North Fork Lewis River. Miller particularly enjoyed the opportunity to operate inboard and outboard jet boats, which are not part of his normal duties or equipment. Miller will assist in 2 classes this year and as a backup for a third class, all in Western WA.



Equipment for MOCC training

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtles: Bios Schmidt and Tirhi concluded turtle trapping this week. 95 turtles (19 males, 48 females, 28 unknowns) were captured using a combination of baited hoop traps, basking traps and catching by hand. 30 transmitters were deployed on adult females expected to nest this summer. One adult female (8yrs old) was found dead in the pond from unknown causes. 11 turtles showed clinical signs of shell rot and two of the worst cases (adult females) were transferred to Pierce College for long term treatment. Afflicted turtles are slightly fewer in number than last year, and it was noticed that old lesions were healing. Bios will be working this week on installing additional basking logs in the turtle ponds and preparing the nesting hill for nesting season.

Bio Skriletz continued coordinating the Mason County pond turtle habitat project. He met with the pilot at NW Helicopters to review safety and logistics.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Wildlife Management

RMEF – Twin Harbors Banquet: Region 6 mascot “Herman” attended the Twin harbors chapter of the RMEF annual banquet in Ocean shores. The big bull has faithfully held a position at the podium for many years and represents the department well. Approximately 300 people attended the banquet.



Wildlife Areas

North Olympic: Manager Guzlas coordinated a meeting with the Peninsula Trails Coalition, the North Olympic Salmon Coalition (NOSC), Jefferson County and WADOT to discuss the grant

proposals that will be submitted to RCO to fund the construction of the Olympic Discovery Trail (ODT) located at the Snow/Salmon Creek Unit of the North Olympic Wildlife Area. WDFW will be submitting a WWRP proposal and Jefferson County will be submitting an ALEA proposal. Both these proposals are due on May 1. Jefferson County and WDFW have requested WADOT to sign a standard RCO landowner acknowledgement form prior to May 1. WADOT provided WDFW and other project partners a summary of an AG opinion that RCO funding should not be utilized in the WADOT right-of-way. If WDFW is awarded funding through this current round of WWRP for this trail section, the real estate arms of both WADOT and WDFW will need to work together to establish an air-space lease that will allow for this "regional trail of significance" to be constructed at the southern end of Discovery Bay. The Maynard nearshore restoration and the trail project need to proceed in unison. Impacts established by the trail will be mitigated by the nearshore restoration work.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Wildlife Management

Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly: Biologist Linders reports that the first adult Taylor's checkerspot butterflies eclosed at the new rearing facility at Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women on Wednesday (photos below), thanks to the hard work and dedication of staffs at The Evergreen State College, The Oregon Zoo, and inmate technicians and staff at Mission Creek. It is the culmination of a large cooperative effort that brought this program to fruition. Thanks to the Washington Department of Corrections, The Evergreen State College, The Oregon Zoo, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, The US Fish and Wildlife Service, JBLM's ACUB Program, the Center for Natural Lands Management, The Nature Conservancy and WDFW staffs for their dedication and support in making this happen. As a result of this effort we have doubled our rearing (and recovery) capacity for Taylor's checkerspot in South Puget Sound!

