

Wildlife Program

Week of April 30-May 6, 2012

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Grizzly Bear: A number of grizzly bear detections have been reported just within the last ten days, including photographs of four different grizzly bears in the Wedge, Game Management Unit (GMU) 105. One of the photographs was of a sow and two cubs, which is highly significant for Washington State. Amongst response measures taken so far, District Wildlife Biological Staff Dana Base and Jay Shepherd have coordinated with relevant staff from other agencies having management jurisdiction, posted bear awareness signs at campgrounds and other suitable locations in the Wedge, and made telephone advisory contacts to spring black bear permit holders for GMU 105. **See video at <http://youtu.be/S6FXXvZxzgc>**

Private Lands/Access

Prescribed Burn on Private Land in Southeast Washington: While working with Crop Production Services, Private Lands Biologist Scott Rasley was able hit a small window this week and complete our 200-acre controlled burn on Starvout Ridge to benefit elk. Several neighbors showed up and commented on this project. All comments were very positive. After the rain quits we will start our legume interseeding and then follow up with a 50-acre spring wheat lure crop seeding.



Strengthening Partnerships: Private Lands Biologist Dawn Davis assisted Pheasants Forever volunteers with a shrub planting in Woodward Canyon, north of Lowden in Walla Walla County.



Habitat Chair Larry Boe, Secretary Carl Bisgard, and a Pheasant Forever volunteer planting shrubs at Woodward Canyon.



Woodward Canyon shrub planting. Since 2011, over 900 trees and shrubs have been planted to benefit upland game birds and wildlife.

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

Wildlife Areas

Kiosk Dedication, Reardan Audubon Wildlife Area (WLA): On Sunday, April 29, District 2 Wildlife Biologist Howard Ferguson emceed the formal dedication of the new kiosks and a memorial plaque at the WLA. About 40 visitors attended the ceremony in WLA's south parking lot, and then strolled the trail to the south viewing blind. The event was capped off with a reception at the Reardan Community Hall, with cake and refreshments.



District Wildlife Biologist Howard Ferguson speaks about the history of the Wildlife Area.





Visitors discuss the new kiosk at Reardan Audubon Lake Wildlife Area



Memorial Plaque for Warren Hall founder of Spokane Audubon Society and early recognition of Audubon lake.

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

Wildlife Areas

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Volunteers: Twenty Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) volunteers from all corners of the state spent the weekend at Smoothing Iron ridge tearing out unused barbed wire fencing, cleaning water troughs, and performing maintenance on springs. Bob Dice worked Saturday and Sunday with the volunteers. About three miles of fence was removed and 12 troughs were cleaned and serviced. The volunteers also cleared deadfall trees from trails and hauled salt to cook ridge for elk. Wildlife Area staff assisted by moving tools and equipment to Smoothing Iron earlier in the week in preparation for the work party. This was the ninth year in a row RMEF volunteers have gathered at Smoothing Iron to work on projects for the Wildlife Area. Their hard work and enthusiasm for wildlife and elk on the Wildlife Area is appreciated.



RMEF Volunteers at Smoothing Iron



RMEF volunteers cleaning a stock tank in Warner Gulch



RMEF volunteers removing old stock fence on Smoothing Iron Ridge

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 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Western Canada Goose: Biologist Finger conducted the annual Western Canada goose nest count with the Washington Waterfowl Association volunteers. There were 16 volunteers, contributing a total of 80 hours of work to the effort of counting Western Canada goose nests on six Moses Lake islands (Heron, Marsh, Goat, Gailey's, Crest, and S. of Crest). This event is a great opportunity to get children interested in conservation activities. They really enjoy the scavenger hunt and ask lots of questions about skulls, feathers, bones, etc. that are encountered along the way. Many of these kids are mentored into waterfowl hunting by Washington Waterfowl Association members. Total nest count was 3% below the long-term average. This survey is part of a broader effort across eastern Washington to determine whether an early Canada goose season for one weekend during September will be allowed. This season has not been offered for the last few years due to counts below the allowable threshold.



Washington Ground Squirrels: Biologist Finger coordinated with Dr. Ernest from Central Washington University so that her Wildlife and Fisheries class could conduct a small mammal trapping exercise. The class was allowed to work the Soda Lake release site and caught 14 individuals. Of particular surprise was that three of the four individuals (all females) were recaptures from previous hard releases during 2010 that were not detected during 2011 despite very intensive monitoring of this site, suggesting these individuals initially dispersed but drifted back in over time (with the exception of 1 individual who was released 1-km away).



District 6: Okanogan District - Scott Fitkin / Jeff Heinlen

Weather Conditions: Typical spring weather – some warmth, some frost, some rain, some sun. Lower elevations are completely leafed out and the snow line is creeping up the mountainsides. Wild flowers in full bloom.

Weekender Opportunities: Spring turkey season still in full swing, although birds are becoming more dispersed and breeding activity is declining so more legwork is required to find birds. WDFW Wildlife Areas are beautiful right now with flower filled meadows and breeding bird activity increasing daily. Warblers and other long-distance migrants are returning. Ospreys are back and active on local lakes and rivers.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wolverine Research: Biologist Fitkin, USFS biologist Rohrer and project principle investigators from the USFS Pacific NW research station conducted follow-up aerial surveys of wolverine denning areas. Eureka! Our camera on Xena's den yielded evidence of at least one kit, definitive verification of successful wolverine reproduction in Washington. Documenting of such is a project objective that had eluded us until now. We also nailed down the location of Mallory's den and hope to deploy cameras at the site in the next couple of days. Interestingly, our resident adult male Rocky has been periodically visiting both den areas indicating he is likely the father of both litters. This type of paternal association with young kits has been documented in other study areas and is fairly unique among carnivore species.

Xena emerging from her den.



Rocky's tracks near Xena's den.



Excited biologist

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

International Coordination: Biologist Fitkin attended a trans-boundary coordination meeting designed to facilitate communication between biologists working on carnivore research/management near to and on either side of the international border, particularly in the Cascades ecosystem. All participants benefited from the sharing of information and ideas and we made significant strides in moving toward a more efficient and timely mechanism for sharing data into the future and in developing broad research/management priorities of joint interest to move forward. The Okanogan District particularly benefited from the specific project breakout group session to plan for this summer's grizzly bear hair-snag survey effort. Hopefully, similar surveys and sighting follow-up will also occur in Canada in areas immediately adjacent to US sites.

SPECIES RECOVERY

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery - Penny Becker

Weather Conditions: Sagebrush Flat Wildlife had rain again this week that was followed sunny days. The vegetation remains green and flowering.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Informal Burrow Survey: Research Scientist Becker and Biologists Gallie and Eidson conducted informal burrow surveys on Sagebrush Flats. The surveys resulted in the discovery of multiple burrows potentially used by pygmy rabbits. In addition to the potential burrow sites a visual observation was made of a pygmy rabbit near one of the suspected burrows. DNA analysis conducted by the University of Idaho on fecal pellets collected during the survey confirmed that two of the sites were used by pygmy rabbits. The newly discovered sites were more than a mile away from previously located burrows.



Biologist Eidson, left, and Gallie, right, conduct burrow surveys on Sagebrush Flats Wildlife area.

Pygmy Rabbit Husbandry: Research Scientist Becker and Biologist Eidson spent time on Sagebrush Flat wildlife area providing supplemental feed to the pygmy rabbits in the large enclosures and the kits in the nursery area. Eidson and Becker continued monitoring of the rabbits in the enclosures via visual observations and trail cameras. Breeding season is well underway and at least 23 kits have been born thus far in the large enclosures to both wild born and captive-bred pygmy rabbits. At the Oregon Zoo, ten kits have survived and will arrive on Sagebrush Flat the second week of May. No mortalities were observed in any of the enclosures.

WILDLIFE AREAS

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

Weather Conditions: Mostly scattered clouds and showers throughout the week. Highs in the 50's lows in the 30's and 40's

Weekender Opportunities: Turkey season is underway and a few birds are being taken in the lower valley.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Riparian Restoration Project Tour: On Thursday, Tom McCoy, Ken Bevis, Lynda Hofmann and Gina McCoy gave a salmon habitat restoration site tour to Amy Windrope, Dan Rawding, Tim Quinn and Eric. The tour included a brief on administrative processes currently in place as well as issues that need to be addressed. We looked at two sites where projects are currently underway, Habermel and Obanion, as well as a site for a future project. We believe that this was a very helpful exercise to have direct, on-site communication between staff in Olympia and field personnel.

Restitution: Methow staff received a letter from the Kittitas County Prosecutors Office detailing the criminal charges filed against two of the individuals convicted for the theft(s) at the Methow HQ last summer and fall. In addition to a 43-month prison term, one of the individuals was also fined \$31,028.08 in restitution payable to WDFW!!! We're not holding our breath till the money is paid but it's a good start.

Disobedient creeks: Just like last year, a portion of Pearygin and Bear Creeks have avulsed out of their channels and are causing problems downstream. Pearygin Creek is cutting through the Lloyd Ranch parking lot (*picture directly below*) and out across the fields. If we can't get a measure of control over the flow it will eventually cut a new channel across the former Pearygin Creek flood plain. Similarly, Bear Creek is flowing around the USFS Road 100 at the Bear Creek Campground and working its way through Pearygin State Park. The same thing happened last year and caused considerable damage in the park. Methow staff are currently weighing the options given the current administrative and financial constraints.





Bear Creek headed toward Pearygin State Park.

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 Thursday with 0.25 inches at the office.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Grouse Counts: Biologist Ann Winters conducted sharp-tailed grouse lek counts Wednesday morning. Joining her were two job-shadow students from Pateros High School who have expressed an interest in a career in wildlife resource management. They visited two leks and observed 13 birds. Afterwards they searched the West Foster Creek unit for lek sites. Although none were found, one of the students found what proved to be a predated sage grouse nest. Ann found the students to be very enthusiastic, and after nearly 8 hours in the field and 5 miles of hiking they told her it was the best job-shadow experience they'd ever had.

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

Weather Conditions: A series of minor lows swept through the Columbia Basin this week, lowering high temperatures from near 70 to the high 50's, lows in the low to mid 40's and steady winds to 18 mph, with gusts daily in the mid 20's mph.

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

Stan Coffin Lake: Stan Coffin Lake in the Quincy Lakes Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area lies at the head of the Columbia River Wasteway, an evacuation route in case the Quincy Columbia Basin Irrigation District (QCBID) needs to reroute water from the West Canal in an

emergency. Over the winter, the QCBID upgraded the gate in the West Canal that feeds the Wasteway, and need to test the gate to ensure proper operation. If all goes well, the amount of water released will be minimal, but should the gate stick open, a substantial amount of water may be released, potentially causing damage to the water control structure or access road across the outlet of Stan Coffin Lake. In order to prepare for the test, Wildlife Area and Access Maintenance staff met at the water control structure to clean out the culverts and check the efficacy of the overflow. The culverts had substantial blockage, and over the course of the week were cleared and monitored for further blockage. Wildlife Area staff coordinated with QCBID and scheduled the gate test for May 10.

Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Complex - Dale Swedberg / Justin Haug

Weather Conditions: For the week, daytime temperatures ranged from 49 to 78. Nighttime temperatures ranged from 33 to 48. Precipitation - .49 inches. Patches of snow can still be seen at higher elevations on north slopes. Most of the week was overcast with two days of fairly clear skies. Average winds ranged from .7 to 2.5 mph with gusts ranging from 11 to 20 mph.

Weekender Opportunities: Prescribed burn operations. Scenery and Neo-tropic migrant song birds Moose have been spotted in numerous locations through the valley bottom recently (see pictures). The number of bird species continues to increase on the wildlife area: different warbler species, hummingbirds and waterfowl species (see pictures).



Rufous hummingbird (J Haug photo)



Yellow-rumped warbler (J Haug photo)



Fish Lake view east (J Haug photo)



Sinlahekin Valley View North (J Haug photo)

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

Chiliwist Watering Point Renovation: Assistant manager Haug met with Conservation District employee Terri Williams to discuss water improvements on the Chiliwist and Carter Mountain Wildlife Areas. These improvements are part of the Washington State Conservation Commission – Cost Sharing Program in which livestock watering points are improved due to degradation over time or improper initial developments. Confirmation should be sent out next week whether or not these 4 developments will be funded this round.

ATV Use on Sinlahekin: Assistant manager Haug met with representatives of the Okanogan County ATV Club at Fish Lake to discuss potential projects involving “better” access to facilities in the valley. The group requested an ATV-specific parking area near the Fish Lake within the campground rather than parking on Sinlahekin Road and using the area. He relayed to the group WDFW concerns with irresponsible ATV-users outside of the group, future maintenance of this site and the potential for site damage. He also expressed the need to go through a set of procedures if we decide to move forward. They relayed their need for more of a dialog with WDFW to initiate a working relationship in the future. Both will work on attending respective meetings in the future and work on issues important for both parties.

Chelan Wildlife Area Complex - Ron Fox

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

Beebe Springs Tour: Chelan Manager, Ron Fox, led a tour of Beebe Springs Natural for the Planning Association of Washington Conference held in Chelan this week. The group was interested in seeing an example of shoreline restoration and recreation development. They also were treated to a display of steelhead spawning in Beebe Creek.



Planning Association of Washington tour of Beebe Springs Natural Area

PRIVATE LANDS - John Cotton / Eric Braaten / JoAnn Wisniewski

Weather Conditions: Highs for the week were in the mid sixties which were below the historical average of about 70F. The lows were slightly above the historical average of 40F.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Douglas County Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse Lek Counts: Private Lands Biologist Braaten continues to spend early mornings counting grouse. Private Lands Biologist Braaten also collected feathers from lek sites for DNA testing.

Sharp-tailed grouse feathers



State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE): Biologist Wisniewski surveyed a SAFE field where the landowners reported seeing ground squirrels while they were mowing. Unfortunately there were neither detections nor any evidence of their presence. Appropriate habitat did not appear to be plentiful in the area. Biologist Wisniewski and Private Lands Manager Cotton began checking on progress of SAFE fields in various stages of the restoration process. Biologist Wisniewski provided District Biologist Volsen with preliminary data to begin planning songbird monitoring for the next round of SAFE fields.

Mule Deer Winter Range Habitat Restoration: Private Lands Biologist Braaten continued planting antelope bitterbrush funded by Mule Deer Foundation. Private Lands Biologist Braaten also looked at 3-year-old sites that he seeded with Antelope Bitterbrush after the Smith Lake Fire. Pleasant results showed plants growing well and being browsed by mule deer in many of the seeded sites.



REGION 3

Oak Creek Wildlife Area ---Manager Ross Huffman

Gate Opening – Oak Creek: Manager Huffman and Assistant Manager Berry, with help from volunteers from the Wildlife Education Corp and the Eyes In The Woods, coordinated the opening of gates and the end of the closure at 6:00 a.m. on May 1st. The whole event went pretty smooth overall and was well attended. About 300 people came through the HQ gate in the initial wave. A total of 89 vehicles (ATV's and pickups) drove through the main gate and 45 people entered on foot or horseback. Interest is really building with a lot of people from out of state.



Oak Creek Headquarters just before the “shed antler opener” on May 1st

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Peregrine Falcon Surveys: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn completed a survey of a peregrine falcon site in coastal Skagit County. The absence of falcons at historic aeries at this site suggests it is unoccupied. However, a single peregrine falcon was observed stooping on one of several bald eagles that were observed during the survey in the vicinity of the site. While this was potentially a falcon from a neighboring site or non-breeding individual, an additional survey later in the season is now warranted. This is one of five designated sites in District 14 being surveyed as part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 3-year peregrine falcon de-listing surveys.



WDFW District 14 Wildlife Biologist Paul DeBruyn deploys for a peregrine falcon survey along the Skagit County coastline.

Common Loon Platform Installation and Monitoring: Biologist Anderson and Access Operations Supervisor Hacker repaired and launched a loon platform at Klaus Lake. Later in the week, Anderson spent time examining some sites for loon use status. A male and female pair was observed on Calligan Lake, displaying some pair bonding behavior. Mud and Black Lake were also checked – no loons. However, this weekend, WDFW Carnivore Scientist Kertson observed one loon at Black, while fishing on his day off.



Loon platform repair at Klaus Lake

Inland Waterfowl Breeding Surveys: Biologist DeBruyn joined forces with Waterfowl Specialist Evenson and District 12 Assistant Biologist Cyra to conduct the inland waterfowl breeding surveys in Skagit and Whatcom Counties. Overall density and species diversity were on par with previous years. This annual survey is a helicopter transect survey and provides a population estimate of local breeding waterfowl species.

Oregon Spotted Frog Surveys: Biologist Bohannon conducted a final visit to a site occupied by Oregon Spotted Frogs in Whatcom County, compiled survey data from this past field season, and coordinated a field tour with representatives from WDFW, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Natural Resource Conservation Service to various sites where Oregon Spotted Frogs were documented over the past two field seasons. This will conclude this two-year project, which was primarily funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Island Marble Butterfly: District 13 staff joined Olympia staff on San Juan and Lopez Islands to learn about Island Marble Butterfly concerns. Staff met with landowners on Lopez Island who are hoping to attract and maintain butterflies on their property. They also discussed plans at San Juan National Park for butterfly survey and monitoring work with the Park's natural resource coordinator.

Peregrine Falcon Deception Climbing Wall Nest: Biologist Anderson met with U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Biologists and State Parks Law Enforcement Officers to provide information on Peregrine use of the Deception Wall. All property owners (USFS owns the wall, State Parks owns the Iron Horse Trail Park – accessing the wall) now know where the nest is and will be monitoring the site to enforce closure and follow nest success. Anderson also passed site and closure information along to internal Enforcement staff. The WA Climbers Coalition has very

proactively worked with all parties, as well as posted a formal announcement of the closure at their website: <http://www.washingtonclimbers.org/Current/DecClose.htm>

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Agriculture Program: Manager Belinda Rotton has been coordinating with WDFW staff, volunteers and the Island Transporter regarding the transport of equipment to the Island Unit. The equipment is scheduled to be moved on the high tide of May 7, soil prep and planting will occur soon thereafter. Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Habitat Tec Cosgrove have prepared and staged equipment for transport to the Island Unit. Logs and floating debris have been marked in the channel of Freshwater Slough to assist with the ferry operation on the 7th.

Waterwheel Creek and Cherry Valley Fish Passage Project: Manager Paulson had the first of three pre-construction meetings with Wild Fish Conservancy Engineers and WDFW Capitol & Asset Management Program construction crew. With two different projects starting the first week in July, coordination and time management is important when the projects need to be finished by October 1, 2012.

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

Wildlife Management

North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt: Biologist Roozen and technician Otto continued work on public access for spring bear hunt permit holders. Otto toured the bear unit, clearing limbs and rocks from roads, and documented snow line, wildlife, and vehicles. Roozen met with the last permit holder and briefed him on expectations and rules regarding access to the hunt unit, and issued his key and vehicle pass.



This recently peeled Douglas fir is an example of the damage black bears can do to young conifer plantations.

Private Lands/Wildlife Access

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 and/or managers. Roozen and Otto made site visits to top locations.



One of the potential new pheasant release sites in Skagit County.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Biologist Roozen and technician Otto began work on waterfowl food plots at Bay View. Roozen spoke with growers and managers and discussed crop selection. Otto continued drainage where necessary in the plots. Roozen and Otto also visited several potential Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program sites. With continued rainfall, many fields showed significant pooling and thus information as it relates to their potential for program.

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

Wildlife Management

Living with Wildlife – Frogs Website Update: Biologist Anderson worked with Peggy Ushakoff regarding changes to the bullfrog Management and Legalities section of the Living with Wildlife – Frogs website. Language updates included physical euthanasia techniques, as well as legal means of harvest, and Prohibited Aquatic Species status.

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/frogs.html>

Wildlife Areas

Wiley Slough Adaptive Management: Manager Rotton, Habitat Biologist Brian Williams and Habitat Engineer Bob Barnard met with Dike District #22 Commissioners Stan Nelson and John Wolden to discuss pump station requirements to include capacity and location options. In addition, other items discussed included the retention pond berm development, the proposal for dredging portions of Wiley Slough, and the status of the tide gate repair alternative.

Nooksack Unit: Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo met onsite with Dept of Ecology personnel to find a location for a PH Monitor on the Nooksack River. A couple of weeks ago there was a fish kill on the river. When the PH was checked it came up as very low – at 4.0. They will install a PH Monitoring unit to check the PH for the next 6 weeks.

Crescent Lake Parking Area Cleanup: Manager Paulson talked with the Crescent Lake Unit sharecropper about cleaning up old flood debris around the south parking lot of the Crescent

Lake Unit. Blackberry and reed canary grass grew within the debris and has formed a large mass of trash. This mass facilitated trash dumping and vandalism. With the mass removed, all of the parking lot can be seen from the road.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Wildlife Areas

Upper Samish Watershed: Manager Rotton joined WDFW Biologist Jennifer Bohannon on a field survey of Oregon Spotted Frog breeding site. Spotted frog egg masses were no longer present but tadpoles were observed in the area. Weather conditions were not ideal for the capture or observation of adults.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Oregon Spotted Frog Survey: Biologist Anderson conducted a site visit to the Trout Lake Creek spotted frog site as a follow-up to an earlier egg mass survey. Two new additional sites were located and mapped. This year's survey at this site represents an increase from previous year's results. A follow-up at the USFS wetland failed to find any egg masses at this site for 2012. Habitat conditions were ideal at this site as beaver have returned to this site and have improved spotted frog breeding habitat. One additional survey will be conducted next week at this site.



Spotted frog breeding habitat.

Dark Goose Nest Re-check: Biologists Miller and Bergh, along with volunteers Howell and Jarvis, returned to Miller Sands Island to make a second check of dark Canada goose nests. Incubation stage was determined a second time to allow for a better approximation of the timing of the molt during which banding will occur. A trail was also cut inland through the brush to aid in travel during banding.

Streaked Horned Lark Survey: Biologists Miller, Stephens, and Bergh met with Hannah Anderson of the Center for Natural Lands Management to review the protocol for Streaked Horned Lark surveys on the lower Columbia River this spring and summer. We toured several islands to perform lark identification and to assess habitat for larks, especially on islands with newly deposited dredge spoil materials. Despite the wet and windy weather we spotted and heard several larks.



Streaked Horned Lark survey

Western Pond Turtle Management: Mark Re-Capture population estimate: Biologists Holman, George, Bergh, and Stephens continued trapping for western pond turtles at the Sondino site. Following the initial 9 days of trapping, a total of 78 captures have been recorded. Additionally, 4 wild western pond turtles approximately 4 years of age have been encountered, marked, and released as they exceed the size where bull frog predation is expected. Finally, 6 wild hatchling western pond turtles have been captured as well. Trapping is scheduled to continue until May 18th. This effort is being conducted to generate a mark re-capture population estimate for western pond turtles at the State's most significant site and provide animals for the head-start program.



Western Pond turtle ready to be released.

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area:

Klickitat Wildlife Area Fuels Reduction Project: This project progressed well, as the Washington Conservation Corps continued to apply their skills and energy to thinning and limbing trees along Anderson Road on the Soda Springs Unit. By the end of the week, the crew had moved on to Old Headquarters Road, where they began working in areas having the densest patches of forest. The plan for next week includes more thinning work along Old Headquarters Road, and chipping of the slash generated by the project.



WCC crew dragging slash.

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

Wildlife Areas

Cowlitz Wildlife Area

Swofford Pond Grant Application: Wildlife Area staff submitted a Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant to improve recreational access at Swofford Pond. If approved, the project would provide for a new floating fishing dock, ADA hardened walking surfaces, and an improved parking lot with toilet facilities.

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

Wildlife Areas

Cowlitz Wildlife Area:

Citizen Advisory Group Meeting: One of 2 annual meetings with the Cowlitz Wildlife Area Citizen Advisory Group was held at the Morton office. WDFW staff met with group members

to discuss the 2011 performance measures and accomplishments, new wildlife area concerns, summary of the annual report to FERC, management plan updates, and an upcoming grant application for Swofford Pond. There was also a short presentation and discussion on current hunting access and habitat improvement programs by regional Private Lands Biologist Stephens.

Klickitat Wildlife Area:

Road Maintenance and Improvement: The WDFW road maintenance crew graded the high priority roads on the Wildlife Area, and added rock to several trouble spots. Weather caused some problems, with rain saturating newly graded road surfaces before they had time to settle. The crew also added more boulders in places along the Sheep Canyon Road, where people have been driving off road. The ruts in the soil visible in the foreground of this picture were made the weekend before the rocks were placed, demonstrating the need for a barrier in addition to the sign saying "No Offroad Vehicles."



Boulders to prevent off road vehicle use.

A new cattle guard was put in the access road to the Goldendale Hatchery Unit, to replace the old one that was badly battered and not on grade. The new cattle guard is to be part of an improved fencing effort around the perimeter of the unit, much of which needs rebuilding.



Cattle guard replacement

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Wildlife Management

Boat Safety: Biologists Bergh and Stephens began learning to use WDFW water craft this week in preparation for attending Boat Safety training in June. Boat launching and retrieval, trailer movements, safety practices, and on water operation were conducted as a part of the Columbia River work on Larks and geese this week. Additional time for each employee will be scheduled to spend with Biologist Miller to become familiar with vessels and make the training more effective.

REGION 6

Wildlife Program – Region 6 Weekly Report 5-7-12 - HIGHLIGHTS

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Snowy Plovers

Nesting/Productivity: Biologists Sundstrom and Peterson have been working with United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Biologist Richie on snowy plover surveys on Midway and Leadbetter beaches. Despite pouring rain and gusty winds, at least 10 snowy plovers were observed at Midway in mid-April. A scrape that was discovered earlier is no longer being tended to and is mostly obscured with windblown sand.

Biologist Peterson assisted USFWS Biologist Richie with patrolling the signed nesting areas at Leadbetter during the razor clam dig that occurred mid-April. Although Biologists observed some “clam diggers” entering the closed area, overall compliance was quite good.

In late April, Biologist Peterson continued plover surveys at Leadbetter and observed significant amounts of breeding activity, including active nests with eggs. No plover nests had been discovered at Midway, but new scrapes were being seen.

Nine (9) snowy plovers (4 pair, 1 lone male) were observed on May 2, foraging and bathing at the surf line of Midway Beach. One (1) male was banded, while all 4 females were banded (one banded female was a ‘first observation’ at Midway this season) – an indication there is movement of breeding birds from Oregon into Washington. No new nesting was reported at Leadbetter.

Closure Signs: Vehicle and human intrusions into the posted nesting habitat area of Midway continues to be a problem and occurred during a 3-day clam dig, as evident by the tracks and foot prints inside the closed area. To help increase compliance by beach goers, WDFW plans to mark critical nesting areas with new signs that are designed to be easier to interpret. Minimizing human disturbance in critical nesting areas continues to be a challenge and Biologists Sundstrom and Peterson spent significant amounts of time constructing and installing signs to minimize human disturbance in these areas.



Taylor's Checkerspot Captive Rearing and Reintroduction: Biologists Linders, Randolph, Walker and Johnson continued surveys. Conditions were suitable although they remained cool and cloudy. The first butterfly was observed at Pacemaker (new reintroduction site on JBLM) in late April. Surveys at Glacial Heritage and Scatter Creek did not detect checkerspot butterflies at that time, but the warmer weather forecast for the coming week and through next week should change that.

Adults began to emerge at the Oregon Zoo, with many more anticipated soon. The Oregon Zoo and Mission Creek have been working together very closely to insure data collection and methods are well coordinated between facilities. This will insure data can be reported and analyzed across facilities in a consistent manner.

Brant Survey: Bio Ament assisted USFWS staff with another brant survey on April 30. USFWS Bio Sue Thomas surveyed the Dungeness Wildlife Refuge and Bio Ament surveyed at specific survey locations from 3 Crabs to WA Harbor. A total of 3,782 brant were counted during the survey (1,610 in DWR and 2,172 from 3 Crabs – WA Harbor). Landowners along the survey route reported seeing high numbers of brant this season. Bio Ament made a stop at 3 Crabs (following the official survey count) and observed approximately 2,500 brant along the shoreline.



Black Brant – Strait of Juan de Fuca

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

Private Lands/Access

Illegal Hunting Camp: Bio Harris and Master Hunter Howard (Shane) Briel, Master Hunter Applicant Shawn Goldsby, and Eyes In The Woods member Gary Easton started cleanup of the illegal hunting camp found on private land in the Polson – Hoppers cooperative road closure. On the way to the site they cleared trees and brush from the road to aid in getting a larger vehicle in to remove trash. The weather was typical O.P. weather with occasional pelting rain. The clean up did not start out on a good note when one of the first buckets moved from the cabin was found

to contain a very deceased skunk. They stuck it out and hauled on the trash with the exception of the wood stove to the road. The next effort will be to haul all the garbage to the dump. Additionally another camp was found. The cabin had fallen down but, a refrigerator and misc. trash remain. They will try and get these when they haul the trash out.



ORV Trail Mapping: Bio Harris, Eyes In The Woods volunteers and a Master Hunter continued to map unauthorized ORV trails for a private landowner in the North River GMU. The volunteers are getting the hang of mapping and covered several thousand acres this time. The timber company, WDFW and the volunteers all appreciate this opportunity for the public to help landowners maintain public access.



Volunteers helping map unauthorized ORV trails on private timberlands in Grays Harbor County.

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

Wildlife Areas

Biologist Tirhi hosted a second cleanup event at the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area, Lakewood for Boy Scouts of America eagle award applicant Brandon Coffman (Troop 474, Kent). Brandon led a group of 25 scouts and parents in pulling invasive blackberry and Scotch broom that surround three ponds used for the recovery of state endangered Western Pond Turtle. Brandon and his scouts also built five walking platforms used by staff and volunteers to monitor the turtles throughout the nesting season. Brandon and Troop 474 are commended for doing such an excellent job in helping WDFW manage this important Wildlife Area during times of budget and staffing cuts.



Piled Scotch Broom cut by Boy Scouts at South Puget Sound Wildlife Area.



Blackberry patch cleared by Boy Scouts at South Puget Sound Wildlife Area.



Walking platforms built by Boy Scouts at South Puget Sound Wildlife Area.