

# Wildlife Program

Week of January 30, 2012

## **OUTREACH DIVISION**

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

**Get Out West:** Several WDFW staff from Research and Outreach met with a representative from Governor Gregoire's Policy Office about the Get Out West initiative, launched by Governor Gregoire, chairperson of the 19 state Western Governors Association (WGA). The 2012 WGA annual conference is planned for June 9-12 in Cle Elum. On June 9<sup>th</sup> the theme will be Get Outdoors; fish and wildlife recreation, from hunting and fishing to wildlife viewing and citizen science, may be the focus on that day. Throughout the balance of the conference many additional fish and wildlife conservation, recreation and tourism topics may be presented. Tudor consulted with a representative of the Western Governor's Association to highlight outdoor opportunities that are available for youth and families. Tudor recommended that the Western Governors direct their natural resource agencies to use Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) 2011 conservation education materials (free, online downloadable) for learning outdoors for youth education, developed by DFW and partners.

**Citizen Science:** Outreach staff met with Marc Hayes, WDFW herpetologist and project coordinator for a set of ongoing amphibian egg mass surveys conducted throughout western Washington by citizen scientists. The meeting was primarily to examine ways to incorporate several years of existing data, and plan for increased WDFW volunteer coordination. Because amphibians have life stages in both the aquatic and terrestrial environments, they represent a potentially significant indicator species for both habitat types. Identification of amphibian egg masses can be accomplished by most trained citizen scientists and so amphibian egg mass data could be extremely useful to local governments and WDFW for wildlife conservation and growth management concerns.

## **REGION 1**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Bighorn Sheep Disease:** The Asotin bighorn sheep herd, historically one of the only 2 healthy herds in all of Hells Canyon (Idaho, Oregon, and Washington), appears to have a disease outbreak starting. This week, one radio-collared ewe was found dead and taken to Washington State University (WSU) for necropsy. The animal died of chronic, severe, pneumonia. Another collared ewe was observed in the herd that was also showing signs of pulmonary disease. District Biologist Wik, Idaho Fish and Game Research Biologist Cassirer, and WSU Researcher Tom Besser will be conducting a field tour on Monday to further evaluate the herd.

#### **Wildlife Areas**

##### **Society for Range Management Tour at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area(SLWA):**

Approximately 50 attendees at this year's national meeting in Spokane took a side tour to Rainier

Seed Company in Davenport, and then continued on to the SLWA headquarters. Wildlife Area Assistant Manager (WAAM) Mike Finch gave a short PowerPoint presentation on the upland and wetland habitat improvements at SLWA and the adjacent Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands. Neighboring rancher Dave Hubbard also spoke to the group about issues concerning potential limitations to his cattle operations due to grouse management in the county, and cutbacks of Animal Units (AU's) per acre, due to the purchase by BLM of the land he leases. After finishing up at the SLWA shop, the group traveled further down Seven Springs Road, where BLM's range conservationist Kerrin Doloughan talked about the predator deterrent research project on WDFW and BLM land. Washington State University graduate student Kourtney Stonehouse also gave the group a primer on her research on sage and sharp-tailed grouse, and the group got to see radio-tracking in action.



SRM tour group, SLWA HQ



Kourtney Stonehouse/radio collar

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Riparian Forest Buffer Enrollment:** Biologist Merg assisted a grower to enroll 30 acres along the Palouse River and an immediate tributary into the Riparian Forest Buffer practice of continuous-enrollment CRP (Conservation Reserve Program). Merg has prepared several payment estimates for this grower over the last 9 months, each one for a larger enrollment as the grower carved out increasing fractions to retire from his farming operation. These retirements both generates stable income from land prone to flooding and straightens field borders making several fields easier to farm. The Palouse River corridor comprises the best wildlife habitat in Whitman County. Thirty-acres of Riparian Forest Buffer will affect approximately 2.5 miles of the Palouse River. It will also conserve soil and protect water quality of the river. This project is quite near a Hunt by Written Permission (HWP) property, and the costs for these habitat improvements will be borne fully by USDA.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Selkirk Elk Herd Plan Public Meetings:** Region One Wildlife Program staff hosted the second public meeting on the Selkirk Elk Plan on Wednesday, February 1. Approximately 84 people attended the meeting along with Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Gary Douvia, Enforcement Program staff, and Regional Director Pozzanghera. Representatives from various Sportsman's groups, Spokesman-Review outdoor writer Rich Landers, as well as representatives from two of

the local Native American Tribes also attended the meeting. Regional Wildlife Program Manager Kevin Robinette walked the group through the nine objectives of the Selkirk Elk Plan via a PowerPoint Presentation. Department Staff then fielded questions and comments from the public. The public was directed to the Department's website to download the Elk Plan and provide comments by February 10. A large number of landowners and Master Hunters interested in changes to the December Master Hunter Elk Season in GMU's 127-142 also attended the meeting. Department staff spent an additional two hours discussing these proposed changes with anyone who wanted to stay after the elk plan discussion. This part of the meeting was very challenging as there is a high degree of passion and concern from many of these Master Hunters and landowners who are concerned with the loss of opportunity as well as compromising long-standing landowner/Master Hunter relationships in this area.

The third public meeting for the Selkirk Elk Herd Plan occurred on Thursday February 2 in Colville. Region One Wildlife Staff hosted this meeting with Regional Director Pozzanghera and Enforcement Program staff also in attendance. County Commissioners Don Dashiell from Stevens County and John Hankey from Pend Oreille County were also at the meeting. Approximately 80 people participated in the meeting, predominantly hunters and landowners. As with the other two public meetings, Regional Program Manager Robinette gave a high-level overview of the elk plan and then opened up the meeting to questions and comments. These included landowner concerns for elk damage, concerns for additional reductions in hunting opportunity especially for youth hunters, and concerns that changes in elk seasons to increase elk populations should not occur until the Department improves their ability to estimate population numbers. The meeting ended after two hours with Department staff remaining at the facility for informal discussions with meeting participants.



*Regional Wildlife Program Manager Kevin Robinette delivers the PowerPoint presentation for the Selkirk Elk Plan at the second public meeting held in Spokane Valley, Feb.1, 2012.*

## **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 / Brock Hoenes**

**Weather Conditions:** Continued warm temperatures have greatly reduced snow coverage. Ice is melting fast. Photo below of Potholes Reservoir from O'Sullivan dam looking north.



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

**Washington Ground Squirrels:** Biologists Finger and Hoenes, with assistance from 2 volunteers, placed traps at Sage Hills Golf Course to prepare for a translocation which is set to occur during the week of February 20. 180 traps and 45 cardboard weed cloth tubes (low budget squirrel trap) were placed within the most heavily utilized areas. Though most of the snow was melted off, we observed little activity, only a handful of burrows showing fresh dirt kicked out of burrows and no alarm calls or visual observations. Finger checked the Soda Lake release site, where squirrels were translocated last year and saw 5 individuals and heard numerous alarm calls.

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

**Middle Crab Creek Habitat Enhancement:** Biologist Finger and Wildlife Areas Fitzgerald and Cole toured through the Gloyd to look at Homestead Lake, Mansfield Pond, and various portions of the proposed Crab Creek enhancements. Homestead Lake was visited because Fish Program would like to build up the levee so they could raise the lake level to reduce fish kill. It appeared that this could be accomplished by putting some additional boards in the water control structure, which still had ~3' of freeboard; however the walkway would need to be raised.



Mansfield Pond was visited to determine whether tall emergent vegetation could be burned off effectively to open up shallow water areas that are conducive to growing smartweed, which is an important waterfowl food. Biologist Finger began draining Mansfield pond so that emergent vegetation can be controlled. Common reed has become established at multiple sites within Mansfield Pond and efforts will occur this spring to control it. Approximately 7,500 ducks (mostly mallards and pintails) were observed on the pond, which only has a few acres of open water at this time. This number of ducks has been observed here following hunting season for the last 3 years.



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

**Weather Conditions:** Clear and sunny days have helped take the snow off lower elevation slopes. South facing aspects are clearing quickly, and deer have responded to the increase in available range. Road conditions in Douglas County are getting worse with the melting of snow there. Many areas in the sagebrush are becoming snow free.

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

**Pygmy Rabbits:** Surveys for pygmy rabbits were completed in the designated high priority areas this past week. The last areas surveyed were two drainages that run from roughly the

center of the Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area to the northeast. Locations of historic once active burrows show a strong correlation with these drainages, and one of the collared and released pygmy rabbits traveled along the drainage before its signal was lost. Biologist Gallie found poor conditions during this part of the survey due to receding snow levels. Cooler evening temperatures resulted in frozen snow, precluding rabbits from leaving tracks, and warm daytime conditions caused the melting of any sign that may have been left. Despite our focus on areas where rabbits were released in the spring, no rabbit sign (new or old), burrows, or tracks detected.



*Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area*

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

**Mountain Goats:** Biologist Gallie conducted the first round of mountain goat road counts in Chelan County, Icicle Creek, Tumwater Canyon, Nason Ridge, and White River. Highlights include a total of 21 goats counted in Tumwater Canyon, most in 30+ years. Counts in other areas were at or below previous counts.



**WILDLIFE AREAS**

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

**Methow Wildlife Area Complex – Wildlife Area Units: Methow, Big Buck, Rendezvous, Big Valley, Multiple dispersed small to large properties**

**Weather Conditions:** Sunny and clear, highs in the 30's and lows in the teens to single digits.

**Weekender Opportunities:** Skiing is in full swing in the Methow. With the weather clearing late in the week, ski touring throughout the wildlife area should be spectacular!!!

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

**Snow Plowing:** Rob Wottlin has spent much of this week clearing snow around the HQ. He was also able to open the road up to the Bear Cr. campground and clear the shooting range parking area. Recent snows are bringing more recreational users to the Methow Wildlife Area.

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

**Society for Range Management annual meeting:** Methow WLA Manager Tom McCoy and project biologist John Hagan attended the Society for Range Management's annual international meeting in Spokane. This event proved to be an excellent opportunity to meet researchers and land managers from around the world, (there was even a large contingent from Mongolia) and see technical presentations addressing management issues we face here in the Methow. John spent most of the week in the workshop dealing with the development and use of ecological site descriptions. Tom attended sessions that dealt with topics ranging from invasive species management to landscape scale remote sensing for vegetation monitoring. This is an outstanding learning opportunity for agency staff charged with managing lands or wildlife populations.

**Wells Wildlife Area Complex –Dan Peterson / Ann Winters / Fidel Rios**  
**Wells Wildlife Area Complex – Wildlife Area Units: Wells: Bridgeport Bar, Okanogan River, Washburn Island, Indian Dan, Central Ferry, and West Foster Creek. Sagebrush Flat: Bridgeport, Chester Butte, Dormaier, Sagebrush Flat**

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

**Grouse Observations:** Friday morning Biologist Peterson observed 16 sharp-tailed grouse in the West Foster Creek drainage – the highest number this winter. Approximately 10 minutes later he found 24 sage grouse feeding in a canola field just west of Mansfield. Three weeks ago Research Scientist Schroeder, his wife Leslie Robb and their daughter Catherine observed 61 sage grouse in the same field.





*Male and female sage grouse*

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

**January Hunter Registration Results:** Biologist Ann Winters tallied waterfowl and upland hunting results for the month January and began compiling overall results for the 2011-2012 hunting season. Table shows the raw numbers from January.

<b>Waterfowl - B-Bar &amp; Washburn Is</b>				
<b># Hunters</b>	<b>Geese</b>	<b>Ducks</b>	<b>Total birds</b>	<b>Birds/Hunter</b>
<b>199</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>Upland Birds - all units</b>				
<b># Hunters</b>	<b>Valley Quail</b>	<b>Birds/Hunter</b>		
<b>90</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>0.6</b>		

**Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Complex - Jim Olson / Brian DuPont / Mike Nelson**  
***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Pogue Mt thinning:** Double A logging crews continued thinning green timber on the North Slope of the project area. Only 3 loads of pulp and 2 loads of saw logs were hauled this week due warmer weather and poor hauling conditions. Crews are planning to resume hauling when

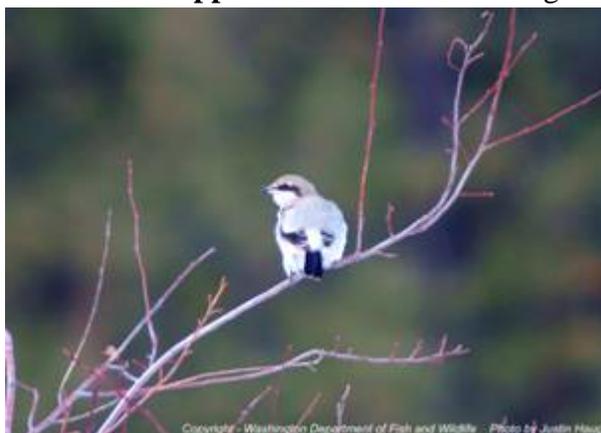
conditions improve and add additional trucks as needed to try and finish before the county puts on road restrictions.



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

**Weather Conditions:** For the week daytime temperatures ranged from a low of 35 to a high of 46, nighttime temperatures ranged from a low of 14 to a high of 28. Wind averages ranged from .0 to 1.3 mph with gusts ranging from 2 to 15 mph. Warmer weather in the week melted quite a bit of snow, but there is still about 8" of snow on north slopes and shaded areas with south slopes starting to bare up. End of week saw overnight temperatures that froze the ground nicely.

**Weekender Opportunities:** Bird watching – most common wintertime birds, e.g.



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

**Machine Thinning - Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration Project (SERP) Phase 1 & 2:**

For the week machine thinning progressed from the DNR Fire Camp on the eastside of the Sinlahekin south the area southeast of Forde Lake. About 30 loads of logs have been hauled out.

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

**Okanogan Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen of Washington:** Manager Swedberg attended the Okanogan Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen of Washington fundraiser in Tonasket. It was an excellent program and featured trail work they have helped with on WDFW lands as well as Federal lands. The Okanogan Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen of Washington have been very helpful in trail maintenance on the Sinlahekin and Scotch Creek Wildlife Areas.

**PRIVATE LANDS - John Cotton / Eric Braaten / JoAnn Wisniewski**

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

**LIP:** Private Lands Biologist Braaten contacted a landowner regarding LIP invoices and found out he was finally compensated. Private lands biologist Braaten also prepared material for installing raptor deterrents on wooden corner posts on all new fence installed on LIP project and others. This will hinder raptors from perching in areas where sage grouse frequent.



## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Waterfowl/Wetland Management:** District Wildlife Biologist Livingston conducted a site visit to assess the status of the migratory bird stamp funded wetland enhancement projects on the Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch. The dikes and control structures were functioning properly. However, the water level in the canal that feeds one of the two enhanced wetlands has been low since early fall and as a result little water has flowed through the system. Wildlife Area worker Rocky Ross extended the intake ditch into the canal to permit water to reach the wetland during low flows. Ross also constructed a catwalk to provide access to one of the culverts for periodic cleaning of debris, installed a beaver deceiver and seeded the dike and other areas disturbed by the construction work.



#### **Winter Weather**

Cold mornings in the 20's and sunny days in the 40's were present all week. A lot of snow melted off and the hillsides opened up. Elk are ranging off the feed sites daily and coming back at feeding time. There is little forage available except some green cheatgrass.

Weather for this coming week is going to be mild with lows in the 20's and highs in the 40's. No new precipitation is expected.

Elk are in good condition, with counts on the feed sites continuing to increase or hold steady.

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Winter Marine Waterfowl and Marine Bird Aerial Surveys:** Marine Bird Specialist Evenson along with Assistant District Biologists Murphie and Cyra completed the annual winter surveys in the inland marine waters of the Washington. In addition, a survey was flown in Boundary Bay on the Canadian side of the border. The Canadian Wildlife Service periodically funds these surveys to provide information on this important habitat for marine waterfowl located between Washington shorelines. Data transcription of the last flown surveys remains to be completed. These annual surveys provide trend data on the health of marine waterfowl and marine bird populations wintering on the Salish Sea, and are also used in the annual harvest setting negotiations in the Pacific Flyway for waterfowl. As always, the flexibility, professionalism, and

support of the staff of Kenmore Air has been greatly appreciated and is integral to the successful completion of these surveys.

**Joint Venture Winter Marine Waterfowl and Marine Bird Aerial Surveys:** Marine Bird Specialist Evenson, and Assistant District Wildlife Biologists Murphie and Cyra continued preparations for these Joint Venture funded surveys. These surveys are part of a bi-coastal effort to survey the outer coasts using a uniform survey methodology. Last winter the team flew the coasts of Oregon and Washington, and this year the waters of the Strait of Georgia and the southern Inside Passage of British Columbia will be flown. WDFW was funded for these flights due to our expertise in marine aerial bird surveys methodologies, techniques, species identification. In addition, the wildlife services in British Columbia do not currently have aircraft vendors with the expertise required for these low-level surveys. Kenmore Air's relationship with the regulating bodies in Canada has been a great help in facilitating the planning for these surveys.

**Swan Mortality and Morbidity Study:** Technicians Lapsansky and Otto and Volunteer Smith collected 24 swan carcasses during the week bringing the season total to 143. Four more swans were found at a potential "hot spot" where several swans have died without apparent cause over the past month. Biologist DeBruyn shipped these four swan carcasses to the US Geological Center National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, WI for necropsy. .

**WDFW-Woodland Park Zoo Citizen Science Amphibian Monitoring:** Biologist Anderson provided citizen amphibian monitoring training to 60-plus WDFW volunteers and participants in the collaborative WDFW-Woodland Park Zoo-Northwest Trek-Point Defiance Zoo Amphibian Monitoring Project. See more about this collaboration at the following website:  
<http://www.zoo.org/page.aspx?pid=2004>

Volunteers will be monitoring area sites in King County for eight species of amphibians. Participants will be surveying for occurrence of amphibian breeding at these sites. Anderson already had very useful conversations with trainees about some of the amphibian activity and species presence that they are familiar with in their local areas, including sites that may have breeding activity of western toad; a State Candidate and Priority species for management.

Part of the data collected is being utilized in a University of Washington graduate student's study examining the effects of urbanization on the occurrence and breeding activity of northern red-legged frog. We are excited about this citizen effort and look forward to this season's work with the volunteers as well as future efforts to provide baseline data on area wildlife and habitats of management concern.

**Great Blue Heron Management Assistance to city of Seattle:** Biologist Anderson provided two heron management recommendation plans for construction projects in management zones around heron colonies in Seattle, per Seattle code. WDFW provides management assistance to local jurisdictions in regards to Priority Habitats and Species, when called for under local code, per state Growth Management Act. More about WDFW Priority Habitats and Species and the relationship WDFW has in assisting local municipalities under Growth Management Act can be found at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/>

## **Wildlife Areas**

**Stillwater Blackberry Removal:** Manager Paulson attempted to cut down the blackberries that hinder the view of the parking lot from the road. With the view of the parking lot blocked there has been an increase of vandalism.

**Lake Terrell Unit:** Wildlife Area Manager Kessler checked the Lake Terrell dam, and checked on the area beavers had dammed in the past and made sure it was clear. The lake water level has now come up to within 3” of the top of the dam.

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

## **Wildlife Management**

**Nooksack Elk Herd Trap and Collar Project:** Biologist Danilson met with tribal biologists and private landowners to establish bait and motion-triggered camera sites. Elk are already utilizing two of the sites established. Danilson also worked with WDFW veterinary staff and others to refine capture protocols and obtain meds for this project.

## **Wildlife Areas**

**Crescent Lake Food Plot:** Manager Paulson toured the Crescent Lake Unit to examine current wildlife food plots. The Crescent Lake Unit wildlife food plots consisted of standing corn and barley. While hunters reported ducks using the standing corn and the pheasants utilized the barley, there were a large number of untouched corn cobs still on the stalk and the barley was sparse. Manager Paulson has talked with the lessee about possibly changing next year’s food plots.

**Whatcom Wildlife Area:** Wildlife Area Manager Kessler spoke with several waterfowl hunters using the units of the wildlife area. Although the season wasn’t the best, most agreed that the last month was very productive and made the season a successful one.

## **Other**

**Winter Conditions:** Weather conditions changed dramatically in the second week of January with a significant winter storm blanketing the region with a substantial layer of snow and ice. For much of the month high temperatures did not exceed the mid to upper 30’s with lows in the upper 20’s. Precipitation was significant and fell in the form of both rain and snow. These weather conditions represent the worst-case scenario for elk residing within District 12 during the winter months. However, the limited duration of the snow (1 ½ weeks) likely helped to limit the detrimental impacts to elk. Biologist Kertson provides the January weather summary from the National Weather Service SeaTac observation station below.

Average maximum temperature: 44.7

Average minimum temperature: 34.8

Total precipitation: 6.83”

Greatest 24 hr total: 1.38” (1/17 to 1/18)

Number of days with light rain: 21

Number of days with snow: 3

Snowfall: 9.6”

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Sound Waters Presentation:** District Biologist Milner presented a talk at the Sound Waters 2012 event on Whidbey Island. Milner discussed various shorebird projects that have occurred in Skagit and Port Susan Bays in recent years and linked this work with the conservation planning efforts for Port Susan Bay that were discussed by the Snohomish County Marine Resources committee representative, Kathleen Herrmann.

**Voluntary Osprey Platform Assistance under Wildlife Interaction Rules:** Biologist Anderson received confirmation that Burlington Northern Sante Fe voluntarily agreed to assist in providing an osprey platform near the Chittenden Locks in Seattle. They are working with Seattle Parks and Recreation to erect the platform prior to the osprey nesting season. A pair has nested on the railroad trestle there for the past two years. The telegraph tower they nested on was unsafe structurally and had to be removed. The inactive osprey nest was removed.

In review and permitting BNSF to remove the inactive osprey nest outside of the nesting season under the state Wildlife Interaction Rules, WDFW voluntarily requested BNSF consider a platform as mitigation. Seattle is now examining converting the Commodore Park Annex area to a more natural habitat site along with installation of the platform. The Wildlife Interaction Rules provide property owners with greater flexibility to prevent and mitigate damage while maintaining healthy wildlife populations. More about state Wildlife Interaction Rules can be found here: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/rules/>

**Wildlife Areas**

**Stillwater Parking Lot Renovation Project:** Manager Paulson talked with King County Parks Department for financial and labor assistance with the Stillwater Unit parking lots. The Snoqualmie Valley Trail runs between the Stillwater parking lot and the Stillwater property. The trail has limited parking and many of their patrons use the facilities at Stillwater. The parking lot needs to be graded and the cost of the port-a-potty for the year is high. No decisions have been made.

**Whatcom Wildlife Area:** Wildlife Area Manager Kessler coordinated with Dennis Conner of Whatcom County Parks. The County Sheriff's Dept has received a grant to fund environmental projects performed by the inmate work crews on county property. Since some of our access sites are adjacent to county property, they will now be able to help keep access sites on the wildlife area cleaned up too.

**Private Lands/Access**

**Snow Goose and Waterfowl Private Lands Quality Hunt Programs:** Biologist Roozen and technician Otto finished public use surveys for both Quality Hunt Programs for the conclusion of the waterfowl season. Roozen and Otto also met with partner landowners with payment documents (A-19a's).

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Human-Bear Conflict Workshop Proposal:** Biologist Kertson finalized and submitted his poster abstract for the 4<sup>th</sup> Human-Bear Conflict Workshop to be held in Missoula, Montana in

March. Coordinating with Detachment 10 Enforcement officers, the presentation focuses on the use of WDFW's Karelian Bear dogs in response to black bear-human conflicts. The abstract was submitted Monday and Biologist Kertson was informed on Friday the work had been accepted by the selection committee. He will continue working with Officers Moszeter and Jorg on the poster in the coming weeks.

**Diversity Regional Road Show Meeting:** Biologist Anderson, along with the rest of Region 4 wildlife biologist staff, met with Olympia Diversity Division staff to plan regional wildlife activities and future efforts for our District and Assistant District wildlife biologist staff. It was a productive meeting and we are looking forward to moving ahead with these efforts.

**Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary:** Biologist Anderson responded to a number of requests for wildlife presentations to the public or government staff charged with local management of wildlife. Anderson looks forward to these education events to provide WDFW information on how to reduce conflicts with wildlife, as well as how to enhance wildlife habitat for watchable wildlife opportunity and keeping common species common.

## **REGION 5**

### **Region 5 Wildlife Program Weekly**

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

##### **Wildlife Management**

**Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Elk Survey:** Biologists Miller and Bergh conducted the monthly winter survey for elk on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. Elk were distributed across the valley floor with elk using both the east and west ends of the valley. This is indicative of average winter distribution with no unusually large groupings observed. There were 120 elk on the valley floor with a calf to cow ratio of 35:100. All elk observed were in reasonably good condition with normal pelage. Weather during the survey was partly sunny and warm, with moderate winds and good visibility to the valley floor. Snow level was approximately 3,500 ft.

**Cascades Carnivore Project:** Biologist Anderson assisted Jocelyn Akins (coordinator) with organizing volunteer effort for this winter's field work to survey for forest carnivores in the South Cascades. Jocelyn is currently working on her Ph.D. at USC Davis primarily focusing on the ecology of the Cascades Mt Fox. Jocelyn is being sponsored by WDFW through an ALEA grant and with the use of two agency snowmobiles for accessing camera stations in remote areas of the South Cascades. This is the third winter of her work with a wealth of information collected on forest carnivores from the Mt Adams/Goat Rocks area.

##### **Wildlife Areas**

**Klickitat Wildlife Area:** WDFW Volunteer Enz checked water levels at the Sondino Ponds this week. Water levels were high (see photo below). The Slavens', who have worked on this site a long time, have reported similar water levels in previous winters, so this appears to be normal.



Pond B: Feb. 3, 2012

**Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area:**

**Winter Condition Monitoring:** While on the Mudflow Unit to conduct other work, Wildlife Area Manager Calkins had the opportunity to observe current forage conditions as well as individuals in several groups of elk. Overall the animals continue to appear to be relatively healthy for this time of year; one cow was noted to be limping and thin. Forage conditions also appear to be in good shape and it appeared that some grasses had possibly put on some growth with the recent mild conditions. The least desirable forage plants also have not been utilized to any significant degree which is also an indicator that forage is not currently in short supply.

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

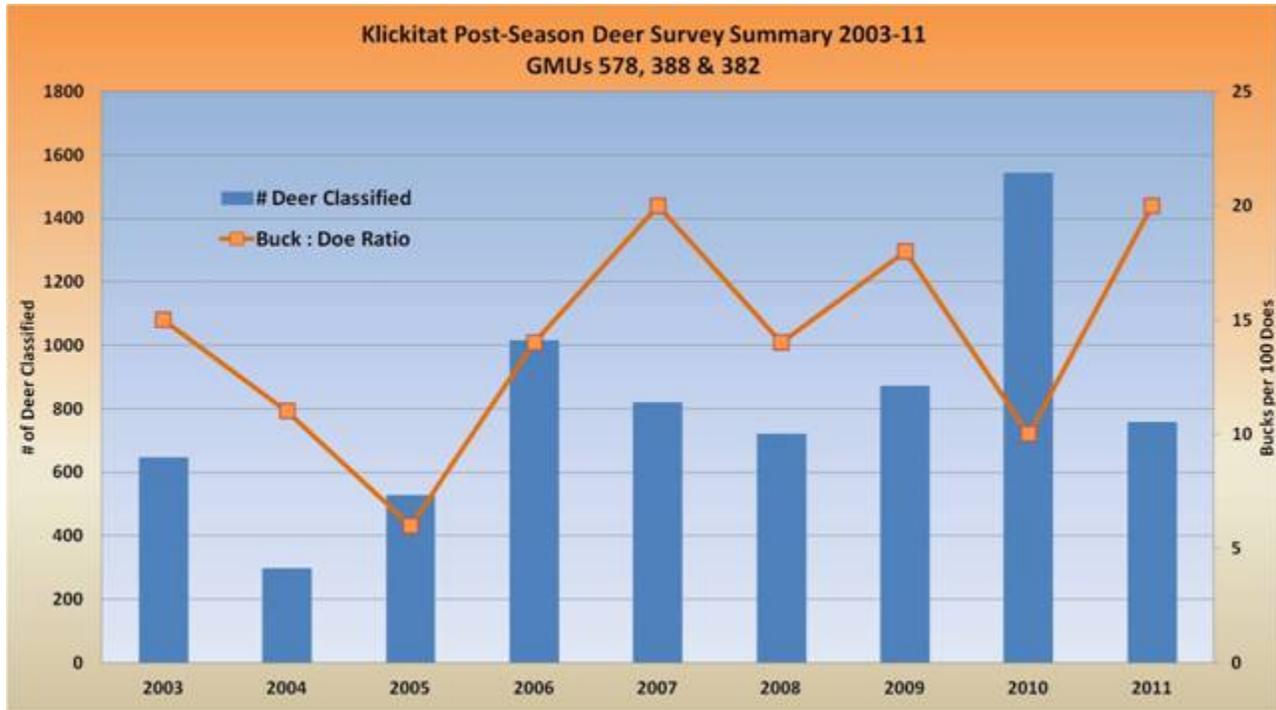
**Wildlife Management**

**Region 5 Deer Post-season Surveys:** Biologist Holman summarized the post season deer surveys for each of the three Klickitat County Game Management Units; 578 (West Klickitat), 388 (Grayback) and 382 (East Klickitat). These surveys are conducted each year, after hunting season and before the start of antler shedding, by a combination of WDFW staff and volunteers. Data generated from this effort is used to evaluate the structure of hunting seasons and assure that management objectives outlined in the Game Management Plan are met. The mild weather conditions in December produced average total deer observations with a sum of 759 deer classified. Total deer classified along with buck to doe and fawn to doe ratios are displayed below for each GMU:

GMU	Bucks	Does	Fawns	Total Classified
578	10	100	67	85
388	23	100	76	454
382	18	100	65	220

Pooled	20	100	72	759
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Both buck to doe and fawn to doe ratios in all three GMUs showed increases over the values generated following the 2010 hunting season. Additionally, the pooled buck to doe ratio of 20:100 exceeds the goal of 15-19 for the Klickitat population. Thanks to all those who participated in the surveys.



2003-2011KlickitatPostSeasonDeerSurvey

### Wildlife Areas

**Watchable Wildlife at Shillapoo:** More than one hundred swans have been seen every day this week resting and feeding in a wetland located in the North Unit of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. With the waterfowl hunting season over, birds have once again settled down, and can be seen all day long resting and feeding in the ponds and fields on the Wildlife Area. Visitors are reminded to keep their distance, and not scare the birds off of the area. Wintering waterfowl cause thousands of dollars of crop damage every year to private land owners, so it is crucial that waterfowl not be disturbed, and forced to leave the Wildlife Area. Some of the birds seen this week at Shillapoo include: Mallard, Northern Pintail, Wigeon, Ring-neck ducks, Bufflehead, Dusky Canada geese, Tundra swans, Sandhill cranes, Lesser Yellowlegs, Bald eagles, and Northern Harriers.

**RCO Workshop:** Wildlife Area Manager Calkins attended the RCO video workshop covering land acquisition grant project programs and changes to their process. A community viewing event was sponsored by the Columbia Land Trust that was also attended by representatives from the City of Vancouver, Camas, and Washougal as well as Clark County.

### Private Lands/Access

**Private Industrial Timberlands:** Technician White compiled information detailing accomplishments of the Private lands Program in District 9 for the 2011-12 season. Information

includes the cooperators in Klickitat County and any work done on these properties, including hunter field checks near these timberlands during deer and elk season and the resulting use by hunters. A separate report, containing some of the same information, was prepared for each of our private industrial timber cooperators in District 9: Western Pacific Timber and Hancock Forest Management. Technician White also summarized Hunt By Written Permission information for 2011-2012. Four cooperators, with 3,228 acres under contract, issued 125 hunt-by-written-permission slips to hunters in the 2011-2012 season. This number is down from the total in 2010-2011 of 181 permits issued by 5 cooperators.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area**

**Damage Assessment:** Wildlife Area Manager Calkins assessed erosion control structures along the North Fork Toutle River for any damages that may have occurred during the most recent storm events. No new recent damage was noted. Previous damage had occurred in November when the river got between the bankline and one of the structures and at least one log jam was dislodged and moved at least a quarter mile downstream. The damages are difficult to completely assess as some of the structures may simply be buried in sediment, which we expected might eventually happen.

**Road Maintenance:** Wildlife Area Manager Calkins worked on minor road maintenance projects on the Mudflow Unit. Included was removal of a large tree across the road we use to cross Weyerhaeuser lands and cutting of surface drains as well as constructing one temporary water bar by hand to channel water route water off the roadway where it was creating ruts.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Natural Resource Technician Hiring Process:** Program Manager Jonker, Wildlife Area Manager Calkins, and Private Lands Biologist Stephens met to review applications and select candidates for interviews that will occur later this month. Our receipt of the applications had been delayed due to a backlog in our Human Resources office. Wildlife Area Manager Grabski volunteered to do the initial screening, which helped to speed the process along. Many thanks to Mark for devoting one and a half days to reviewing over fifty applications and helping us with this process.

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**Winter Conditions:**

**D-10 & MSHWA Winter Conditions:**

**Past Weather:** November temperatures were below normal and precipitation was slightly above average. Snow accumulated in mid and low elevations early in the month but was later melted off by a major warm rainstorm. Most of the month of December was unusually dry with below normal temperatures except the last week, which was warm and wet. The first half of January was mild with relatively warm and dry conditions but was followed by a mid-month storm with significant low elevation snow and valley accumulations. The latter part of the month was

relatively normal with occasional rain and snow elevations generally above 2500 feet. February began with several days of almost spring like temperatures and very little precipitation.

**Short-Term Forecast:** Very mild with little chance of precipitation over the next week. Valley temperatures will range from the low 30's to upper 40's. The 6-10 and 8-14 day outlooks suggest above normal temperatures and show the south cascades near the fringe of a forecast zone of below average precipitation.

**Long-Term Forecast: *No Change.*** The longer term outlook maps still suggest below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation throughout the winter, but Southwest Washington is now on the edge of these forecast zones.

**Habitat:** Slopes below 3,000 feet are snow free or very little snow is present. Observation on the mudflow this week is that grasses actually appear to have put on a small amount of growth and grazing pressure has been light in much of the area. There has been little use of the least desirable forages, indicating that adequate quantities of the more desirable species are still available.

**Snow Depths:** Little snow left in the lower elevations. Snowpack is near average in the Southwest Cascades. See spreadsheet below for detailed information ([06Feb2012-MSH\\_Sno-Depth.pdf](#)).

**Animal Concentrations:** No unusual concentrations noted to date. Counts on the Mudflow Unit Survey area remain low. This week's monthly monitoring count tallied 120 elk on the Mudflow Unit. 176 elk were present in the mudflow monitoring area during a survey January 3, 2012. This and the previous December 5, 2011 total of 116 elk are below levels that would raise concerns.

**Animal Condition:** Animals observed to date appear to be in reasonably good condition. One cow was observed on the Mudflow that appeared unusually thin, but not in obvious distress. This animal also had a slight limp, potentially indicating that disease may be a contributing factor to this individual's decline. A few others in the same group had a similar gait.

**Mortality:** In the course of relocating radio collared elk in the Mt. St. Helens herd study area, three mortality signals have been detected. One of these is near the Western end of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area Hoffstadt Unit. Due to the degree of decomposition, a link to winter stress was not possible by examination of the carcasses located so far.

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

*The public is reminded that the Mudflow Unit of the Mt. 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:** Weather this past month has been more typical of winter conditions. Snow pack in the Cascades has improved.

**Weather This week:** The weather continued to moderate this week with warmer weather and some melting of snow below 2500 feet.

**Winter Severity:** There is still little concern for the overall severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County. These conditions could change with additional snow throughout the winter. Until recently the winter severity has been minimal on big game.

**Habitat:** Habitat conditions in Skamania and western Klickitat counties continue to be poor due to the recent storm that dropped 2-3 feet of snow at mid elevations. Snow conditions are crusty. In eastern Klickitat County habitat is open and conditions are favorable for wintering deer populations. Snow is restricted to higher elevations (above 3000 ft).

**Animal Concentrations:** Large groups of deer were seen in eastern Klickitat County following the recent snow/ice storm event.

**Animal Condition:** Deer and elk appear to still be in good condition as the severe winter conditions have been a recent event.

**Mortality:** Several individual mortalities were reported this last week throughout the district as a result of the severe snow and ice conditions of two weeks ago. Most mortalities were reported along roads as deer were seen more frequently as ice conditions made it more difficult for travel through open country.

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

## **REGION 6**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Winter Marine Waterfowl and Marine Bird Aerial Surveys:** Marine Bird Specialist Evenson along with Assistant District Biologists Murphie and Cyra completed the annual winter surveys in the inland marine waters of the Washington. In addition, a survey was flown in Boundary Bay on the Canadian side of the border. The Canadian Wildlife Service periodically funds these surveys to provide information on this important habitat for marine waterfowl located between Washington shorelines. Data transcription of the last flown surveys remains to be completed. These annual surveys provide trend data on the health of marine waterfowl and marine bird populations wintering on the Salish Sea, and are also used in the annual harvest setting negotiations in the Pacific Flyway for waterfowl. As always, the flexibility, professionalism, and support of the staff of Kenmore Air has been greatly appreciated and is integral in the successful completion of these surveys.