

# Wildlife Program

Week of August 6-12, 2012

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Mazama Pocket Gopher Survey Access Contacts** – There were approximately 200 responses during the first week following mailing of letters to landowners to request access to private lands for pocket gopher survey. These responses represent about 16 percent of all mailings. About 15 percent of responses to date have indicated willingness to allow Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) access to one or several land parcels. There can be several prospective sample plots per parcel, thus this is a promising start to efforts to arrange access. Access to larger land holdings and public lands is being arranged through separate in-person contacts by Region 6 staff.

## **WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Rehabilitation**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is evaluating bear rehabilitation and is consulting other states for feedback. Answering the survey questions and corresponding with Wisconsin DNR Wildlife Health Biologist, Tricia Thompson confirmed that Washington needs enhanced bear (and cougar) rehabilitation guidelines. Washington bear rehabilitators are experiencing a larger volume of bears admitted into their facilities. In 2010 alone, PAWS Wildlife admitted 12 bears, mostly cubs, 2011 they admitted six, and this year as of July 8 they already admitted five. Thompson is reviewing current large carnivore rehabilitation protocol, along with current and past Wildlife Rehabilitator Annual Reports for bear intakes and release.



*Black bear release. PAWS Wildlife photo.*

**Falconry:** The Eyas/Wild Take Peregrine permits are valid until August 31, 2012, the last day that a wild fledgling may be taken. Tricia Thompson was able to offer a permit to the next falconer from the randomly selected list because a permitted falconer relinquished their permit. We have only had four out of the permitted 10 take wild peregrines this year.

**Scientific Collection Permits:** Thompson finalized the new Scientific/Education Collection Permit Application along with its instructions and will be sending out requests to Regional Wildlife Program Managers and District Biologists for comments on the new review process.

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

**WildWatchcams** -- Chuck Gibilisco, Watchable Wildlife Section, responded to numerous emails from WildWatchcam viewers and submitted cam updates for the month of August as many species are leaving their nest, den, or holding pool which are the prime focus of many of the fish and wildlife cams. The peak viewing season has passed and attention now turns toward repairs, enhancements, and resetting of many of the camera systems in anticipation of next year's viewing seasons. See the August 2012 Update below.

**Whale Trail** -- Chuck Gibilisco met with the Executive Director of the Whale Trail to coordinate the production of a new series of Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) funded Whale Trail interpretive panels for various facilities and Washington community sites where the public can participate in land-based whale watching or learn about whales, marine mammals, and marine ecosystems. More information is available at <http://thewhaletrail.org/>

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

**Citizen Science** -- Gibilisco continued to work with other WDFW staff on the Ecological Monitoring Assessments being conducted on select wildlife areas. Level II ecological monitoring utilizes volunteer citizen scientists. The Level II training and workshop was held at the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area in July. Project coordination and communications continues with the volunteers as the first data is collected and submitted this summer. A second Environment Information Management (EIM) workshop is being planned for the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area on September 29.

**Wildwatchcam Updates August 2012**

**Eagles - Eaglecam temporarily off-line:** The Lake Washington eaglecam was damaged during recent severe storms and plans are underway to install an improved camera at the nest tree, for what we hope is a successful re-nesting in winter/spring of 2012-2013. Two adult eagles have been observed together in and around the nest tree indicating no young birds or breeding for this pair. The new camera system should be on-line during September 2012. Public contributions help make improvements to the Wildwatchcams for public wildlife viewing and scientific observations.

**Hérons:** The great blue herons completed nesting for 2012 and despite repeated attacks by neighboring bald eagles, have successfully raised numerous fledged herons that are now free flying and learning what it takes to be a wild great blue heron. We will provide a heronry status update later this summer as the Kiwanis heronry has been expanding in total number of nests over the last several years.

**Osprey:** Two of the three young ospreys continue to use the nest as they maintain their fledging process. Soon the osprey will be free of the nest and stay in the area briefly before flying south to Mexico or Central America for the winter season.

**Burrowing Owls:** Burrowing owl young are still active at the burrow entrance and one or both adults may spend the winter in Washington while the young may disperse to unknown areas. A new camera system is planned for this site and will extend viewing time into the night hours, when burrowing owl activity increases. The solar array and battery bank will be enhanced as this system is off the power grid. Public contributions are helping to make these improvements possible.

**Barn Owl:** A genuine mystery surrounds the barn owl nest box and owl activities. The female laid eggs, attempted to nest, and then proceeded to abandon the nest box. The immediate area provided habitat for numerous barn owls, however the community is also undergoing rapid development in recent years. We will continue to monitor the nest box and camera and hope for the return of the barn owls. Barn owls have been known to nest throughout most of the year.

**Seals:** The newly installed sealcam continues to provide observations and data on several hundred harbor seals on a South Sound seal haul out for the public, for scientists, and for students working together from Cascadia Research, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Marine Fisheries, Makah Fisheries and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. This system has been funded by an ALEA grant and is another solar powered, remotely controlled wildlife monitoring camera.

**Swifts:** Numbers of Vaux's swifts should be building throughout most of August and into September. The outside chimneycam is temporarily off-line and we are pursuing repairs. Thousands of Vaux's swifts roost in the large chimney for several weeks prior to their fall migration. Don't miss the Monroe Swift Night Out scheduled on September 15 from 5 pm to dusk for a fun and education packed evening with spectacular views of returning swifts. More information is available at <http://monroeswifts.org/see-the-swifts/announce2012/>

**Salmon:** Soon the rainbow trout will be collected from the holding pool and released in Washington waters. The poolcam will be off line for a few weeks until returning salmon are occupying the pool in late August or September. Don't miss the Issaquah Salmon Days, October 6 and 7. More information is available at <http://www.salmondays.org/>.

**Bats:** Big brown bats are present and active through the summer months and seem to scatter across the rafters and metal roofing of the bat roost during the day. Early morning and cooler overcast days provide the best times to view large numbers of big brown bats and their young of the year.

## **REGION 1**

### **Wolf Management**

**District 1:** Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd sent general Smackout pack information from satellite radio collars to range rider Leisa Hill and WDFW staff via text message every day of the week. Biologist Shepherd discussed wolf locations and pack detection with contractor Jeff Flood. Biologist Shepherd sent a list of Depredation Kit contents to Biologist Wik in the Blue Mountains. Biologist Shepherd, Sergeant Charron, and Officer Weatherman responded to a reported cattle depredation in the Wedge on Diamond M Ranch property. A necropsy was conducted on a dead calf. No indications of cause of death were found and the cause of death was determined to be “Not Depredation.” Biologist Shepherd discussed the depredation in a conference call with WDFW staff and provided information to Olympia staff to publicly disclose following the wolf removal. Biologist Shepherd and Wolf Technician Baker planned a flight to detect the last member of the Diamond Pack with a radio-collar and find missing deer radio-collared by Biologist Myers. Wolf Technician Baker assisted with many of the above duties as well as placed remote cameras in Ferry County.



*WDFW Sergeant Charron, Stevens County Sheriff Department Sergeant Harboldt, and McIrven family members look on as WDFW Officer Weatherman skins a dead calf to determine cause of death.*

**District 3:** District Biologist Wik was asked to assist officer Vance investigate a three-month-old foal killed by a predator near Asotin Creek on Sunday. Some people were suspecting a wolf

may have been involved, although there was no evidence that would indicate that. A follow up conference call will occur on Monday to make the final determination.

Both district bios checked trail cameras and placed new cameras in areas with recent wolf sightings. No new images of wolves were taken and no fresh sign of wolves was found along any of the trails or roads surveyed. We did detect an unusual howl at about 10 pm, but could not determine the origin and found no wolf sign in the general direction of the howling. Cameras are taking a significant number of images of a variety of wildlife, including elk, deer, cougars, bears, coyotes and coyote pups.

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Northeast Washington Summer Deer Classification Surveys:** District biological staff initiated summer deer classification counts this week on survey transects located within Game Management Units 101, 105, 108, 111, 113, 117, and 121.



***Two white-tail bucks observed on one transect this week (left) along with the start point of this transect (right).***

**Verizon Cell Tower Modifications:** Biologist Ferguson met with Verizon staff who requested a visit to a cell tower in Cheney to determine a status of a nesting bird on this tower which is scheduled for modifications. Ferguson visited and found an osprey nest occupied with two five-week old nestlings, and recommended to Verizon that they delay scheduled operations for one month.



*Verizon Cell Tower scheduled for maintenance and modifications with active osprey nest.*

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Tractor Work at SCWA** – Natural Resource Technician 2 (NRT2) Jerry “Chris” Christensen continued with tractor work this week, clearing roads of storm debris and cleaning out ditch lines. The ditch line cleaning shown in the photos is a project Christensen has wanted to do for many years. Water seeps from the bank above throughout the spring and has caused many road maintenance issues in the past.



*Natural Resource Technician Jerry Christensen digging the ditch.*

**Private Lands/Access**

**VPA Access and Habitat Initiative:** *Garfield/Asotin County.* Biologist Earl continued his efforts this week to expand the Volunteer Public Access (VPA) program. Earl has added new access totaling 9,281.94 acres. Biologist Earl is still finalizing the acreages for the habitat improvements and there will be over 400 acres of riparian buffer and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) enhancements that go with the VPA contracts. Last week Biologist Davis met with a landowner with private lands in both Walla Walla and Columbia counties. The landowner agreed to enroll 560 ac of private lands in the VPA-Feel Free to Hunt (FFTH) program. *Columbia/Walla Walla County.* This week, Davis enrolled an additional 3,000 ac in Walla Walla County in the VPA program. In addition, Davis spoke with a landowner in Columbia County interested in enrolling 1,847 ac under the VPA access initiative. Two additional landowners that adjoin this property are also interested in switching from Hunting by Written Permission (HBWP) to FFTH; these cooperative agreements would result in over 9,800 ac (9,464 ac and

about 430 ac, respectively) of public hunting access under FFTH. To date, Davis has enrolled eight contracts into the VPA program totaling over 7,389 acres of public hunting access.

**Feel Free to Fish:** Biologist Davis enrolled an additional half mile of the Walla Walla River into the Feel Free to Fish (FFTF) program adding to the four miles previously enrolled. To date, Davis has enrolled six contracts into the FFTF program totaling over four miles of fishing access on the Walla River and approximately three miles on the Touchet River.



*Overlooking part of the half mile of Walla Walla River to be enrolled in the VPA-FFTF program (left) and a portion of the adjoining four miles of river frontage, which includes approximately 1,350 ac of FFTH (right).*

## **REGION 2**

### **Wolves**

**District 6 - Wolf Management:** At the request of Enforcement Officer Day, Biologist Heinlen responded to a report from a private landowner of a possible wolf scat full of dark hair from an area that had a probable wolf depredation earlier this spring. Upon investigation the scat turned out to contain rodent hair and bones (probably red squirrel) and appeared to be too small for wolf. In any case biologist Heinlen collected the scat for possible DNA analysis.

**District 7 - Wolves:** Wolf Technician Spence has been working in Region 3 in the Tieton area and in Okanogan County doing follow up on reported wolf sightings. He will be working for most of this week in the Okanogan and then transition back to Region 3 to place more cameras at likely spots. Between follow up on recent reports, Technician Spence has been systematically searching high probability areas for sign of wolves. To date we have recorded roughly 600

camera nights of monitoring and at various sites in Regions 2 and 3. While wolves don't always make their presence known, other species leave their calling cards:

"I did find the tracks of quite a few moose, several bears (including one that urinated as it walked down the road), lots of coyotes, a snake track, raven tracks, turkeys, two cougars traveling together, loads of deer, and of course, dogs, cows and horses, as well as mice, squirrels, chipmunks, several bobcats (as well as a live sighting), snowshoe hare, and misc songbirds," according to Spence.

### **District Biologists**

**District 6:** Okanogan District - Scott Fitkin / Jeff Heinlen

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**North Cascades Wolverine Research Project:** Biologist Fitkin and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) staff returned to Washington's first verified wolverine natal den to document the remote, high-elevation site in snow-free conditions. The den turned out to be located in the interstitial space created between two large boulders, each several meters across. We took site measurements and photos and collected several scats which will hopefully yield a genetic profile of the kit(s). Sub-alpine and alpine habitats that hold late season snow and maintain cold temperatures are critical for wolverine denning and food caching behavior. Our local newspaper recently highlighted the latter in a recent comic strip.



***Wolverine natal den site (left), along with a close-up of the site (right).***

**Okanogan Lynx Research Project:** Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen attended a meeting with other WDFW and USFS staff to discuss potential projects for Karen Hodges (University of British Columbia Okanogan) and new master's student Carmen Vanbianchi. The discussion focused on the idea of exploring lynx dispersal corridors and modeling lynx habitat using the wealth of GPS data collected over the last several years. Vanbianchi plans to start this fall.



*Methow watershed lynx.*

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

**Weather Conditions:** The weather has been consistently hot and dry throughout the week, with temperatures reaching the high 90s on several days. The wet spring allowed good productivity of grasses; therefore the fuels load going into summer is relatively high. Fire management professionals from multiple agencies have commented that an increased risk of wildfire is present and will continue through September.

***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Bighorn sheep/ Hwy 97A Wildlife Fence:** A local resident submitted several pictures of bighorn sheep from the Swakane herd crossing back over the Hwy. 97A fence using a Department of Transportation (DOT) installed jump out. While it is encouraging to see the sheep utilizing this feature and to know the design is working, it is also troubling that the sheep continue to cross the fence onto the highway side. At this point we do not know how they are negotiating their way around, through, or over the fences, and they are doing so without much

public attention, as no motorists have reported sheep along the roadway. An even more troubling aspect is that they appear to have become comfortable moving across the fence and then using the jump out to return, so much so that they have brought newborn lambs along with them and the lambs are using the jump out as well (see images). In the past it was common for ewes, lambs and young rams to regularly cross the highway in order to gain access to riparian and ornamental vegetation along the river and at home sites east of Hwy. 97A. Our worries are that they are going return to their old habits of regularly crossing the roadway by incorporating the jump outs as their return route. The hope is we can locate where sheep are crossing and alter the fence to prevent future crossings.

According to the local resident that observed and photographed the crossing, the lamb watched the adults cross the fence using the jump out, and then it took the lamb another hour or so, following multiple attempts of trying to get through the fence at ground level, to find and successfully use the jump out. Lesson learned!



*A Swakane herd bighorn lamb crossing a jump out over the Highway 97A Wildlife Fence north of Wenatchee.*



*Adult bighorn ewes from the Swakane herd using the same jump out from earlier that day.*

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex** – Greg Fitzgerald / Brian Cole

**Weather Conditions:** Hot with highs near or above 100 degrees with calm winds. Fire danger is extremely high for the Columbia Basin.

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

**Frenchman Ponds Regulated Access Area:** Wildlife Area Manager Fitzgerald checked the soil moisture in the planted food plots in cell seven in the Frenchman Ponds Regulated Access Area. The millet is up and growing, with ample soil moisture and warm weather, the millet should make seed. Volunteer millet and Smartweed are already setting seed.

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

**Fencing:** Manager Fitzgerald met with Mitch Thompson of the US Bureau of Reclamation to plan the construction of a “buck and rail” fence for the Steamboat Rock peninsula on the Banks Lake Unit. Mitch has access to several four to six-inch poles from a thinning project near

Spokane, and will work with the local Job Corps crew to build the fencing. The Columbia Basin Wildlife Area will then hire the Department of Natural Resources prison crew to install the fencing around a WDFW managed parking area and stop unauthorized vehicle use beyond the parking area.

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

**Weather Conditions:** Seasonal temperatures for Okanogan summers with highs into the lower to mid 90's, with no precipitation.

***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Hunsinger Lake:** Staff measured depth and temperature at Hunsinger Lake on Pogue Mountain for possible fish plants later this fall. Area Fish Biologist Bob Jateff agrees the lake could support cutthroat and will provide 200 this fall.



***Hunsinger Lake on Pogue Mountain.***

**Spruce Budworm infestation:** Bryan assisted WDFW forester Doug Kuehn to Chesaw to inspect the severity of the Spruce Budworm infestation on that unit. The situation is bad and getting worse with most small Doug Fir trees completely defoliated. We are planning a thinning project this winter with most leave trees already marked. Bids for purchasing timber and harvesting the logs will go out this fall.



*Spruce Budworm infestation on the Chesaw unit.*

**Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Complex** - Dale Swedberg / Justin Haug

***GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.***

**Topic 1: Sinlahekin Prescribed Burn Planning and Module** – Dry Forests Restoration Specialist Ray Guse worked on planning and administration for prescribed fires on Sinlahekin and Sherman Creek wildlife areas. Ranking contractors who will assist us with preparing units for prescribed fires and actual implementation was completed and contracts will soon be executed. Progress toward finalizing MOU's with partner agencies is progressing. We have interviewed applicants for the Natural Resources Tech 2 position (Fire Team Leader) and we will interview candidates for the Natural Resources Worker 2 positions (Fire Team Members) this coming week.

**REGION 3**

***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Wildlife Management**

**Waterfowl Banding:** Biologists Bernatowicz, Sunnyside Assistant Manager Sak and Natural Resource Tech Medina banded 336 mallards in three days at the Sunnyside Wildlife Area. The

number of birds being caught is the highest ever seen in the district. Only two traps are being used due to lack of water in one of the wetlands due to beaver problems. Biologist Livingston, Access Manager Garcia (and Joey), as well as a crew moving beavers were called to help process the large number of birds. Last year was considered to be a pretty good year and it took 11 days and six traps to band 300 Mallards.



*Duck banding project on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area.*

### **Wildlife Areas**

On Friday evening, Oak Creek Manager Huffman received a call from DNR about a fire on Highway 12 at Windy Point. The fire was reportedly on WDFW, but was later determined to be on USFS. Manager Huffman coordinated with DNR and USFS fire personnel on access and how to get a good view of the fire. The fire had originated on Highway 12 and had jumped the Tieton River and was burning upslope through very steep and rocky terrain. Fire crews worked until dark on the lower portion of the fire and a helicopter worked on the upper portion as DOT reduced Highway 12 to one lane. During the night winds pushed the fire to the east and onto WDFW. Cliffs and rocky terrain kept the fire from reaching the ridge top. A type III command with about 70 people was on scene Saturday morning and was able to contain the fire to about 30 acres, with only about three acres on WDFW. Manager Huffman coordinated with command on access to the top of the ridge in case the fire spread and attended fire briefings on Saturday and Sunday morning. Fire crews are still mopping up hot spots. The cause of the fire is under investigation, but is likely human caused.



*Windy Point Fire on Saturday afternoon viewed from Windy Point Campground. The fire burned about 30 acres of grass, trees, and oak in steep rocky terrain.*

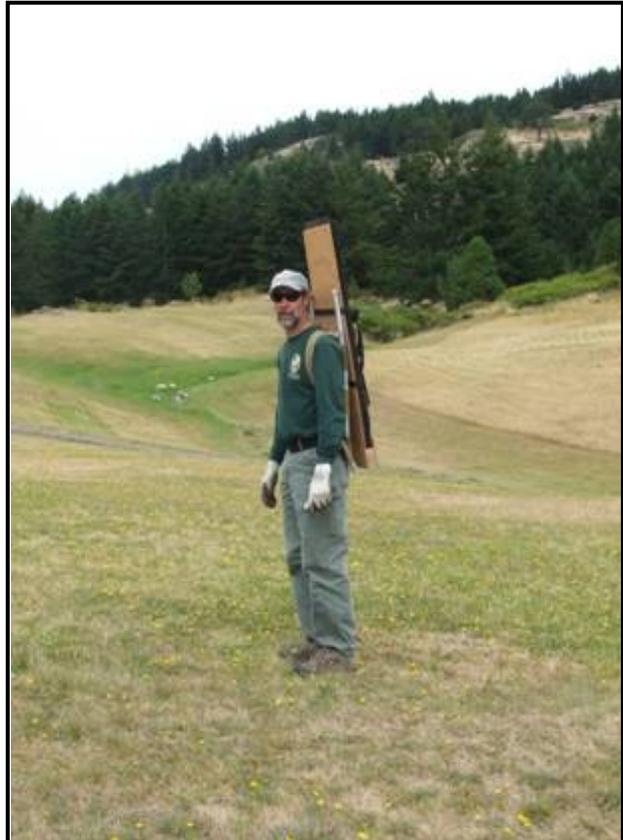
## **REGION 4**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**San Juan Islands Species of Greatest Conservation Need surveys:** District Biologist Milner and Assistant District Biologist Cyra spent three days on Orcas Island conducting surveys for species of greatest conservation need. In addition to concentrating on bats and small mammals, the team also put out cover boards on private property located on Turtleback Mountain to survey for sharp-tailed snakes. One specimen of this species was found in the vicinity in 2007, which is the only confirmed specimen in the San Juan Archipelago. The species has been confirmed on several of the Gulf Islands in British Columbia. WDFW staff also met with staff from the San Juan County Land Bank to view the area where the snake was found in 2007 and come to agreement on where to place additional cover boards on the Turtleback Preserve.

We were once again hosted by the SeaDoc Society, who provided a place to stay as well as talking to several landowners to obtain permission for us to survey their properties. And, once again, we are very grateful to Wildlife Biologist Greg Green who generously donated his bat echo location survey equipment so that we could record bats that were seen in several habitats on Orcas Island.



*Biologist Ruth Milner places shingles, which served as cover boards for sharp-tailed snake surveys on Turtleback Mountain (left). Biologist Cyra carries a load of shingles to the survey area for sharp-tailed snakes (right).*

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**North Cascades Elk Herd Radio Tracking:** Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn conducted radio telemetry searches for radio collared elk (bulls in particular) prior to the upcoming GMU 418 bull elk hunt. Approximately 65 elk in this population have functional radio collars that are used for annual helicopter surveys to develop population estimates. Danilson and DeBruyn were able to locate eight 11 radio collared bulls having covered about 75 percent of the summer time distribution area of this population. Additional telemetry searches will be conducted opportunistically in conjunction with other WDFW activities in the area.

**Elk Hunter Coordination Meeting:** Biologists Danilson and Roozen, along with Technician Otto finalized preparations for a coordination meeting with GMU 418 bull elk tag holders. This meeting, facilitated by WDFW, is a condition of an annual agreement between WDFW and Sierra-Pacific Industries, which provides access to elk hunters on Sierra-Pacific property in GMU 418. Private Lands' personnel, in particular, were busy in the weeks prior to the meeting preparing map packets, developing access agreements, and resolving road closure issues. The

meeting was held on Saturday August 11<sup>th</sup> and all but two of the 23 tag holders were present. Topics covered included biological information and harvest management strategies, access rules and requirements, WDFW personnel contact information, key issuance/return logistics, and desired biological information from successful hunters. Individual access agreements were signed by each hunter, who received a map packet and gate keys.

**Western Mallard Model Work:** Biologist DeBruyn set up three trapping sites to capture and band mallards to provide data on survival for population modeling work for western mallard populations. DeBruyn also investigated other sites and pursued landowner permission to trap ducks in other areas.

**Mount Baker and Darrington Area Mountain Goat Surveys and Data Analysis:** Biologist Danilson completed data entry, analysis and summary tasks for the Darrington Ranger District mountain goat surveys. Summary information was disseminated to project partners from other entities that assisted with the surveys.

**North Cascades Elk Herd Habitat Modeling:** Biologist Danilson met with Master's student from University of Washington to discuss the potential for developing a thesis project involving GPS collar data from 2008-2010 from elk in the North Cascades Elk Herd. Among the many topics discussed was the desire to develop a proposal that results in habitat modeling alternatives that tie into the objectives outlined in the draft herd plan Danilson is working on. Additionally, Danilson had a conference call with biologists from the US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station (PNRS) to evaluate the potential to utilize products from the western Washington and Oregon habitat models recently developed by PNRS staff. Danilson will continue to coordinate with the student as this research proposal this fall/winter.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**New Skagit County Pheasant Release Location:** Biologist Roozen worked to finalize agreements with landowners which will secure a new location for pheasant hunting in Skagit County. Agreements should be drafted and/or finalized within the next week, at which point, work will begin to prepare for the rapidly approaching youth and senior pheasant hunting weekends. Technician Otto treated weeds at the proposed parking area which will simplify leveling the lot and installing needed stalls and signage. Wildlife area and private lands staff will work together in the following month to develop both the parking and hunting areas.

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Technician Otto and Habitat Specialist Meis toured new food plots at private leased properties enrolled in the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program. Otto checked crop and weed growth, took GPS points of the acreage, and gave Meis insight on work done. Meanwhile, Biologist Roozen continued to contact potential partners throughout Region 4 for re-enrollment in this and the Snow Goose Quality Hunt Program. Roozen and Otto are working to develop and finalize the dozens of landowner agreements for the upcoming waterfowl hunting season. Both will work in the following weeks to draft and distribute agreements to partner landowners in the Region. Landowners on Whidbey Island and the San Juan Islands recently have reached out to WDFW inquiring about the Waterfowl Quality Hunt

Program. One or more of these may develop into private lands access opportunities, in particular, enrollment in the proposed reservation system being developed.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Samish River Unit:** Manager Rotton is coordinating with NRCS Biologist Kathy Kilcoyne on the next steps for the proposed wetland enhancement project for this site. Regional Wildlife Program Manager Link has been working out necessary contract and agreements. Field trip in the next few weeks is scheduled to talk about some small design feature modifications

**Island Unit:** Manager Belinda Rotton and Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) Greg Meis prepared maps of the Island Unit for a local vendor to review and provide an estimate for a ditch cleaning project on the site. Manager Rotton also provided map to Habitat Biologist (HB) Brian Williams to review for permitting purposes. HB Williams will be able to determine if any of the ditches are classified as streams or tidal channels and if consultation from the Services will be required for any portion of the project.

**Lake Terrell Bass Tournament:** A Bass Fishing Tournament was held at Lake Terrell on Saturday that was well attended.

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Sign Project:** Manager Paulson cleaned and painted the reader boards at the Cherry Valley and Stillwater Units. Manager Paulson also cut the grass and blackberries around the signs. Manager Paulson will update the reader boards with up to date maps.

**Cherry Valley Fish Passage Project:** Manager Paulson checked the new pedestrian bridges at the Cherry Valley Unit. The pedestrian bridges will be easier to see than the narrow planks that cross some of the ditches on the Cherry Valley Unit.

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

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Fir Island Farms:** Natural Resource Specialist Meis monitored crops types planted on the various field. Meis also reviewed papers from British Columbia that examine the effectiveness of various cover crops to with stand extensive goose grazing and nutritional value.

### ***GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.***

**Whatcom Wildlife Area:** Manager Link and Manager Kessler participated in a meeting in Ellensburg on improving our Citizens Advisory Groups used in the wildlife areas management planning process.

## **REGION 5**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Region 5 Deer Productivity Surveys:** Biologist Holman sent solicitations to approximately 30 individuals asking them to again record deer observations that they may have during the next six weeks. The annual productivity surveys are used to generate the annual fawn to doe ratio for inclusion in the Regional Sex Age Kill method of population estimation for deer in the Region. Interested parties who spend time in any "500" GMU as well as GMUs 388 and 382 and want to record deer should contact Biologist Holman. The survey period encompasses August 15 to September 30. Thanks in advance to all those who gather deer observations.

**Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) Grant Cycle:** Wildlife Program Manager Jonker gave three in-person presentations to the RCO panel for proposed acquisitions in Region 5. Region 5 staff did an excellent job of researching evaluation criteria to support these proposals for approximately 1,400 acres surrounding Merrill Lake in Cowlitz County and approximately 13,000 acres in Rock Creek in Klickitat County. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has been a critical partner in pursuing the Merrill Lake property and we thank them for their partnership in this endeavor.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Pheasant Release:** Biologists Anderson made preliminary contact with volunteers in Klickitat County that are interested in coordinating pheasant releases this year. This year's effort will rely more on volunteer help for the initial releases, while WDFW staff will spend more time monitoring hunter use and harvest success at the three Klickitat County release sites.

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

#### **Access**

**Region-wide Service:** Maintenance Mechanic Spangler and Natural Resource Worker Rhodes crisscrossed the Region this week from Klickitat County to Lewis County keeping on top of high levels of garbage pickup, blackberry removal, limb trimming, and site and ramp cleanup at several access sites as well as working with the Larch Mountain Corrections Crew on litter pickup.

## **REGION 6**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Scatter Creek / West Rocky:** Crews assisted in the preparation activities associated with the planned prescribed burns for Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairies. Fire lines were established on approximately nine different units across these wildlife areas. DNR inmate crews also assisted in this process. It is likely that the Center for Natural Lands Management fire crews will begin burning the WDFW wildlife areas on Wednesday and Friday of this week. Current weather conditions look very favorable depending on wind directions and speed.



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

#### **Private Lands/Access**

**Weyerhaeuser Vail, tree farm:** Bio Harris worked on identifying and addressing hunting access and safety issues associated with permit hunts (Hanaford, Centralia mine, & Disabled access) in GMU 667. Weyerhaeuser reported that there were some near misses that caused them some serious concern on the E-150 road. The E-150 road is the boundary for the Hanaford elk area and is also used heavily by the owner in the winter months. As the gate is located at the bottom of a steep hill there have been instances where individuals have been at the gate, while gate is open, and trucks have had difficulty avoiding an accident. Because of the high use of this

road there is also concern for bicycles and foot traffic using the road. Bio Harris will continue to work on this issue with Weyerhaeuser staff and Region 6 staff to remedy this concern.

***GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.***

**Wildlife Management**

**World Congress of Herpetology:** Biologists Tirhi attended the world congress of herpetology held at University of British Columbia where she presented on the Western Pond Turtle Recovery Program as an invited speaker under the symposium Success Stories in Conservation. The congress was very well attended by herpetologists from all around the world; Tirhi attended fantastic presentations on cutting edge research in amphibian and reptilian studies. Tirhi also attended symposiums on translocation and reintroduction and hopes to implement some of the techniques gleaned to both the Western Pond Turtle and the Oregon Spotted Frog reintroduction programs.