

Wildlife Program

Week of April 23-29, 2012

WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Scientific Collections Permits: Much of the concern in issuing Scientific Collection Permits is the cumulative effects of lethal collection by several museums requesting “blanket” permits across the state. Tricia Thompson discussed collection criteria and permit conditions with another Collection Manager at the Burke Museum who is very interested in helping in our SCP simplification process.

Tricia Thompson reviewed and compiled the comments for five applications and sent in the approval for permitting, and reviewed six more scientific collection permit applications.

Wildlife Rehabilitation: Tricia Thompson graded and issued Wildlife Rehabilitation permits to three wildlife caregivers from Sarvey Wildlife Care Center, Arlington. They should receive their permits in the mail next week.

Falconry: Every year the WDFW issues permits to take wild peregrine nestlings for falconry. These nestlings may not be removed from the eyrie before they are five days of age and, to avoid premature fledging, the nests may not be entered when the nestlings are 28 days of age or older. The number of wild-take permits allowed is based on last year’s peregrine populations and productivity. Tricia Thompson issued 10 permits this year for peregrine eyas take. Because there were 14 applicants, random numbers were generated to draw those falconers who would receive the permits. A preliminary email went to the 10 falconers randomly selected to receive a permit; they were asked to notify her if they felt they were not going to take a nestling. Two declined and she moved down the list to numbers’ 11 & 12. Final letters and permits were mailed out yesterday. Only Master Falconers may take peregrine nestlings from the wild.

Two falconry applicants took their tests which were graded by Tricia Thompson. Both applicants passed and have been mailed their pass letters.

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

WildWatchcams – Herocams Live on King 5: Great blue herons at the Seattle Parks and Recreation first designated ‘Wildlife Park’ goes live to highlight the ecology and partnerships devoted to the unique management and conservation of this urban heronry. Check out the WDFW Heroncam and partnership @ <http://www.king5.com/news/environment>

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

Wolf Outreach: Chuck Gibilisco, Watchable Wildlife Section lead, worked on DRAFT wolf outreach materials that will be used to communicate to the ranching and livestock public, various

management options and tools available to address and reduce wolf livestock conflicts in Washington. Draft materials will be reviewed at the end of April and will be making their appearance later this spring.

Ecological Inventory Assessment: Gibilisco worked with Wildlife Program staff from Outreach, Science, GIS and Lands on next steps of the protocol development for the EIA. The protocols will serve a major role in the EIA process. Another unique aspect of the EIA project is that citizen science data collection and monitoring will help measure overall management objectives efficiency and place a measure of ecological integrity for given units of a wildlife area. Wildlife Program staff will continue to work on select EIA wildlife areas in early May and plan to meet, discuss and confirm ground truthing with wildlife area managers prior to next steps of protocol development. The months of June and July are slated for actual citizen science training and initial data collection on various units of the selected EIA wildlife areas.

Wildlife Outreach Volunteers: Volunteer Management Coordinator, James Chandler, participated on the panel to review 65 grant proposals received to be considered for funding by the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA).

Citizen Science: Citizen Science coordinator Margaret Tudor provided the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency (AFWA) conservation core concepts that pertain to the Conservation Initiative that will guide consistent messaging by WDFW employees to the public.

To be effective in our Conservation Initiative efforts we need to speak with one voice and clearly state what we want every citizen to know and understand. These core concepts were approved by the entire membership of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, including the 50 state agencies and all federal and Canadian partners.

The Conservation Core Concepts and Key Messages for the Public are:

1. In North America fish and wildlife are public trust resources managed by governmental agencies.

Key Message for the Public: North America's fish and wildlife belong to all of us, and we rely on state and federal agencies to watch over them.

2. Since most wildlife live on private lands, private landowners play an important role in sustaining and improving habitat.

Key Message for the Public: Private landowners play an important role in ensuring that wildlife and the places they live remain for future generations to enjoy.

3. Sustainable natural resources depend on the support of an informed and responsible citizenry.

Key Message for the Public: Maintaining healthy places for people and wildlife, depends on each of us taking responsibility to be informed about our natural world.

4. The health and well-being of fish, wildlife, and humans depend on the quality of their environment.

Key Message for the Public: All living things benefit from a healthy environment. What's good for fish and wildlife is also good for people.

5. Loss and degradation of habitat are the greatest problems facing fish and wildlife; therefore, enhancing and protecting habitat is critical to managing and conserving them.

Key Message for the Public: Taking action today to conserve wildlife and the places they live is the key to ensuring they survive for future generations to enjoy.

6. Conserving biodiversity is important.

Key Message for the Public: It is important to take action now to ensure that wildlife and the places they live are healthy and diverse.

7. Fish and wildlife can be conserved and restored through science based management which considers the needs of humans as well as those of fish and wildlife.

Key Message for Public: Wildlife conservation and management are solidly rooted in science and balance the needs of both wildlife and people.

8. Everyone impacts fish and wildlife and their habitats and as human populations grow, impacts on natural resources increase.

Key Message for Public: As human populations grow, resulting changes in our natural environment affect the quality of life for both people and wildlife.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Peregrine Falcon Survey: Biologist Ferguson surveyed – observed the area for 4 hours, the historic Peregrine Falcon nesting site at the Sunset Bridge near downtown Spokane and found no sign of peregrine falcons in the area. This is the first of two required surveys by the USFWS.



Historic peregrine nesting site at the Sunset Bridge near downtown Spokane.

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

Wildlife Management

Northeast Washington Spring Turkey Season: General Spring Turkey Season continues this week in District One. Casual observations find turkeys widely spread with many broken into small groups of a gobbler with 3-5 hens typically in short grass fields near forest/field edges. Hunting pressure seems to be quite light following the opening week-end, especially on week days.

Wildlife Areas

Reardan WLA Dedication Preparation: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager (WAAM) Finch and Private Lands Biologist Todd Baarstad finished installing informational boards under the Plexiglas at the kiosks, Monday. WAAM Finch and Wildlife Area Manager (WAM) Anderson again visited Reardan WLA on Tuesday, and checked kiosks for warped informational signs under the Plexiglas. There is some warping under the clear plastic covers, but nothing that detracts from readability, and little degradation to the attractiveness of the displays. They also met with the Washington Department of Transportation, Davenport office, sign engineer, Jim Wilcox. Wilcox had installed all but one of the brown binocular signs along Highways 2 and

231, to guide visitors to the Wildlife Area. Wilcox, Finch and Anderson all put up the last sign, at the intersection of Railroad St. and Audubon Way, leading directly to the south parking lot. Kiosk completion and sign posting was done in preparation for the kiosks' dedication scheduled for Sunday, April 29, at the south kiosk location. This planned dedication was also noted in the outdoors section of the Spokane Spokesman-Review newspaper a week ago.



Photos from installation of “Brown Binoculars” wildlife viewing signs near Reardan Audubon Wildlife Area.

Private Lands/Access

Private Lands Access Provided: Biologist Earl put some finishing touches on a new Partnership for Pheasants (PFP) contract for Garfield County this week. He met with the landowner to finalize everything so that it can be entered into CAPS. Upon the meeting, the landowner offered an additional 77.7 acres of CRP enhancement planting to the list. This brings the total project to 19.6 acres of CREP (w/ trees and shrubs) 150.26 acres of PFP brood habitat enhancement, and 795.44 acres of Feel free to Hunt (FFTH).

Lowland Lakes Fishing Opener Prep: Access Manager Scott Young has spent the last few weeks preparing WDFW boating access sites for opening day of the lowland lakes fishing season.



Williams Lake Access Site ready for opening day of fishing season.

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

Wildlife Management

Workshop on Livestock Ranching and Large Carnivores: District Wildlife Biological Staff Dana Base and Jay Shepherd attended this half day workshop at the Sheriff's Ambulance Training Center in Colville. Keynote speakers were Seth Wilson with the Blackfoot Challenge group in Montana and Timmothy Kaminski with the Mountain Livestock Cooperative in Alberta, Canada. The workshop provided overviews and case histories of producing and marketing cattle profitably on ranges occupied by large carnivores, particularly gray wolves and grizzly bears. Major lessons learned included the importance of forging partnerships, building trust amongst stakeholders, understanding conditions that minimize predator/livestock encounters, and putting these conditions into practice. The most effective on-the-ground actions for eliminating predator conflicts included the following: Rapid removal and composting of cow carcasses; Retirement of boneyards; Tactical use of turbo-fladry; and Strategic deployment of range riders.

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

Weather Conditions: Normal spring conditions with highs in the 60s and 70s and lows in the 40s.

Weekender Opportunities: Warm spring weather is bringing excellent birding opportunities to the Ephrata district. Because of the diversity of habitat types (wetland, riparian, shrub-steppe, agricultural) in this district, this area offers an opportunity to observe a wide diversity of species. Wetland birds are migrating through or stopping in and preparing for breeding season. Various species of sandpiper can be found frequenting wetland margins consisting of low vegetation or unvegetated flats. Diving and dabbling ducks are abundant across many of the waterbodies in the area, including cinnamon and blue-winged teal which have arrived more recently.

The Coulee Corridor is a great place to see a diversity of diving ducks, some puddle ducks, small grebes (eared or horned), and up to three species of loon. Large grebes may be spotted on Banks Lake though it's still pretty early for them to show up this far north. Potholes Reservoir is likely the best opportunity to get a look at Western and Clark's grebes. Some cranes remain in the area as well though many seem to be continuing on to the north. Shrub-steppe obligate birds such as sage sparrows, sage thrashers, and loggerhead shrike have moved into the area and can be seen when frequenting large expanses of quality shrub-steppe habitat. Long-billed curlews are scattered throughout areas with sparse sage or around farm ground (particular hay fields). Burrowing owls are occupying burrows and likely nesting now. They are more commonly seen in the Warden and Othello areas. In particular, look to areas with a mix of cultivated cropland and uncultivated ground (circle corners, shrub-steppe, weed patches, and debris piles).

District 6: Okanogan District - Scott Fitkin / Jeff Heinlen

Weather Conditions: Temps as high as 80 degrees accelerated leaf out and raised river levels dramatically. The wild flower bloom is full on in the lowest elevations and moving upslope.

Weekender Opportunities: Waterfowl, Red-wing blackbirds, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds are easily observed doing their courtship displays on local lakes. Common Loons are returning to their territorial lakes and starting to pair up. Deer are avoiding the mid-day sun and are more visible in the mornings and evenings.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wolverine Research: Biologist Fitkin and USFS biologist Rohrer conducted an aerial search in attempt to locate and document the reproductive dens of our two radio-marked females based on clustered satellite locations over the last couple of months. We successfully located Xena's den in remote subalpine habitat in the south unit of North Cascades National Park and confirmed her presence in the den via VHF signal. As expected, the den is located under several feet of snow and is situated in a stringer of conifers between avalanche chutes. As far as we know, this is the first verified reproductive wolverine den in Washington State. We installed a remote camera that will hopefully document kit production data and yield exciting and oh so cute video for a future weekly installment. As for Mallory, we were able to identify her general denning area, but

without a VHF signal we did not attempt a ground search to observe the den. We may try again next week.



Wolverine Den habitat.



Wolverine Den.

Deer Management: Assistant District Biologist Heinlen received the results from the US Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services laboratory in Ames, IA from the louse sample collected from the Mule Deer exhibiting hair loss symptoms last week. The species of louse was determined to be *Bovicola tibialis*. This is an exotic chewing louse typically associated with European fallow deer. In recent years it has spread to infest populations of native *O. hemionus* deer in at least eight western states, including Washington. It also occurs on Columbian Black-tailed deer in British Columbia, Canada. Infestation intensities vary widely, but fawns in late winter/early spring may sustain intense louse populations and display severe hair loss. This collection represents a new county distribution record for Washington and the northernmost known locality in the United States.

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

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Biologist Gallie, Braaten, Area Managers Peterson and Winters, have been monitoring 19 sharp-tailed grouse lek sites in Douglas County. We are nearly complete with the first series of counts with sharp-tails. The results are a bit mixed. Several sites have attendance equal to or +/- a couple birds from last year's count. However, a couple others have possibly been displaced by conversion of some lek sites in CRP fields that were either taken out or enrolled in SAFE, but underwent mowing or restoration activities. This temporary loss of

cover may have caused birds to find alternate lek locations. More efforts will be taken to find these missing leks. One has already been relocated.

Interesting Observation: While conducting lek counts, it is not uncommon to hear male pheasants call out in the general area. However, upon flushing a group of sharp-tails on a lek site, I was very surprised to also flush a male pheasant off the edge.

Peregrine Falcon: Biologist Gallie complete the occupancy surveys on two peregrine sites in Chelan County as part of the State and Federal coordinated monitoring effort for the de-listing of this species. Both sites are in the Wenatchee National Forest in Tumwater Canyon. A pair was observed in the first territory, indicating the site is occupied, but no adults were observed at the second site. Follow up visit was conducted by USFS staff and concluded the site was not occupied. Visits will be completed in June to determine how many, if any, chicks were produced.

WILDLIFE AREAS

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

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Winter Range Enhancement: On Tuesday the 24th, Methow Manager Tom McCoy, met with members of the Methow Valley Ranger District of the FS to initiate the process for conducting a joint prescribed fire on our Frazer Unit and adjoining FS lands. This meeting is part of the scoping process for the districts South Summit Project NEPA scoping. While this proposed project is still year away from implementation this series of meetings will allow the project to be covered in a larger scoping document that is nearing completion and save us from doing the analysis in the future. This project is right in the heart of our highest density mule deer winter range.

Water Conservation Project(s) Meeting: Methow staff met with Jon Kulp, Jack Myrick from the Washington State Conservation Commission Office of the Columbia River, Bob Clark of the OCCD and Pual LaRivier to discuss possible strategies to advantageously use water from saved with our irrigation efficiencies projects. The plans we are developing are too complex to capture in this document but are intended to support agriculture as well as fish and wildlife, and may provide some additional public benefit.

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

Weather Conditions: Lows in the 40's, mid to upper 60's for highs. Rain mid-week with 0.35 inches recorded at the office.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Grouse Counts: Biologists Dan Peterson and Ann Winters conducted sharp-tailed grouse lek counts Wednesday morning. They visited the two historic West Foster Creek sites. No birds were observed and there was no evidence of use. These sites haven't been used for several years so the result was not a surprise.

Field Spraying – Swakane Canyon: Maintenance Mechanic Fidel Rios spent much of the week getting the numerous old agricultural fields in Swakane Canyon treated with herbicides. Uncooperative weather (rain and wind) plus equipment breakdowns slowed progress but by the

end of Friday afternoon he had completed the project. Natural Resource Technician Virgilio Ruiz assisted both Thursday and Friday.

Field Spraying – West Foster Creek: Ann spent the better part of two days spot spraying quack grass regrowth in the restoration fields on the West Foster Creek unit.



Equipment Repair: Maintenance Mechanic Ed Pierson spent much of the week replacing the brake components of our Interstate tilt trailer. After 30+ years of service the brakes seized up and wouldn't give way. Ultimately Ed, with Brad's assistance, had to disassemble all four wheel/brake assemblies including shoes, springs, cam rollers, pivot pins, bearings, seals and other misc. things and replace just about everything. Friday, after finally getting all the parts that had been ordered earlier in week, Ed reassembled everything, took the trailer on a road test and now it's ready to haul the offset disk to Chelan Butte.

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

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Scientific Technician Topping: Major tasks for this week included chemically treating 3 acres of White Top with some Scotch Thistle rosettes thrown in for good measure and also spraying 2.5 acres of Russian Knapweed. Several weed sites that were treated last year were monitored and checked for new growth. In those sites that were checked only isolated new growth was found and this can be attributed to probable skips in the spraying process. The sites were for Russian Knapweed and White Top. For the most part it is safe to conclude that last season's spray program exhibits very positive results – at least for those sites that were checked. Several Scotch Thistle rosettes were located this week and many were sprayed in the course of treating other target weeds. However, an attempt to mechanically control other thistle rosettes on Thursday was hampered by a very welcome and lengthy rainstorm which moved through the area. So Thursday was spent assisting Bryan with vehicle and ATV maintenance.

Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Complex - Dale Swedberg / Justin Haug

Weather Conditions: For the week daytime temperatures ranged from 65 to 85. Nighttime temperatures ranged from 33 to 48. Precipitation - .51 inches for a total of 1.5 inches for the month of April. Some snow still lingers at higher elevations on north slopes and more shaded areas. Most of the week was clear with one day of overcast and rain. Average winds ranged from .9 to 2.9 mph with gusts ranging from 11 to 20 mph.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE



Spring Prescribed

Burning: The prescribed burning continued, under auspices of Rx Burn Boss **Tom Leuschen** with a total of about 25 acres of timber litter and light slash burned in two units over 2 days, on a steep hill slope with the fireline mid-slope along the property boundary. The units are located west of Conner's Lake. Despite a 6000' water trunk line charged by 2 pumps with 20 sprinklers deployed along the line at strategic locations and small garden

hose sized hose (toy hose) installed every 100 feet with 2-3 hours of pre-burn wetting of the perimeter conditions are still very challenging conditions requiring a lot of effort on the part of a crew of only 5 people. Due to very high daytime temperatures and erratic winds burn tactics were changed – one prescribed burn was undertaken in the early evening with ignitions being completed at Midnight after which the crew spent time going over the perimeter and wetting it down.





Again as stated previously we have an outstanding burn crew that has met these challenges head-on in excellent fashion.



Before Rx Burn

After Rx Burn



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

Wildlife Oriented Recreation: Spring birding is available as well as observing deer and bighorn sheep opportunities. Photos below:



Swallows – primarily tree swallows



Whimbrel

Chelan Wildlife Area Complex - Ron Fox

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Swakane Canyon Field Restoration: Chelan Manager, Ron Fox, worked with Dan Peterson, Wells Manager and Fidel Rios, Maintenance Mechanic, to move equipment and purchase supplies to spray 100 acres of agricultural fields in Swakane Canyon. Fallow operations were started last year and after a combination of chemical and mechanical fallow operations this spring and summer the fields will be seeded with native grasses, forbs, and shrubs this fall.

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

Beebe Springs Natural Area: Chelan Manager, Ron Fox, worked with Guy Moura, Colville Tribe History and Archeology Program, to define cultural resource concerns associated with Phase 4a. A site surface survey and test pits will need to be completed in areas that were not surveyed in previous phases. Ron and Michael De La Cruz, Construction Project Coordinator,

met with Dr. Stan Gough, Eastern Washington University Archeological and Historical Services, to plan and schedule the surveys.

PRIVATE LANDS - John Cotton / Eric Braaten / JoAnn Wisniewski

Weather Conditions: The average high 74F and low 46F for the week was about 8 degrees above the historic average.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

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 completed preparing them and dispersed them to the biologists who will be responsible for conducting the vegetation surveys. Private Lands Biologist Braaten visited several SAFE fields to look at timing of green up for upcoming chemical applications and discussed recommendations with two landowners.



Douglas County Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse Lek Counts: Private Lands Biologist Braaten continues to spend early mornings counting grouse.



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

Hunter Access: Private Lands Biologist Braaten visited Blue Grade Private Land Access Area out of East Wenatchee to look at how the Register to Hunt system is working for the landowners. The cooperating landowner is now wheat farming the old CRP which will help curb off road activities. Some dumping and vandalism is still occurring but not like before. Signage, new gated parking lots and roads as well as continued assistance from local WDFW enforcement staff has helped curb these unwanted activities. A list of upgrades to the site will be worked on this coming summer to try and curb even more of these unwanted activities.

Off season gated parking lot reduces littering/dumping



Before



After

REGION 3

No reports.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Breeding Waterfowl Aerial Surveys: Marine Seabird Specialist Evenson along with Assistant District Biologists Murphie and Cyra began the western Washington portion of the annual breeding waterfowl aerial surveys. Breeding waterfowl surveys are flown along transects laid out across the state with all habitat within the transects surveyed. Breeding numbers are then extrapolated based on the amount of area surveyed. Following technical delays, the first day surveyed portions of the southern Puget Sound and Hood Canal. The second day flown by Evenson and Murphie flew the Chehalis Valley and the eastern Olympics up to the Elwha.

Surveys continue this week with the area east of Puget Sound from Olympia to the Canadian border being flown. A new vendor, Hillsboro Aviation is providing the helicopter and pilot this year, in part due to their willingness to install bubble windows on the observer doors of the ship, greatly increasing visibility of the survey transect.



Biologist Murphie surveying wetland for breeding waterfowl



Marine Bird Specialist Evenson observing out the bubble window

Peregrine Falcon Federal Nest Monitoring and Deception Wall Closure: Biologist Anderson conducted a full site monitoring of the Mt. Si eyrie as part of the 2012 federal delisting monitor effort. No birds were observed over 5 hours. Ten-plus goats were observed, along with many other bird species and interested community members stopping to look into Anderson's viewing scope at various wildlife.

Anderson has been in ongoing conversation with USFS biologists and members of Washington Climbers Association regarding voluntary closure of the Deception Wall climbing area. Anderson and volunteer observers confirmed nesting on the wall, in follow up to reports of suspected nesting to the USFS. The wall is now closed through the end of June and USFS has posted the below signage at the site, as well as released media statements:



North Cascades Elk GPS Collar Data: Biologist Danilson spent time organizing GPS collar data sets in a Geographic Information System in preparation for discussions with other entities regarding future GPC collar work on the North Cascades Elk Herd. There is a strong interest in developing a new GPS collar project focusing on elk-related agricultural conflicts on whether and to what extent current and future management approaches may reduce these conflicts. Biologist Danilson will participate in a conference call next week to begin developing proposals for this project.

Seattle City Light Wildlife Grant Program Committee: Biologist DeBruyn reviewed five final proposals for the Seattle City Light Wildlife Grant Program. DeBruyn also met with the Seattle City Light Wildlife Grant Program Committee, which made final decisions on grants for 2012. Four proposals were funded totaling just over \$90,000. Seattle City Light will publicly announce who the recipients were after all entities that submitted a proposal are notified of the results.

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Study: Biologist DeBruyn transported and delivered tissue samples from 140 swans to the Ministry of Environment in Canada. These samples will be tested for lead poisoning. Between swans mortalities documented in Region 4 and across the border in Canada, a total of 246 mortalities were documented. This is slightly lower than last years' data, when 264 mortalities were documented, yet higher than the 2006-2010 average of 210 mortalities.

Bald Eagle Nest Confirmation and Updates for USFWS: Biologist Anderson spent a good amount of a day examining 4 nests in the Woodway area for eagle nesting activity and nest location confirmation. This was at the request of USFWS biologist who are in consultation with area contractors and community members due to proposed work near documented or new nests. WDFW is charged with documenting eagle nests and providing this data to USFWS so that they can meet federal mandates of consultation under Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940. WDFW greatly appreciates observations of eagle nest activity, due to limited time that staff have available to provide this service to USFWS and to keep state eagle data up to date. More information on eagle management and how citizens can assist in providing this data can be found at the WDFW eagle management website: http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/bald_eagle/

Peregrine Falcon Urban Eyrie–SR 520 Floating Bridge: Biologist Anderson conference with



WSDOT and USFWS regarding conditions of WSDOT's state Take Authorization Permit due to work near the new SR 520 Peregrine eyrie and potential for take. WSDOT closed the bridge this weekend and installed a walkway along the NE portion of the bridge deck, adjacent to the falcons. All parties agreed, along with mitigation phasing of construction activities

and on site monitoring of the birds by WSDOT biologists and volunteers; that a back-up plan should be in place to care for any eggs if adults were disturbed and abandoned. This was per the WDFW Take Authorization Permit. WDFW recommended that, in event any egg neglect extended long enough to potentially jeopardize the viability of the eggs, that WSDOT work with USFWS to take the eggs into care of a falcon propagator. The construction activity commenced this past weekend and all was well for the birds. *Picture from volunteer observer showing work crews within 30 feet of a peregrine nest site. Birds went about normal activities. Three to four eggs are being incubated currently. Photo by Martin Muller.*

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

Fir Island Snow Goose Work Group Meeting: Biologists Danilson and Roozen attended the Fir Island Snow Goose Working Group meeting. Roozen provided an overview of the 2011-2012 Snow Goose Quality Hunt Program and potential changes for that program in this fall. Overall, the program was a great success, with relatively high compliance and few infractions, thus few changes to the program are proposed. The Fir Island Work Group was formed approximately seven years ago to address several issues related to public safety, hunter ethics and other issue related to snow goose management on Fir Island. WDFW personnel and work group members in attendance conceded that, while there are still occasional violations, the changes implemented over the years have resulted in major improvements to public safety.

North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt: Biologist Roozen and Technician Otto continued work on public access for spring bear hunt permit holders. Roozen and Otto toured bear unit, clearing limbs and rocks from roads, and documented snow line, wildlife, and vehicles.

Opening Day Creel Assistance to Fish Program – Walker Lake and Peregrine Falcon Nest Site Occupancy Check: Biologist Anderson provided assistance to the Fish Program by working Walker Lake, in Cumberland, WA (south King Co.). Regulars remembered Anderson from the same creel effort from last year. Fishing was great, with all limiting outside of those who chose not to. Average take was 4.2 fish per person. Officer Bruce Richards stopped by and provided some checks for folks.

Tennant Lake Units: Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo cleared beaver dams and the beaver deceiver pipes on the Tennant Lake unit. Due to heavy rains, the lake once again flooded the boardwalk. Natural Resource Tech Deyo repeated the clearing at the end of the week.

Resource Tech Deyo rechecked the saw-whet owl nest box on the Lake Terrell Unit and found two hatchlings inside.



Lake Terrell Unit: Opening Day was very busy at Lake Terrell. The front parking area was full of boat trailers and both the boat dock and new fishing pier were full of anglers.

Skagit Wildlife Area Farming: Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) Greg Meis has been coordinating with service and supply vendors for agricultural enhancement programs on the Island, Samish, and Leque Island Units. NRS Meis has been discussing logistics and process with Wilbur Ellis and Hiline Helicopter for the aerial seed application.

Echo Lake Opening Day: Manager Paulson participated in the fishing opening day survey. The sun was shining down on the 17-acre lake, and with little to no wind gave the anglers a perfect opportunity to catch fish. Parents were almost as excited as their kids when they showed their catch to Manager Paulson for measurement. Most fishermen noticed the larger fish, “The fish seem to be bigger this year. I like it”.

Wildlife Access

Access Maintenance: Access Area Manager Hacker worked with Ross Calvert from South Region 4 to remove dead and hanging branches on the large cottonwood tree on the Lake Geneva access in King County. A 60 ft. man lift was rented to assist with the project. Trees at North Lake in King County were also pruned with the assistance of the man lift. A wind damaged oak tree at the south sound hatchery had branches removed using the man lift.



Leaning trees at the Lake Geneva access launch were removed for safety reasons.

Private Lands/Access

Private Lands Wildlife Viewing Sites: Biologist Roozen and technician Otto met with Whatcom County Parks and Recreation staff to collaborate on wildlife viewing locations in northwestern Whatcom County.

Skagit County 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.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Biologist Roozen and technician Otto initiated negotiations with the landowners for enrollment in the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program for the 2012-13 hunting season. Biologist Roozen and technician Otto began work on waterfowl food plots at Bay View. Roozen and Otto spoke with growers, discussed crop selection, and started drainage at property.

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

Wildlife Management

National Wildlife Federation Identifying Target Species and Success Metrics for Certified Habitats Program in Suburban-Urban Areas, Pilot Program for NYC, Philadelphia, Houston, and Seattle – WDFW Technical Assistance: Biologist Anderson provided information, suggestions and comments to National Wildlife Federation (NWF) regarding development of a program to evaluate the success of their Certified Habitats program. NWF is examining factors such as measured improvement in habitats, presence/absence of keystone or index species as a proxy for success of this program, as well as where to focus future efforts based on findings. WDFW works closely with local NWF due to collaborative efforts regarding the joint WDFW Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary and NWF Certified Habitat certification option that both organizations offer to citizens of WA. More information can be found at the WDFW Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/backyard/>

Captive Breeding and Translocation of Northern Pacific Tree Frogs: Staff at Woodland Park Zoo relayed to Biologist Anderson that a private citizen was captive breeding tree frogs and providing them to area citizens to "relocate to area wetlands". This is not legal in the state of Washington. There are a number of biological reasons that wildlife cannot be kept in captivity or relocated without permits from WDFW. Although intentions are good, it is to the detriment of these animals and local habitats to conduct these activities. Anderson passed the information along to WDFW Enforcement for follow-up. Information on frogs in WA can be found at the WDFW Living with Wildlife- Frogs website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/frogs.html>

Wildlife Areas

Samish River Unit: Manager Rotton met with NRCS Biologist Kathy Kilcoyne to discuss the proposed freshwater wetland enhancement for this site. A preliminary design has been provided for initial discussion and comment. This proposal will be forwarded through the restoration framework process and discussion will begin with other potential project partners.

Cherry Valley Tree Clean Up: Manager Paulson continues to work on the old blown down trees at the north access of the Cherry Valley Unit. Once the dead trees are removed, the littering should decrease.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Elk Mortality Survey: Regional Wildlife staff along with volunteers conducted an annual count of winter mortalities on the mudflow of the Wildlife Area. Approximately 46 winter mortalities were found, although data still need to be verified to ensure that locations from the previous winter were not counted again. The breakdown appears to be 13 calves, 3 yearlings, and 30 adult elk. This number is higher than in the past 3 years, and is likely related to the late winter/ early spring snow fall. Snow levels were very high at Spirit Lake this winter, with over 400 % of normal winter water content/snowpack. Thank you to our large crew of volunteers, mainly consisting of members of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.



Female calf elk winter mortality

Old elk cow winter mortality

Black Tailed Deer Study: Biologist Bergh met with Research Scientist Rice to set-up equipment and go over protocol for the upcoming deer fawning season. They also located a study deer whose radio collar was giving off a mortality signal. The cause of death appeared to be coyote predation. Another study deer met the same fate the week before, but the VIT (vaginal implant transmitter) could not be located near the deer carcass. After searching further, the VIT was located about a kilometer away; parts of it were chewed up, most likely by a coyote.

Western Pond Turtle Management: Biologists Holman, George, Bergh, and Stephens initiated trapping for western pond turtles at the Sondino site on the Klickitat Wildlife Area. Fifty-six hoop and basking traps are now set in 6 different water-bodies at Sondino. The traps will be checked daily until approximately May 18th. The trapping session is being conducted to generate a mark-re-capture estimate of the pond turtle population at the State's most significant site. An attempt will be made to capture hatchling western pond turtles during this time as well.



Initial captures as well as Sondino "Pond B".

Peregrine Falcon Survey: Biologist Stephens conducted a peregrine falcon survey at an occupied site near Lyle. The birds were incubating eggs on a new nest ledge that has not been historically used by peregrines occupying this site. The birds were observed defending their territory against a passing prairie falcon.

Sandhill Crane Nesting Survey: Biologist Stephens assisted the staff of Conboy Lake National Wildlife Refuge with conducting an annual sandhill crane nesting survey. The goal is to identify all the crane nests present on the Refuge so that the number of colts produced can later be documented. Biologist Stephens observed a pair of cranes building a nest.

5 Year Nesting Canada Goose Survey: Biologists George and Holman along with Officer Meyers and fisheries biologist Glaser conducted the five year nesting Canada goose survey in Clark and Skamania counties. The area surveyed included islands in the Columbia River between Bonneville Dam and the I-5 Bridge. Sixty-three nests were located with the most production occurring on Sand Island. Data from this survey are compiled with the District 10 survey data to achieve an overall nesting index of Canada geese in the lower Columbia River.

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area:

Klickitat Wildlife Area Fuels Reduction Project: A roadside thinning project designed to reduce the risk of fire on the Soda Springs Unit was initiated this week. A Washington Conservation Corps crew from Yakima began thinning the forest understory within 50 feet of the edge of Anderson Road, a very well-used public road on the KWA.



Roadside fuels reduction.

The smallest trees are being cut, as well as selected larger trees. Shrubs within 10 feet of the road's edge are also being cut, as well as low-hanging tree limbs, to reduce "ladder fuels" that allow a fire to climb up into the forest canopy. Manager Van Leuven is working ahead of the WCC crew to mark the boundary of the work area, and then mark specific trees for retention or cutting based on a survey for uniquely valuable trees, assessment of tree health and growth potential, gaps in the forest canopy, and potential safety issues such as fallen snags hung up in neighboring trees. Where opportunities exist within the project description to promote the health of mature oak trees by reducing competition from conifers, those actions are also being implemented. The project is also expected to improve habitat for the western gray squirrel, a species that prefers a more open forest understory. The WCC crew will return next week to do more roadside thinning and chip the slash produced by the project effort.



Actions promote the health of mature oak trees by reducing competition from conifers.

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

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area:

Road Maintenance: The WDFW Road Maintenance Crew arrived this week to grade roads on the Klickitat Wildlife Area. The roads serving the water access sites are the top priority. Most of the roads on the Soda Springs Unit that are open for public use are also on the work plan.

Private Lands/Access

Citizens Advisory Groups: Program Manager Jonker and Biologist Stephens attended the Klickitat Wildlife Area and Cowlitz Wildlife Area Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) meetings this week to introduce the new private lands program in region 5. The members of the advisory groups offer a great potential for future partnerships with regard to hunting access and habitat enhancement on private lands.

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

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area:

Citizen Advisory Group Meeting: A meeting with the Klickitat Wildlife Area Citizen Advisory Group was held on April 24th. Staff from the Region 5 Wildlife Program met with group members to discuss progress on the 2011 performance measures, consider a list of performance measures for 2012, and provide updates on other developments such as the Private Lands Access Program. Private Lands Biologist Stephens explained the purpose of the Private

Lands Access Program as well as incentives WDFW can offer for landowner participation. Group members offered input on various topics, including pine and oak forest management.

REGION 6

No reports.