

# Wildlife Program

Week of December 10-16, 2012

## **WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION**

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

**Falconry:** It is that time of year for Falconry License renewals. Thompson wrote the 2012 renewal letters and mailed them to 61 falconers to remind them that their license expires on December 31, 2012. A falconry license is valid for two years. So far, 21 renewal applications have been completed, returned and filed for processing. The applications are entered into a database, and a letter and permit card are mailed to the falconer.

Occasionally, government agencies request our Falconry Exam because they are in the process of revising theirs. A request was made from an individual in New Zealand asking for our exam. After researching the request, Thompson discovered that although she was a falconer, the individual was a reporter and was not affiliated with a government agency.

**Wildlife Rehabilitation:** Thompson fielded several calls and emails on the upcoming Wildlife Rehabilitators Grant for 2013-2015. Washington Wildlife Rehabilitators are gearing up to send in their applications at the beginning of next year.

Thompson assisted Sergeant Jennifer Maurstad and Officer Nick Jorg in the release of a young black-tailed deer buck from Sarvey Wildlife Care Center. Several issues arose with the deer release. Thompson assisted Sarvey Wildlife Care Center with the question “do deer need to be tagged before release?” Deer do not need to be tagged prior to release if they have surpassed the waiting period for some of the drugs they are administered. If the deer must be released prior to that waiting period, the deer must be tagged, and the tag numbers and drugs reported to our Wildlife Veterinarian Dr. Kristin Mansfield.

A marbled murrelet was admitted to Sarvey Wildlife Care Center last week. It was found on the car deck of the Anacortes ferry. The bird suffered head trauma and an injured eye then died this weekend. Sarvey was instructed to send the body to University of Washington Burke Museum.



Quite a bit of time was spent on a discussion surrounding a snowy owl transfer to Blue Mountain Wildlife Center in Pendleton, Oregon from the Yakima area. Birds are frequently transported across state lines by the public and by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) officers. Due to this activity, Oregon has established guidelines to make these transfers possible without veterinary exams and paperwork. A migratory bird may be transported from Washington to Oregon, but is required to have an import number. This number is obtained by calling the Oregon Department of Agriculture. The number is reported to the state veterinarian either before the bird is transferred or immediately upon admittance to the rehabilitation facility.

**Wildlife Removal:** Thompson facilitated the removal of a marauding Cooper’s hawk in the Tri-Cities following reports of several chicken coops being harassed. The reporting party was a Washington State University (WSU) Cooperative Extension Agent for Benton County. The Washington Falconers Association (WFA) and WDFW have a memorandum of understanding granting WFA members the task of trapping and removing “nuisance” raptors.

**Scientific Collection Permits (SCP):** Questions arose regarding who needs to obtain a Scientific Collection Permit. The first question was “Do people running Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) stations need a SCP?” Yes, if they are not affiliated with WDFW. The second question was “Does the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) need a SCP?” Although the USFWS has applied for and been issued a SCP in the past, there are questions as to whether they need to, so Thompson is conducting additional research.

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

**The Whale Trail:** Chuck Gibilisco, Wildlife Outreach, reviewed and commented on two new Whale Trail interpretive panels to be installed at Snow Creek Whale Trail site nine. This area is close to where the Strait of Juan de Fuca meets the open Pacific Ocean, marking National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Olympic Coast Discovery Center and the Feiro Marine Life Center on the Port Angeles waterfront.

**Welcome to The Whale Trail**  
Snow Creek

**Orca (Killer whale)** (*Orcinus orca*)  
Length: Adult 26 ft • 33 ft • Calf 8 ft  
Orcas are the largest member of the dolphin family. Highly intelligent and social, they live in tightly bonded family groups their entire lives. Three pods of full-sounding orcas (J, K and L) are resident in Washington State. These iconic mammals were listed as Endangered in 2005.

**Gray Whale** (*Eschrichtius robustus*)  
Length: Adult 48 ft • Calf 15 ft  
Gray whales use baleen to filter shrimp-like food from along the sea floor. Each year they migrate from feeding grounds in Alaska to calving lagoons in Baja California and back again. Some gray whales take a detour from their coastal migration to forage in Puget Sound.

**Harbor Seal** (*Phoca vitulina*)  
Length: Adult 6 ft • Pup 3 ft  
Harbor seals are the most common marine mammal in the Pacific Northwest. Pups are sometimes left on the beach while their mother feeds for extended periods, please stay at least 100 yards away.

**Harbor Porpoise** (*Phocoena phocoena*)  
Length: Adult 5 ft • Calf 20 in  
Shy and elusive, when harbor porpoises surface you may briefly catch a glimpse of their triangular “melon-shaped” dorsal fin. They travel in small groups of up to ten animals.

**California Sea Lion** (*Zalophus californicus*)  
Length: Adult 6 ft • 7.5 ft • Pup 2.0 ft  
Sea lions are larger than seals and have external ear flaps. California sea lions have a dog-like bark. They sometimes “toll” on float with their flippers in the air to regulate body temperature.

**Mammals you can expect to see in this marine environment**

Often seen: ORCA, GRAY WHALE, HARBOR SEAL, HARBOR PORPOISE, CALIFORNIA SEALION, STOLEN WHALE, PACIFIC PORPOISE, ORCA-RELATED WHALES

Occasionally seen: HARBOR SEAL, PACIFIC PORPOISE, ORCA-RELATED WHALES

Rarely seen: HARBOR SEAL, PACIFIC PORPOISE, ORCA-RELATED WHALES

**Ecosystems in trouble**  
Orcas and salmon are icons of the Pacific Northwest. But they face an uncertain future due to pollution, loss of habitat, and the threat of an epifaunal, floating, shell-forming, reproductive and human health risk depend on healthy ecosystems.

**You can help**  
Everyone has a role to play in protecting our marine environment. Contributing to tracking rigidity in the earth. Volunteer on projects to measure and preserve our salmon data and watersheds, advocate for our community, and use public decision makers to support strong protective protections.

**Keep your distance**  
Enjoy watching marine wildlife without causing them stress or posing your personal safety at risk. View animals from a distance where they won't be disturbed. Don't touch, feed or chase wildlife. Keep pets leashed and away from marine animals.

**Snow Creek**  
Sail and Seal Rocks rise from the seascapes in front of you, where Snow Creek enters the Strait of Juan de Fuca. This rich and productive marine habitat attracts fishermen, divers, kayakers – and whales!

Snow Creek overlook is one of the best places along the Strait to see gray whales. Watch for them close to shore, where they feed in the shallow, sloping bay. Look for their heart-shaped blows near the sea stacks.

Wolf eels, lingcod and octopuses thrive in the boulders and kelp. East of here, the wreck of the steamship Andalusia forms an artificial reef that is home to dozens of species.

To the west, the Strait makes a transition to the Pacific Ocean and Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. The sanctuary teems with marine mammals, seabirds, fishes and other sea life.

What will you discover?

**The Whale Trail is a series of sites around the region where you may view orcas and other whales or marine mammals from shore.**

**Mission:** Our mission is to engage appreciation and stewardship of whales and our marine environment by establishing a network of viewing sites along the entire trail through Puget Sound and the coastal waters of the Pacific Northwest.

**Whale Trail Sites**

For a complete list of sites, visit the Whale Trail web site.

**Whale Trail Sites:** South Beach, Kalish, Destruction Island Viewpoint, La Push, Maffo Beach, Cape Mudge, Cape Mudge, Snow Creek, Shipwreck Point, Tuba Climb, Salt Creek Recreation Area, Freshwater Bay Clivity Park, Olympic Coast Discovery Center, Lewis & Clark Life Center, Port Townsend Marine Science Center, Chumley State Park, Washington State Parks.

**The Whale Trail is a nonprofit organization in partnership with:**

PEOPLE FOR THE PACIFIC SOUND, SEATTLE AQUARIUM, NOAA, WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY, WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE.

Learn More! Visit [www.thewhaletrail.org](http://www.thewhaletrail.org)



**Brochure Distribution:** Distributed WWO materials to various libraries, resorts in Leavenworth and Mazama, and to North Cascades National Parks.

**Website/Facebook:** Continue to upkeep, monitor, and add blogs, along with posting information to Vimeo and Twitter.

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

**Community Event Registration and Volunteer Information System (CERVIS):** Wildlife Program Volunteer Coordinator James Chandler spent time with Volunteer Program Manager Christine Redmond to train her on taking over the administrative duties of CERVIS. Chandler also linked a number of volunteers to District wildlife biologists for regional volunteer opportunities. Chandler also trained two more wildlife staff on how to post their volunteer opportunities on the agency webpage. Chandler met with Margaret Tudor to follow up on Ecological Integrity Monitoring (EIM) tasks.

**REGION 1**

**Wolf Management**

**District 1:** Biologist Shepherd investigated a dead Hereford cow near Rice, Washington with Officer Nick Parkert. No sign of large carnivores was present and other animals including the cow's young calf were not harmed. The carcass was scavenged however. Biologist Shepherd discussed wolf sightings with Aladdin Road residents. Biologist Shepherd sent locations to Aladdin Valley ranchers and dog walkers. Biologist Shepherd and Officer Anderson worked on the depredation response trailer. Biologist Shepherd had the range rider ATV serviced and stored for the winter. Biologist Shepherd contacted U.S. Forest Service (USFS) grazing permit holders concerning Wildlife Damage Prevention Contracts.



***Officer Parkert performed a necropsy with Biologist Shepherd on this cow. No marks by a large predator were found.***

**District 3:** The two wolves collared in Oregon this past summer that were exploring the Washington Blue Mountains have moved on. One of the wolves, a two-year old female returned

to the Wenaha Pack, while the yearling male moved south into Hells Canyon. District Biologist (DB) Wik initiated contact with the USFS regarding possible actions to implement to reduce risk to the grazing permittees. DB Wik reviewed and commented on a draft depredation form. DB Wik talked with Regional Director Pozzanghera about the upcoming cattlemen's meeting. Assistant District Biologist (ADB) Vekasy spoke with two responding parties regarding recent wolf sightings. One sighting was of two gray wolves on the North Patit, viewed from about 200 yards, standing and bedded. The second involved an attack on a dog on the Wolf Fork north of Dayton. Owner saw what he thought were three black wolves fighting with his dog. The dog suffered a torn ear, but was otherwise ok. Too much time had passed between the incident and when it was reported to conduct a site investigation.

**Walla Walla Cattleman's Association Meeting:** Biologist Rasley and Supervisor McCanna attended the annual Walla Walla County Cattleman's meeting. Supervisor McCanna gave a detailed presentation to 72 cattlemen regarding the new Livestock/Wolf depredation contracts. The meeting started off a little tense, but ended on a good note with lots of questions being asked regarding how the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is going to handle wolf issues when they come in contact with their cattle. The group also handed out several Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) contracts at the request of the cattlemen for their review and to sign at a later date. We also had lots of positive feedback from the group.

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

##### **Wildlife Management**

**Columbia Basin Mule Deer Project:** Biologists Ferguson and Atamian conducted ground surveys for the Columbia Basin Mule Deer Project Phase I and Phase II – areas in Lincoln and Whitman counties, a cooperative effort between Regions 1, 2 and 3.



*Several young bucks observed during the Columbia Basin Deer Project Ground Surveys.*

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

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

**Wildlife Conflict Meeting:** Habitat Biologist Dotts, Fish and Wildlife Office Taylor, Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd, and Private Lands Supervisor McCanna hosted an informational meeting for landowners in the Cottonwood Creek area near Chewelah. Several landowners were in attendance, as well as County Commissioner Dashell, Commissioner-elect McCart, former Commissioner Delgado, and a reporter from the Chewelah Independent. Landowners are concerned about crop damage, but aren't willing to allow for reasonable public access beyond friends and family. Their preference would be to obtain antlerless permits to sell or give to family.

### **REGION 2**

#### **Wolves**

**Okanogan County:** Biologist Heinlen received a report of “large canine tracks” in Game Management Unit (GMU) 204. The observation occurred seven days before the report was received and a site visit found the tracks completely snow-covered; however, a camera was deployed to monitor the area.

**Chelan County:** Biologist Volsen contacted local landowners that reported capturing images of a wolf in Chelan County southwest of Wenatchee. On reviewing the information with Biologist Becker, it was thought to be a single wolf traveling through the area. Local suspicions in the area (no formal report submitted) say more wolves are present. Landowners do not want attention brought to them by the report and have not allowed access to the property. We are working with the owners to gain more information and they are sharing what they have.

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

**Pygmy Rabbit Snow Surveys:** Research Scientist Becker, Biologist Eidson, and a small crew began surveys in the snow on Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area December 12-14. With three days of surveys walked and each person covering on average of six miles a day, 53 possible pygmy rabbit burrows were identified and 54 fecal samples collected for DNA analysis. The genetic results will hopefully confirm the fecal samples as pygmy rabbit pellets and identify the individuals that were located.



***A reintroduced pygmy rabbit at the edge of its burrow during the snow surveys on Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area December 12-14.***



*Research Scientist Becker navigates through surveys on Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area (left). Biologist Gallie and graduate student DeMay collect fecal genetic samples at a burrow (right).*

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

**Okanogan County Deer Surveys:** Following several weather delays, Biologists Fitkin, Heinlen, McCoy and Welfelt conducted post-season, aerial mule deer surveys in the Okanogan District. The group classified over 3,000 mule deer in the Methow Watershed which yielded buck:doe and fawn:doe ratios of 34:100 and 78:100 respectively. The fawn ratio is right around the long-term average; however, the buck:doe ratio is the highest in well over 20 years. In addition, 48 percent of observed bucks sported  $\geq$  three-points which equals the highest percentage observed for this metric since the implementation of the three-point restriction in 1997. Unfortunately, bad weather kept us from flying in the Okanogan Watershed and may prevent us from surveying mule deer in those units this year.

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

**Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI):** Private Lands Biologist Braaten attended a Sage Grouse Initiative meeting in Pateros. It was a great informational meeting. Braaten also met with a few landowners regarding SGI. Landowner interest varied. Some ranchers were very interested in Rest rotation grazing and water developments. Private Lands Biologist Braaten contacted Kelli Bartholomew regarding appointments for landowners. With the signup deadline quickly approaching, considered too soon for some landowners to review SGI options, there were some cautious reservations.

**Watchable Wildlife:** A snowy owl has been camped out in the Rendezvous Unit of the Methow Valley Wildlife Area for several days and has been viewed by many wildlife enthusiasts. With deep snow in the high country, many interesting critter observations are being reported in the lower elevations including a close encounter with a nonchalant bobcat illustrated in the photo on the next page. Also, swans are currently frequenting many lakes in the district with open water.



*Wildlife enthusiasts caught a glimpse of this snowy owl camped out for several days in the Rendezvous Unit of the Methow Valley Wildlife Area. Teri Pieper photo.*



*Close encounter with a bobcat near Mazama. Pat Leigh photo.*

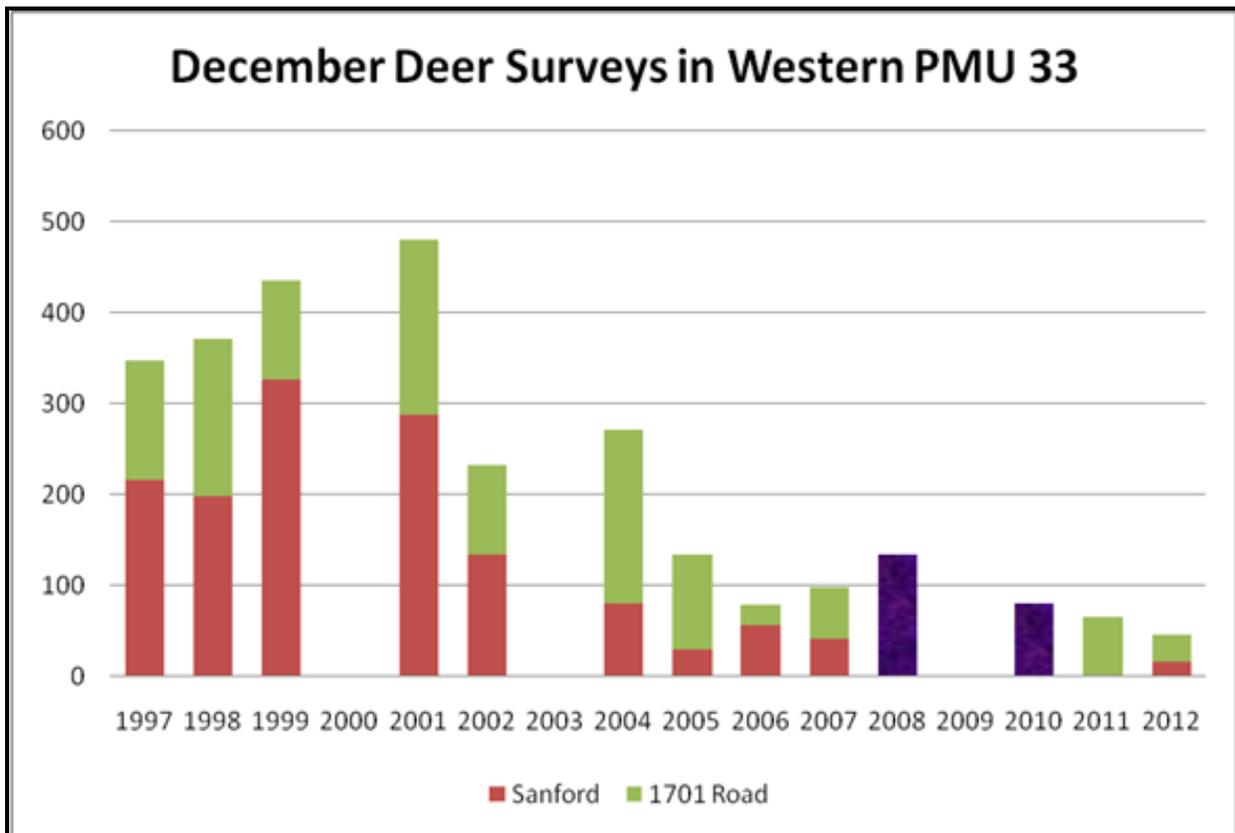
## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Deer Surveys:** District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz conducted ground surveys for two days, but did not find many deer. The conditions seemed good with deep high elevation snow, but minimal amounts on winter range. The range looked in excellent condition, especially in Sanford Pasture where forage production has been high post 2006 fire.

Few deer were found in the area. The survey area has been increased in recent years in an attempt to get decent sample sizes for calculating ratios. Despite good range, increased visibility (fire/logging), and more survey effort, deer numbers are down ~ 90 percent since 1999-2000. Hopefully the Muckleshoot deer study will help shed light on the deer population in the area.



#### **Other**

**Winter Conditions:** Temperatures were in the 30's and low 40's during the day, with lows in the 20's. For the upcoming week, temperatures are expected to be in the low 30's during the day, with lows in the teen's and low 20's. Snow showers are being predicted throughout the week. Condition of the elk appears to be good.

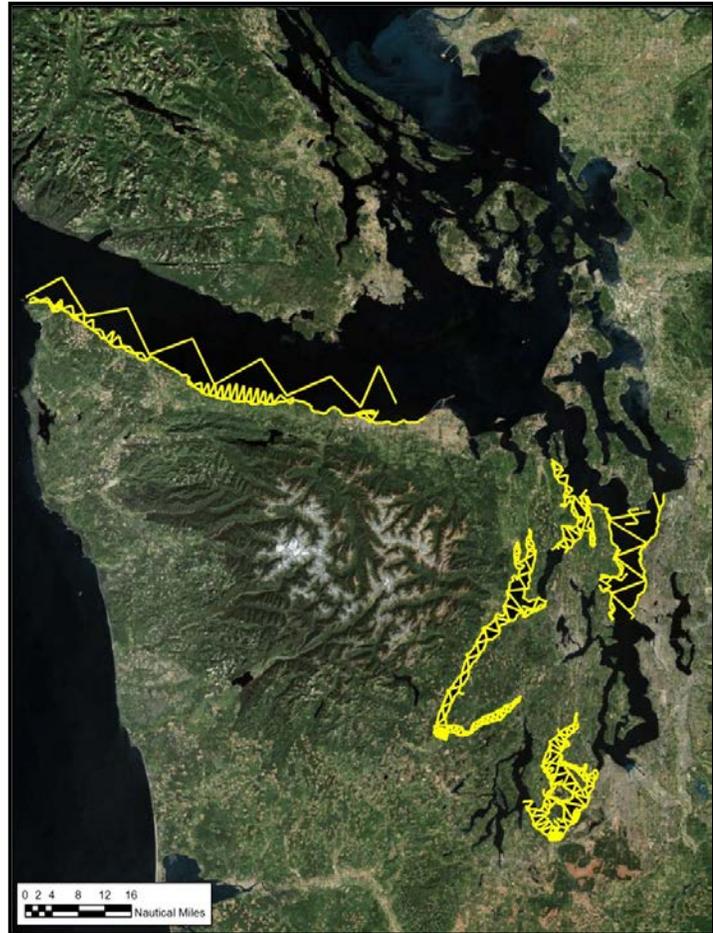
## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Winter Marine Waterfowl Aerial Surveys:** Waterfowl Survey and Sea Duck Specialist Evenson and Assistant District Biologists Murphie and Cyra completed the first week of the winter sea duck and marine bird aerial surveys of the inner marine waters of Washington State. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> winter that these surveys have been conducted. These surveys are the longest data set documenting trends of winter marine bird distribution and population indices in the Puget Sound, documenting the declining trends in many of the species that inhabit the Puget Sound during the winter season. In addition, these surveys are used to document population index levels of sea ducks that will determine next year's harvest limits.

A total of four days of survey were flown this week completing 24 percent of the survey. The weather forecasts for most of the week were not always favorable; however, the crew was able to fly each survey day in favorable weather conditions. The efforts and professionalism of Chuck Perry, chief pilot with Kenmore Air, are much appreciated and are vital to the success of this project. Biologist Tschaekofske provided flight following as part of the survey safety protocol.



The yellow lines on the above map represent transects surveyed to date for the winter sea duck and marine bird aerial surveys of the inner marine waters of Washington State.

**Swan Mortality and Morbidity Project:** Swan Technician Anderson responded to calls regarding sick and dead swans. Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn assisted with swan collection in Skagit and Whatcom counties. To date about 54 dead swans have been collected and sampled

**Pacific Flyway Shorebird Survey:** District Biologist Milner and Ecostudies Institute partner Gary Slater conducted a volunteer based shorebird count on Saturday. Higher winds prevented counting from an airplane at the same time volunteers were conducting ground counts, and the

tides were not ideal for our area. However, the flyway-wide protocol calls for the survey to be completed between November 15 and December 15, so expectation was met. Partners intend to do follow-up surveys later in the winter.

**Northern Puget Sound Lesser Snow Goose Study:** Biologist DeBruyn gathered liver samples from hunter harvested birds for lead analyses.

**WDFW-Woodland Park Zoo Citizen Amphibian Monitoring Project:** Biologist Anderson QA/QC'd data from the initial pilot 2012 breeding season of citizen amphibian egg mass monitoring. The effort is coordinated through Woodland Park Zoo. The data will be analyzed as staff time or intern opportunity affords examination. Anderson and the zoo staff are in the planning phase for the upcoming 2013 season, with current enrollment (and cap set at) of 60 participants.

**Black Canyon Hydroproject Proposal – FERC and State Consultation:** Biologist Anderson, Habitat Major Projects Mitigation Biologist Applegate, Snoqualmie Tribal staff, and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission staff met with proponents of the proposed Black Canyon Hydroproject electrical facility. This project is proposed to be implemented along the Snoqualmie, at the base of Mt. Si, outside of North Bend. The group examined wildlife considerations for the proposed project.

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

**Northern Puget Sound Lesser Snow Goose Study:** Private lands staff began efforts assisting the wildlife program capture, measure, and band/collar lesser snow geese. Staff processed one female, juvenile bird on one net gun attempt. Private lands staff will continue to assist the capture effort as time allows in the following weeks.



*Snow geese foraging in (radish/mustard) cover crop, with three collared birds, immediately before a successful capture attempt for the Northern Puget Sound Lesser Snow Goose Study.*

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Snow Goose Festival Planning:** Biologist Milner attended a meeting with the festival planning committee and met with Ecostudies Institute to further refine plans for the Western Hemispheres Shorebird Reserve Network celebration on Saturday night of the festival.

**Brant Population Monitoring:** Biologist DeBruyn flew a brant survey over Padilla, Samish and Whatcom county bays with Mike Davison. DeBruyn also checked the postings and buoys marking the Swinomish brant reserve and prepared informational posters to put up at boat launches before the upcoming season.

**Eagle Scout Project – Peasley Canyon, Auburn:** Biologist Anderson provided further wildlife management considerations regarding trail upgrades and parking lot improvements at the Peasley Canyon natural area site. Herons occasionally breed here and a variety of wildlife utilizes the wetlands. Anderson also provided contacts to WDFW Habitat biologists, Auburn planning staff, and Washington Department of Transportation (DOT) staff (property owner) to assist the scout with further planning and potential permitting needs.

**Urban Peregrine Activity:** Biologist Anderson updated data regarding new 2012 nest sites in the greater Seattle Area. Anderson provided this information to WDFW data stewards.

**Proposed Cherry Point Coal Facility – Wildlife Impacts in Seattle:** Biologist Anderson provided requested plausible management recommendation considerations to Heron Habitat Helpers and Seattle Parks and Recreation staff regarding local concern over potential increased railroad traffic and dust from the proposed Cherry Point Coal Facility. The railroad right-of-way that would be used is directly adjacent to the largest heron colony in Seattle found in Kiwanis Ravine, near Discovery Park.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Whidbey Island Pheasant Release Site:** Private Lands Technicians Otto and Deyo completed cleanup and removal of the Arnold Road pheasant release site. Private lands staff contacted the landowner and will meet with him in the following week or two to review this season and plan for next year.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Bald Eagle Natural Area:** Manager Belinda Rotton and Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis met with Phil Kincare of the U.S. Forest Service to tour properties near Honeysuckle Lane. There has been some recent timber harvest in the area and there was concern regarding timber trespass, road development, and potential new off-road vehicle activity on the sites. These are fairly new acquisitions from a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) land transfer a few years ago and Washington staff has limited knowledge about some of these newer properties up river.

DNR was contacted to determine what digital data and maps exist for the properties. Further investigation is necessary. The initial tour does not indicate trespass, but better maps are necessary to determine for certain.

**Island Unit:** Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove checked water levels in south end fields of the Island Unit. The water level was adjusted to improve waterfowl and hunter access to southern end fields.

**DeBay's Slough Swan Reserve:** Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove monitored waterfowl/swan use at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Swan Reserve at dusk on Monday. Ducks and swans have yet to utilize corn on the hunt area of the property.

**Tennant Lake and Lake Terrell Water Levels:** The Tennant Lake water levels are still extremely high. Manager Kessler checked and cleared the beaver dams to adjust the lake water levels. Kessler also monitored the Lake Terrell water levels and checked the new dam for beaver activity.

**Lake Terrell and Intalco Units Downed Trees:** Manager Kessler cut up and removed several downed trees that fell on access roads on the Lake Terrell and Intalco Units.

**Lummi Island Overlook Fence:** Manager Kessler coordinated with managers from the Lummi Island Heritage Trust on recent reported damage to the overlook fence. Parts of the fence have been knocked out by people climbing on the fence. The fence will be repaired this week.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**North Cascades Elk Herd Management:** Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn participated in a meeting with the Stillaguamish and Tulalip Tribes to discuss their proposed GPS collar study. The objectives of the project are to evaluate habitat use patterns of elk in the Acme area, where elk related agricultural conflicts continues to be a management challenge. While the proposal needs further development, the project proponents are interested in two main objectives: (1) evaluation of the effectiveness of current strategies in dealing with elk damage; and, (2) understanding qualities of non-agricultural habitats to inform future forage enhancement projects that may mitigation crop damage in this area.

Biologist Danilson also met with representatives from Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT), the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, and WDFW Enforcement to discuss elk related vehicle collisions along SR 20. This highway corridor is one of the top three in Washington State for elk-vehicle collisions. From the meeting, it became apparent that elk-car collisions along SR 20 between Sedro Woolley and Concrete are definitely on the rise and may be much higher than what anyone presumed. Secondly, all present conceded that data sharing and reconciliation could be much improved and a process was developed for doing just that. Lastly, the biologist from WSDOT will use the data available to develop a proposal to address this situation.

**King 5 News Interview – Snowy Owl mini-irruption:** Biologist Anderson was interviewed by Gary Chittim of King 5 news regarding the unusual amount of Snowy Owls folks are seeing in Seattle and greater Puget Sound. Anderson explained this is likely an “Echo Flight” or mini-irruption event that is occurring. Winter 2011 saw record numbers of wintering owls across the northern part of the lower 48, including all of Washington. Occasionally, a second, smaller wintering event will occur the next winter in localized areas of the previous more widespread event the year prior. That seems to be the case this year in Puget Sound and a few other spots across the lower 48 where they are observing more of these animals than normal. They are much rarer in winter annually across lower 48, generally a few only in e.g. WA. King 5 didn’t quite relay these details, but we got some DFW attention regarding non-game, urban wintering wildlife that is normally quite rare to see. The review the news article online, please visit <http://www.king5.com/news/environment/snowy-owls-return-to-Western-Washington--182913211.html>

**Urban Canada Goose Conflict – US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) Seattle District Headquarters:** Biologist Anderson provided management advice and options to a US General Services architect that helped head-up landscaping improvements and installation of an eagle aerie sculpture at the USACE Seattle District Headquarters. The sculpture is to represent urban nesting eagles with landscaping around it. Geese have taken to the landscaping. Anderson also works with this contact to monitor an eagle nest in the Laurelhurst area. They reported 2012 activity and recent pair activity this winter. This was relayed to the WDFW Wildlife Data Stewards to provide for updates to this nest territory.



*A landscaping improvement project at the US Army Corp of Engineers Seattle District Headquarters features this eagle aerie sculpture. U.S. General Services Administration photo.*

**Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group (USVEMG):** Biologist Anderson phone conferenced with members of the USVEMG regarding Master Hunter permit levels for the 2013 season. Anderson and appropriate members of this non-profit will keep in contact regarding these needs, working with WDFW Enforcement staff, and providing for reducing damage via the Master Hunter program.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Game Management Unit (GMU) 418 Elk Hunting Access:** Biologist Roozen spoke and met with tag holders to collect gate keys, discuss their hunt efforts, and manage other issues as they came up. Private lands staff will continue monitoring access and addressing problems within the GMU. Three unfilled tag holders have through December to fill their tags.

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Region 4 private lands staff continued scheduled surveys of hunt units and attended to unit repairs as needed. Good waterfowl weather contributed to very high unit use. One morning produced almost 100 percent occupancy in Quality Hunt units with high hunter success.

**Snow Goose Quality Program:** Region 4 private lands staff monitored and noted hunter use in units. Several days of concentrated groups of geese and winter weather produced many successful hunts in the units, particularly later in the week.

**Wiley Slough Working Group:** Manager Rotton facilitated the working group meeting. Items on the agenda included dredging project updates, pump station development, tide gate repair proposals, and adaptive management plan report. Summary notes will be prepared and the next meeting is scheduled for mid-February.

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area:** Natural Resources Worker (NRW) Kraig Paulson continued cleaning, repairing and winterizing pheasant pens on the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. NRW Paulson cleared brush around the barn to prepare for debris removal.

**Headquarters and Leque Island Units:** Meis and Cosgrove will continue to monitor water conditions during the high tide series this week. High tides combined with low pressure and storms can result in damage to dike infrastructure. Water levels overtopped the dikes again this week over a broader area due to different tide and weather conditions.

**Headquarters and Fir Island Farm Units:** Gravel was ordered and delivered for parking lot and road maintenance for these two sites. Meis and Cosgrove began parking lot and road repairs as well as additional road grading on the Headquarters site.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Aerial Flight Following:** Biologist Milner helped the sea duck survey crew by flight following during one of their surveys.

**Wildlife Program Radio Training:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued to provide assistance with radio training and assignment of radio call numbers to Wildlife Program staff. Biologist Anderson worked with other field biologists in the office to cover front desk phones while customer service staff met.

## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Post Season Deer Surveys:** Biologists Holman, Bergh, Stephens, and Hauswald conducted post-season deer survey flights over portions of GMUs 578 (West Klickitat), 388 (Grayback), and 382 (East Klickitat). Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven provided flight-following for the surveys. Conditions were favorable for flying the survey, though mild weather had the animals broadly distributed throughout the County. A total of ~ 1,350 wintering deer were observed during the effort. Buck to doe and fawn to doe ratios will be calculated and summarized in future reports.

#### **Wildlife Areas**

##### **Klickitat Wildlife Area**

**Access Road to Field 7:** The tractor road to the agricultural lease field on the Klickitat Wildlife Area has sustained deep ruts due to unauthorized access by the public. The agricultural lease holder has trouble accessing the field due to the tractor's trailer hitch dragging on the ground between the ruts. Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven agreed to add fill to the ruts when the ground was firm and the weather dry enough. Van Leuven hauled two loads of dirt and rocks out to the problem spot and with the help of a volunteer, shoveled and raked the material into the ruts and fixed the worst part. Another load or two will finish the job.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument (NVM) Area Hunts:** Region 5 wildlife staff met with staff from the Gifford Pinchot National Forest to discuss the three special permit hunts that occur in and around the National Volcanic Monument (Pumice Plain, Mt. Whittier, and Upper Smith Creek). In this annual meeting, concerns from last year's hunts and plans for next year's hunts were discussed. These hunts are an important management tool for the monument in order to decrease elk damage and prevent the monument from being an 'elk sanctuary' during the hunting season. The remoteness and difficulty of access can be a challenge to permit holders, but those who can manage the challenging terrain see good success. The group also discussed other NVM issues and updates.

**Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt:** The southwest Washington Area 2A goose hunting season continues to be open in all zones. Technicians have identified a total of 700 geese from November 10 through December 17. Harvest rates were approximately 2.2 geese per hunter and four dusks were harvested during this period.

Hunters interested in participating in this season can refer to pages 16, 20 and 21 of the [Washington State Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons](#) pamphlet for further details regarding requirements for participation. As a reminder for those planning on participating, Management Area 2A hunts take place on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The season extends from November 10-25 and December 5-January 27.

### Access

**Access Sites:** Access staff Spangler and Rhodes had a busy week addressing many items on access sites in Region 5. High water seems to be moving a lot of debris down river so Spangler and Rhodes used the truck winch to drag some large logs out of the way where boaters need access to the river.



*Sportsman Club Access Site log removal.*



*Martin Access Site restrooms were repainted and a window was replaced due to vandalism.*



*Spangler assisted Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald installing speed bumps on the paved parking area at the Vancouver Lake Unit of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area (left) and also welded hinges on the bathroom door (right).*

### **Private Lands**

**Landowner/Hunter Contacts:** Technician White visited large timber landowners and pheasant release sites on December 8, the last day of archery elk and deer in GMU 388, and muzzleloader deer in GMU 578. White encountered six archery hunters in GMU 388 and three pheasant hunters on a private pheasant release site. One hunter reported getting a deer earlier in the week. White provided maps/land use guidelines to hunters and left maps on windshields of vehicles parked at gates. Technician White assisted master hunters with permits for Trout Lake Hunt 2720 in Elk Area 5062, providing landowner contact names and talking with landowners about the upcoming hunt. White discussed damage reports from one landowner with Officer Kimball.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Ranchers and WDFW Meeting:** Olympia and Region 5 staff met with ranchers who have livestock grazing permits or pastures south of Mt. Adams to discuss the potential of having wolves on the landscape and to begin a coordinated effort to avoid livestock/wolf interactions.

### **Winter Conditions**

#### **District 10 and MSHWA Winter Conditions**

**Past Weather:** November temperatures were slightly above normal and precipitation was above average for the month. Snow levels this past week have lowered to around 2,000 feet for a couple of days, but there was only a trace of snow at this elevation. Most areas above 3,000 feet in elevation are snow covered after this past week's weather.

**Short-Term Forecast:** Temperatures are expected to be cool over the next week with snow levels between 1,700 to 3,000 feet. The 6-10 and 8-14 days forecast both predict below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation.

**Long-Term Forecast:** The December forecast model shows an equal chance for either above average, below average, or normal temperatures and above average precipitation. The three month forecast model shows an equal chance for above average, below average, or normal temperatures and precipitation.

**Habitat:** Forage is available at lower elevations, while most areas above 3,000 feet currently have some snow cover. Use of grasses and forbs has been minimal to date on the Mount St Helens Wildlife Area.

**Snow Depths:** Most areas below 2,500 feet have little to no snow accumulation, but with the forecast of low snow levels for the next week, several inches of snow could fall at elevations of 2,000 feet and higher.

**Animal Concentrations:** No unusual concentrations of elk noted to date. On December 3, 2012, a total of 28 elk were present on the Mudflow Unit monitoring area. The Wildlife Area Manager noted about 60 elk in the unit on December 4 while conducting other work.

**Animal Condition:** No reports of animals in poor condition that can be attributed to winter conditions. Animals observed to date appear to be in good condition.

**Mortality:** None reported.

**Public Contacts:** None to report regarding winter conditions.

The public is reminded that the portion of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle, and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30 to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

### **District 9 Winter Conditions**

**Past Weather:** Mild weather conditions continue and snowpack is well below normal for this time of year.

**Winter Severity:** The Klickitat Wildlife Area is snow-free and forage habitat is available. There is no concern for the current severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County or Klickitat County. The eastern portions of Klickitat County are snow-free and deer are reported to be in good condition.

**Habitat:** Habitat is open and forage habitat continues to be available throughout District 9.

**Animal Concentrations:** Deer widely distributed throughout Klickitat County.

**Animal Condition:** Deer and elk appear to be in very good condition and no winter stress/mortality has been reported.

**Mortality:** Just one deer mortality observed during extensive surveys of Klickitat County during the week.

**Public Contacts:** No concerns raised by the public this week.

## **REGION 6**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Clearwater Cooperative Road Management:** Eye's in the Woods volunteer remote camera team attempted to pull camera equipment this weekend. Unfortunately, snow levels prevented them from retrieving any equipment. The area unexpectedly received several inches of snow Friday night that made driving the narrow logging roads treacherous. Although the volunteers attempted to get to the locations, they made a safety call and cancelled the activity. Biologist Harris thanked the volunteers for putting safety first! Interestingly, some of the local elk chose to bed under one of the remote cameras Saturday morning, giving an indication of what the weather was like at the cameras.



**Western Pond Turtle** – Biologist Tirhi, Schmidt and Skriletz along with staff from Headquarters toured a potential new Western Pond Turtle recovery site in Thurston County. The property is currently being considered for purchase by various entities. WDFW staff are seeking a third recovery site for state endangered pond turtles as dictated by the Western Pond Turtle Recovery Plan, which requires at least five populations of >200 turtles be established in the state to down-list to threatened status. The new potential location looked promising enough to warrant WDFW to compose a letter of support for acquisition.

**Oregon Spotted Frog** - Biologist Tirhi attended the annual Oregon spotted frog working group meeting hosted by Northwest Trek. The meeting was well attended by WDFW, USFWS, Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), Oregon Zoo, Woodland Park Zoo, Cedar Creek Correctional Center, Northwest Trek, Prison Sustainability Program, and Port Blakely. The working group meets twice annually to review data collection, spotted frog recovery, reintroduction efforts, and captive rearing efforts.

Tirhi presented results of 2012 egg mass surveys at four sites and results of monitoring PIT tagged reintroduced spotted frogs to JBLM. The 2012 collaborative captive rearing and reintroduction pilot project to JBLM marks the fifth year. The intent this year was to review success of the project and make a determination on continuing.

Although only one of five of the reintroduction years resulted in egg masses produced at the JBLM reintroduction site, the working group decided that five years was not enough time to ensure success and that spotted frogs should once again be captive-reared and reintroduced to JBLM in 2013 with another group review in 2014. Additionally, it was decided that more effort should be put towards monitoring at JBLM in the event egg masses are being overlooked and/or PIT tagged frogs are not being recaptured.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Canada Goose Check-Stations:** Biologists Michaelis and Sundstrom manned the Canada goose check stations in Raymond and Reikkola. Michaelis checked 12 geese from four hunters while Sundstrom checked 21 geese from 10 hunters. None of the geese checked were determined to be dusky Canada geese.

**Canada Goose Surveys:** Biologists Michaelis and Sundstrom conducted Canada goose surveys as part of a regional effort to determine seasonal distribution patterns for Canada geese populations that winter in southwest Washington and northwest Oregon. Although the primary focus is cackling and dusky Canada geese, information is also collected for a variety of other species of Canada geese including lesser, Taverner's, western, and Vancouver. Michaelis and Sundstrom observed 411 and 4,447 geese respectively. Michaelis observed four collared dusky Canada geese while Sundstrom observed one collared cackler and six collared dusky Canada geese.

## Wildlife Areas

**Chehalis, Osgood Quality Unit:** Manager Guzlas and Gallegos re-surfaced the parking area at the Osgood Quality Hunt Unit on the Chehalis Wildlife Area. A fresh coat of black rock was spread through the site. Recent flood and high water conditions created soft and muddy parking conditions. A waterfowl hunter was contacted on the site and reported great conditions. This new site has been widely utilized throughout the waterfowl season with hunters reporting positive hunts.



*The parking area of the Osgood Quality Hunt Unit on the Chehalis Wildlife Area was re-surfaced due to recent flood and high water conditions that created soft and muddy conditions.*

**Oyhut Unit:** Manager Gerchak installed Audubon “Olympic Birding Loop” sign at the trail head, while checking on Oyhut parking area. Federal Avian Administration (FAA) has resurfaced the parking area and the road. They brushed the road and the parking area, but the chain link fence has not been completed. Gerchak also checked on Anderson Homestead and installed another Audubon sign on the kiosk.



*Anderson Homestead Unit - Audubon Sign.*

**Raptors support holiday Discover Pass sales – Willapa Wetlands/Potters Slough:**



## **Private Lands**

**GMU 658, North River:** Biologist Harris checked gates and monitored hunter and other activities on private timberlands several mornings. The landowners left some main roads open for late season muzzleloaders to distribute hunters and make accessing state lands easier. Unfortunately, a lot of littering and ORV's have been active. He found one gate that had been tampered with and in discussions with landowner security was informed that a few locks had been cut. In his travels he was able to speak to two hunters who reported that they had been on a bull elk, but they just could not get a clean shot. He observed several vehicles parked in various locations that to his knowledge are good access points to promising elk habitat. Assumption was that these were elk hunters. Appears most, if not all, were getting out of their trucks to hunt.

**Waterfowl Access:** Biologist Harris and Officer Cilk contacted a landowner who currently has a Hunt by Written Permission agreement to see how the season is going. They also talked with a commercial landowner interested in working out a waterfowl access agreement in exchange for helping them with deer problems at their nursery.

**Rayonier Fishing Access:** Biologist Harris was contacted by Rayonier timberlands staff for assistance on fishing access in the Forks Area. Due to dumping and littering, they were basically forced to close access to a popular fishing area known as the Forks Hole last spring. They have been receiving calls from the public to re-open and Harris discussed the proposition with local Rayonier staff. Due to the importance of the area, Rayonier is willing to re-open if the garbage is cleaned up and the area maintained. WDFW and Rayonier agreed that motorized access to the area is reasonable during the winter steelhead run, but it was also determined other times of the year it is a reasonable walk and because of its location would be subject to more public abuse. Harris will attempt to work with local volunteers to clean up and maintain the area. If users fail to keep area clean, then motorized access will once again be denied. More to come on this issue as a maintenance plan is developed.

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

### **Wildlife Areas**

Wildlife Area staff, Access Area Manager Mitchell, and Biologist Skriletz met with the Department of Interior (DOI) auditor. After being interviewed and verifying equipment inventories, Manager Guzlas and Westside Lands Supervisor Bob Cannon toured the auditor to several sites, including the Chehalis Wildlife Area and several access sites on the Satsop and Chehalis Rivers. Staff did not report any concerns from the auditor.