

# Wildlife Program

Week of July 16-22, 2012

## **LANDS DIVISION**

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

**Riffe Lake Conservation Easement:** On behalf of Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) secured a Conservation Easement on 1,859 acres of working timberland and valuable wildlife habitat above Lewis County's Riffe Lake approximately four miles southwest of Morton. This action will conserve the property from development in perpetuity. The Conservation Easement on land owned by Pope Resources was purchased using mitigation funding from the licensing of TPU's Mossy Rock Dam.

With the Conservation Easement in place the 1,859 acre property can continue operating as active timberland, but cannot be used for commercial or residential development. This transaction expands on the existing 10,000 acres of land surrounding the lake that TPU conserved and WDFW currently manages, ensuring the majority of land surrounding Riffe Lake remains forested and undeveloped. The forests around the lake are home to a wide variety of wildlife species including elk, deer, bald eagle and pileated woodpecker.

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

**Whatcom Wildlife Area Fishing Pier, Parking Lot and Restroom Completion:** The Whatcom Fishing Pier Access Development was funded by a Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) State Lands Development grant. The \$400,000 project included removing the old dilapidated dock, the construction of a new state of the art fishing pier and gangway, a new CXT restroom facility, and new parking lot improvements including an educational kiosk. The project was completed in October, but Lake Terrell Wildlife Manager reports that the use did not begin until this summer. There's been a phenomenal public response to the new facility.



*Before.*



*After.*

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

**Selling Surplus Land Streamlined:** On July 19, 2012, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) approved a Programmatic Environmental Assessment (Programmatic EA) process that provides a streamlined and cost-effective process for evaluating surplus USFWS funded land for disposal. While land acquisition previously included categorical exclusion, land disposal requests could not be approved under the existing categorical exclusions. June Skye of WDFW Real Estate Services worked since 2009 with Idaho and Oregon in a joint effort with the USFWS Pacific Region in drafting a Programmatic EA that allows small properties to be evaluated and processed for sale without the cost and time involved in an EA process. The Programmatic EA will save Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and USFWS time and money in jointly approving and preparing parcels for surplus.

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

**New Westside Lands Supervisor:** Please welcome Bob Cannon as the new Westside Lands Supervisor. Bob will be stationed in the Montesano office and oversee the Real Property work

for Regions 4, 5, and 6. Bob holds a bachelor's degree in Natural Resource Management from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. His work history includes eight years with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and 14 years with the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). His work with WDNR has included the implementation of federal grants through the Forest Legacy Program. Robert has structured and negotiated complex Conservation Easements and worked with private timberland owners, non-profit organizations, U.S. Forest Service program managers and WDNR staff to accomplish the goals of the forest legacy program.

**New Statewide Range Ecologist:** Jeff Burnham started this week as the new Statewide Range Ecologist in the Land Stewardship and Operations Section of the Lands Division, Wildlife Program. Jeff has a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in botany and ecology from Brigham Young University and Utah State University respectively, and over seven years of experience in range monitoring working in large part on the Sagebrush Treatment Evaluation Project throughout Utah, Idaho and Nevada. Jeff will work with land managers implementing agency goals and objectives towards rangeland management. Working from the Yakima Regional Office, Jeff will provide assistance on grazing plans and associated Ecosystem Standard evaluations, and will perform resource monitoring and assessment efforts to measure impacts of management activities on wildlife areas. Welcome aboard Jeff!

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

**Access for Pocket Gopher Surveys:** Section Manager Bruce Thompson worked with Science Division and Region 6 staff to compile and review a master listing of landowners with prospective plot locations for pocket gopher surveys. The listing includes nearly 5,000 records which are being examined to determine which landowners can be contacted most efficiently by regional staff and which will be better contacted with a WDFW standard mailing. An arrangement coordinated with Department of Enterprise Services (DES) provides merge and mailing services to send letters to landowners.

## **WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION**

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

**Wildlife Rehabilitation:** Wildlife rehabilitation is a profession licensed by the State of Washington. In order to obtain a license, wildlife rehabilitators must complete 1000 hours of training, successfully pass the exam, and either work at approved facilities or assist in building them. The rule governing wildlife rehabilitation in the state of Washington, Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 232-12-275 is being revised to improve efficiency and consistency for Washington wildlife rehabilitators to practice rehabilitation and for WDFW staff to manage this activity. Tricia Thompson is finalizing the draft for the administrative regulations staff to review.

A bobcat was delivered to Sarvey Wildlife Care Center this week after getting trapped in a razor wire fence at Monroe Correctional Center. The bobcat was diagnosed with deep tissue cuts, but appears to be healing from those wounds. Tricia Thompson is receiving updates from Sarvey about the bobcat's condition and the proper protocol to follow in preparation for the bobcat's eventual release.



*Sarvey Wildlife Care Center photo.*

**Falconry:** The initial draft of the new falconry raptor rehabilitation exam is underway by Tricia Thompson. This exam differs from the special raptor rehabilitation exam because falconers must first pass a test in raptor daily husbandry, housing, and behavior. This test is highly concentrated on disease and injury treatment. Falconer raptor rehabilitators are permitted to care for only raptors. The test will be delivered to existing raptor rehabilitators and falconers for their review.

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



*Dyanna Lambourn photo.*

**WildWatchcams – Summer highlights:** Halfway through the busy cam season, online viewers visited WDFW wildwatchcams to capture a glimpse of *Wild Washington*. Due to recent wind

and lightning storms, the unoccupied Lake Washington eagle cam was damaged and will remain offline for the remainder of the season.

**Sealcam:** July is primetime for harbor seal pupping season and thus far no public complaints were received about the vivid life and death drama stemming from the tender moments of mother-pup interactions. Way to go Dyanna Lambourn for keeping the cam on the more pleasant side of the haul out! Due to predation by opportunistic bald eagles, herons, coyotes, gulls, ravens and raccoons, up to 50 percent of seal pups will not survive their first year of life.

**Ospreycam:** An earlier cam captured the left image below of the three nestling ospreys. Displayed below on the right is a more recent image where one or more of the young staged a successful hit, as they point skyward and squeeze their strong sphincter muscles, sending an upward stream toward the cam several feet above and beyond the nest's edge. Fortunately, heavy rains occurred around the same time as the incident, but numerous viewers inquired about the continual foggy weather in Washington.



*Gig Harbor Ospreys.*

*Prepare for Hunting Seasons Now* is the first of a series of documents related to hunting prospects that will be released this summer. The focus of this piece is to encourage hunters to get active now in order to have a successful hunt this fall. Subject headings are: ***Study the regulations; Take a Hunter Education Course, Buy licenses, tags and stamps, Spend some time with maps, Do some scouting, Get to know landowners, Shape-up, Work with your dog, Get home on the (shooting) range, Get organized, and Start scheduling.***

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

**Volunteer Program Moves Forward:** Wildlife Program volunteer coordinator James Chandler presented a report on the Community Event Registration and Volunteer Information System (CERVIS), an on-line volunteer management software system, to the Executive Management Team (EMT). The presentation was well-received by EMT, providing solutions to effectively

manage volunteers, increase participation with additional volunteer events, and create customized reports covering volunteer activities.

## **REGION 1**

### **Wolf Management**

#### **District 1**

**Gray Wolf Management:** Assistant District Biologist Jay Shepherd and Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker met with Seth Wilson from the Blackfoot Challenge Range Rider and Wolf Monitoring Program in Montana, rancher John Dawson, range rider Leisa Hill, WDFW Commissioner Jay Kehne, and Fish and Wildlife Officer Don Weatherman to discuss the Smackout Range Riding Program and Wolf Monitoring effort. Assistant District Biologist Jay Shepherd de-scrambled and mapped and texted Smackout wolf locations to range rider Leisa Hill everyday of the week.

Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker and Assistant District Biologist Jay Shepherd accompanied and assisted Wildlife Biologist Ben Maletzke in trapping efforts for the Diamond Pack in the Middle Branch Le Clerc Creek area. Assistant District Biologist Jay Shepherd and Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker discussed trail camera deployment for next week. Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker worked on geo-referencing cameras and updated the camera inventory/deployment log. Assistant District Biologist Jay Shepherd discussed wolf issues in the Wedge with Biologist Frame and Officer Weatherman.



*Biologist Maletzke setting a trap in the Middle Branch of Le Clerc Creek to re-collar the Diamond pack.*



*Biologist Maletzke checking the hair in a sprung trap in the Middle Branch of Le Clerc Creek. The hair appeared to be deer hair.*



*Diamond pack pups in the East Fork of Le Clerc Creek drainage.*

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Common Loon Conservation:** Citizen Scientists Ginger and Dan Poleschook along with other agency cooperators completed leg-banding efforts on Common Loons at nesting lakes in northeastern Washington. The Poleschook's will compile banding records and associated information into a summary report later this year. Common Loons successfully nested producing young at only 3 lakes within District One this season including Ferry, Swan, and Pierre Lakes. Two other lakes, Big Meadow and Long Lake, each had a pair of loons, but nesting was unsuccessful.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Sage grouse brood flushed on Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area:** Volunteer Dr. Kim Thorburn flushed her third sage grouse brood and counted 2 chicks out of the 5 that hatched. Kim's comment," So far, that makes 10-14 sage chicks on the brood flushes, which, without looking back through the mortality data and going by memory, makes our sage grouse numbers at about replacement this season. Given the fact that we have a number of hens with collars that probably died just as they started nesting this season, we can hope that our replacement numbers are even better."

**Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Big Game Forage plots:** Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice roughly counted 227 elk feeding on spring oats and winter wheat forage plots on Smoothing Iron ridge on Monday afternoon. The elk were observed feeding at 1:00 in the afternoon on a hot summer day. We've observed some large groups of elk on Smoothing Iron before, but this is the largest I've seen in the middle of summer on Smoothing Iron. The elk seem to be especially attracted to the oats and were observed again Wednesday evening running from cover to the oats while I was disking a field at about 7:30 in the evening with a D4 Cat. Needless to say, the loud tractor didn't bother the elk. John Cook presented information at a workshop at Pendleton a few months ago indicating that summer nutrition is especially important to elk. These elk appear to be quite content getting a full belly from the forage plots. Fresh water and salt are nearby the forage plots as well and are getting substantial use.



***A portion of 227 elk foraging on winter wheat and spring oats at Smoothing Iron Ridge at 1:00 pm on a hot summer day.***



*Elk and their calves running to a spring oats field on Wednesday evening at Smoothing Iron Ridge.*

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

**Private Lands/Access**

**Anatone Landowners Meeting:** Sergeant Sprecher, Officer Vance, Biologist Rasley, Biologist Earl and Biologist McCanna met with Anatone landowners regarding their “Elk Hunting Only” program they have been in the past seven years. Biologist McCanna lead the meeting by displaying their sign and explaining the new WAC has over ridden the program. McCanna also explained the new program is called “Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement” and the land must be open to all hunting, not just elk hunters. McCanna then turned the meeting over to Biologist Rasley who did a great job explaining the program and how it is used south of the Snake River. With ten landowners and two couples in the room you could of cut the air with a piece of paper, four landowners signed up for the program and three others took home to read over and will probably sign. All in all was a worthwhile meeting. The biggest complaint from the landowners was the August and September elk hunts were taken away while the majority of the damage is occurring. Landowners say the elk move up into the timber, which is fee hunting only during the later months. District Wildlife Biologist Paul Wik has scheduled a follow up meeting with these landowners to address the hunting season issue.

**VPA Access and Habitat Initiative – Asotin/Garfield Counties:** Biologist Earl continued his efforts this week to expand the VPA program. He is currently working on contracts that carry 8,965.04 acres of public access and 344.86 acres of habitat plantings. *Columbia/Walla Walla Counties*. Private Lands Biologist Dawn Davis continued to contact private landowners to inquire about their interest in enrolling properties in the VPA program. In addition, Davis met

with 2 private landowners interested in enrolling their properties in the VPA program under access only agreements in Walla Walla County. These cooperative agreements would provide approximately 2,024 acres of public hunting access under Feel Free to Hunt. Another Walla Walla County producer that Davis previously contacted has committed to establishing a native grass planting (~13 ac) adjacent to fields enrolled in CRP. This cooperative agreement also includes up to 241 acres of hunting access under the Feel Free to Hunt program. All 3 agreements have been entered into CAPs and are in draft status. Davis also visited a 1,429 acre site in NE Walla Walla County; the property is currently enrolled in CRP, however, the landowner is waiting to hear if FSA will be extending the end of their contract date. Due to the uncertainty of is CRP status the landowner is potentially interested in enrolling in a 1 year access only agreement. *Whitman County*. Biologist McCanna has enrolled four contracts into the VPA Initiative program totaling 4,005.5 acres. These contracts include 1.4 acres of riparian planting and 40 acres of CRP inter-seeding split between contracts. Biologist McCanna is working with three more landowners at this time. McCanna will enter these contracts after harvest starts the first of August so landowners are still available to meet with.

## **REGION 2**

### **Wolves**

**Summary of wolf monitoring work in the Naneum and Colockum – Technician Spence:** I have spent 15 days surveying for wolf tracks and sign. I have surveyed most major roads, and the likely ridges and basins looking for tracks and sign. We currently have 9 cameras out in the Colockum and Naneum, and as of 7/16/2012 have 146 camera nights. Cameras will continue to be out for about another week. Results so far are no tracks or sign of wolves, and no detections with trail cameras. The lack of wolf tracks, sign, or photographs coupled with our survey effort indicates that it is very unlikely that there is a resident pack or pair of wolves living in the Naneum/Colockum at this point in time. There have been a few reports of wolf sightings, howling, and tracks in the Naneum/Colockum. However, wolves travel and disperse widely, and the data seems to suggest that these tracks and sightings are probably a case of dispersal or exploratory movements by wolves, not an established pack. Wolves can disperse at any time of the year, but most dispersal happens in fall or late winter. We will continue to monitor the Colockum and the Naneum for wolves as time goes on.

### **District Biologists**

**District 5: Grant / Adams District - Rich Finger / Vacant**

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

**Western grebe:** Biologists Finger and Becker made a final weekly visit to monitor the Western grebe colony at Job Corps dike. Water levels dropped 21” over 9 days (2.3” per day) and most nesting was completed. Of 69 individual nests monitored for this period; 1) 8 (12%) were active on the last visit or had an unknown fate, 2) 25 (36%) hatched, and 3) 36 (52%) appear to have failed. Of the 36 failures, 25% were from nest destruction (likely from wind and carp activity), 19% appear to be from declining water levels, 8% from abandonment, 11% from egg

depredation, 5% from adult mortality, and the remainder was unknown. Of the 4 abandoned nests, 2 had no eggs on the first visit.

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

**Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA):** Biologists Finger and Cotton visited with members of the CPWMA to discuss their ongoing work with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in Region 1 and ways in which to involve them in Region 2 activities. The CPWMA essentially serves as a liaison between hunters and landowners and has three objectives, 1) use hunting as a tool to assist landowners with reducing congregations of ungulates on agricultural fields, 2) use hunting as a tool to manage ungulate populations within levels desired by state and federal entities, and 3) provide opportunities to the general public for unique hunting opportunities by engaging with private landowners for enrollment into their program. CPWMA manages all hunters and claims to have had great success pleasing private landowners and hunters.

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

**Weather Conditions:** Hot weather dominated the district with several days of 100 plus degrees. Along with the heat came numerous thunder storms that resulted in frequent lightning strikes, starting fires throughout the district

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

**Bighorn Sheep:** Biologist Gallie completed surveys on two of the three Chelan County herds. Surveys focused on locating bands of ewes and lambs to determine productivity, with rams being of secondary importance at this time of year. The Swakane herd had a minimum count total of 122 sheep (58 ewes, 24 lambs, and 40 rams). This marks the highest lamb to ewe ratio recorded for the Swakane herd. A large portion of the core range of the Swakane herd was burned three years ago, and appears to have responded to that burn with increased grass and forbs production. The burn, along with two years of wetter spring/early summer weather, may have contributed to the high lamb count.

The Chelan Butte herd continues to increase; now at a minimum count of 128 (72 ewes, 13 lambs, and 43 rams). This lamb count appears low; therefore some lambs may have been missed. However, the Chelan Butte herd has limited “typical” lambing habitat within its known range. The terrain is relatively easy to negotiate, and is likely that we observed most of the sheep during surveys. Future focused aerial flights will aid us in determining the precision of ground counts.

The Manson herd survey was unsuccessful due to high temperatures which pushed sheep to hold up in cooler deep canyons with streams, limiting our inability to view the herd without a boat or aircraft. Attempts to complete this will continue.



*A group of sheep from the Chelan Butte bighorn herd.*

Biologist Gallie and Officer Oswald recovered the VHS collar from a bighorn sheep mortality in the Manson herd. Virtually nothing was left of the carcass to determine the cause of death. Collars were placed during a capture in 2009.



*The view of the canyon the bighorn sheep collar mortality was recovered from. Terrain varied from really steep to really-unsafe-steep.*

**Sick/Injured Bighorn:** Biologist Volsen and Gallie responded to a report of a sick/injured bighorn sheep north of Highway 150 and the city of Chelan. This area has become the extended range of the Chelan Butte and/or the Manson bighorn sheep herds. Over the last 5 years, bighorns have occupied this area continuously, producing young and attracting rams from the Chelan Butte herd to move across the highway during the rut. Due to its close proximity to the city of Chelan, there is a risk of bighorns encountering domestic sheep and goats in the form of small-landowner “herds”. The area in and around Howard Flats, where the sheep was found, is known to harbor several bands of domestics.

According to the report from the landowner that found the sheep, a small group of bighorns had been relatively close to a landowner’s orchard where domestic sheep are held just the day before. This information added urgency to recovering the sheep and getting samples. Biologist Gallie was first to arrive and worked with the landowner to locate the sheep and determine its condition. The yearling ewe (1.5 years) was found lying on its side on a south facing slope in direct sun on a 100 degree day. The landowner had moved the sheep to a shaded location and then called WDFW. The ewe was unable to stand and had limited ability move its hind legs. When approached, the sheep would paw the ground with its front legs, but showed little other ability to move. We took nasal swabs and blood samples from the sheep and then euthanized her. The carcass was skinned to determine if any injury or trauma had occurred that may have caused the condition. There was no evidence of any subcutaneous injury on the hind quarters, forequarters, neck or back. None of her limbs or pelvis was broken. We collected samples of lung and heart tissue and fecal samples along with swabs and blood. Working with Biologist Rowan we sent samples to WSU’s diagnostic lab for testing.

## **Species Recovery**

### **Pygmy Rabbit Recovery - Penny Becker**

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

**Husbandry of Enclosures and Monitoring of Released Kits:** Research Scientist Becker, Biologist Eidson and graduate student DeMay spent time on Sagebrush Flat wildlife area providing supplemental feed to the pygmy rabbits in the large enclosures and kits in the nursery area. So far this season 87 kits have been released to the wild and we estimate that well over 150 kits were born in the enclosures. Another release, likely the last of the season, will be done on 7/23. Eidson and DeMay performed radio telemetry to track released pygmy rabbit kits. Eight kits from the most recent release still have transmitters attached, while kits that were released earlier in the season have lost their transmitters as they have grown. During monitoring, we have encountered many kits without transmitters near the release site.

**Captive Breeding Efforts Finish At Oregon Zoo:** On 7/19 the Oregon Zoo brought the remaining 11 adults and 5 kits to the large enclosures on Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area, thus ending their role as a captive breeding center for pygmy rabbits. Just two adults not fit for life out of the zoo remain with them now. This completes the planned transition from captive breeding in zoos to controlled propagation in large enclosures in semi-wild conditions.

Washington State University ended their breeding program in June 2011 and Northwest Trek Wildlife Park finished their efforts in October 2011.

**Enclosure Site Selection:** Research Scientist Becker and Biologists Chad Eidson, Dan Peterson and Ann Winters spent the morning of 7/20 selecting a site on the Dormaier unit for the next pygmy rabbit breeding enclosure. Peterson and Winters gave a tour of the area and the group hiked the property searching for dense sage areas, flat topography and other features important for holding the rabbits successfully. Overall, the unit and adjacent areas had great intact habitat that could support rabbits. A site near an old homestead and well was selected for a 5-6 acre enclosure.



*Becker, Eidson, Peterson and Winters scout out the best enclosure location on the Dormaier unit.*

### **Wildlife Areas**

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

**Weather Conditions:** Sunny weather with mid-day thunderstorms and high humidity, with highs in the upper 80's and lows in the lower 60's, along with thunderstorms throughout the week.

**Weekender Opportunities:** The Methow River and its tributaries have receded to fishable levels! Let the summer trout season begin.

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

**Beaver Creek Pivots and fence:** Construction got underway this week on three irrigation pivots on our Beaver Creek irrigated Lease. Construction should be complete sometime early next week, leaving enough time to get a second cutting this year. This project may provide an opportunity to improve in-stream flows in Beaver Creek, a stream that is home for three listed fish species. Methow staff also met with the lessee and representatives from the Okanogan Conservation District to discuss funding opportunities to fence this irrigated lease so that livestock can be fed there in the winter. If we can get this fence project completed by this fall it will give the lessee the ability to feed his cattle on the hay field (thus improving soil organic content and fertility) and not on the Beaver Creek floodplain. This is a great win-win opportunity.

**Obanion Project tour:** Tom McCoy and other WDFW staff met with representatives from the Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation and Bureau of Reclamation to go over the final details of the salmon ID habitat recovery project. Specifically, we looked at a late design change that had not been presented or analyzed in prior iterations. Some potential concerns were identified but later resolved after meeting with the design engineer. We are hoping Phase I of this project will get underway in the near future.

**Habermehl Project tour:** On Monday, Tom McCoy and other WDFW staff met with representatives from the Yakama Nation Fisheries Program and one of their consulting engineers to discuss the latest designs for this salmon ID habitat project. This project begins on WDFW property, goes through two private parcels, and terminates on WDFW property. The proposed project includes a lengthy infiltration gallery and extensive enhancements to an existing channel. Overall the WDFW staff was quite pleased with their proposal and expects implementation late in the summer of 2013.

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

**Lloyd Ranch building surplus:** A local citizen purchased two of the Lloyd Ranch building during our surplus process and has the big barn nearly dismantled. We expect him to start on the next one within the next week. We were also contacted by another individual who is interested in taking most of the other buildings that were available for surplus. If we can make the necessary arrangements the demolition phase of this project will consist of little more than removing the concrete footings! This would represent a significant cost savings to the state and put these otherwise useless buildings, slated for demolitions, to a beneficial use.

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

**Weather Conditions:** Scattered rain and electrical storms throughout the week left behind 0.32 inches of rain at headquarters and by Friday 3 more fires of varying sizes in northern Douglas County. Temperatures ranged, lows in upper 50's to the mid-90.

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



**Dezellem Fire – Bridgeport Unit:** Late Friday afternoon a lightning strike from one of those electrical storms mentioned above resulted in a small fire in a stand of Ponderosa pines located above the town of Bridgeport. A six person crew from Douglas – Okanogan County Fire District had responded at 4:15pm and by the time Biologist Dan Peterson and Maintenance Mechanic Fidel Rios arrived at the site at 5pm District firefighters had the burn well in hand. Heavy rains accompanying the storm kept the fire limited to a single Ponderosa pine and a small area of grass. At 6:30 a 16 person DNR crew arrived and relieved the District personnel. Steep terrain kept firefighters from getting their trucks to the site so suppression efforts were limited to hand tools and ‘bladder bags’. The DNR crew stayed on site till 9pm and returned early Saturday morning to complete mop up.

**Foster Creek Fire – Bridgeport Unit:** Wednesday the DNR declared the Foster Creek Fire 100% contained and 100% controlled. The Type 3 Incident Team that was assigned to the fire demobilized and took their fire camp that had been located at the Bridgeport High School. The total acreage burned was estimated to be 1,291, with approximately 720 acres of that on the wildlife area. Restoration and rehab needs include nearly 3 miles of dozer lines, erosion control measures on 70 acres and probable reseeding on 90 acres.

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

**Weather Conditions:** A couple severe thunderstorms produced lots of lightning and heavy rain, of which 6” ended up in the HQ basement.

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

**Fence Marking:** Clark and Mike completed fence marking 2 ½ miles on the Chesaw unit, while Bryan completed about the same on the Scotch Creek unit. The objective is to make more visible the barbed wire to Sharp-tailed grouse, and other low flying upland game birds. Fence collisions have been identified as a mortality factor for these birds. We will continue marking the most vulnerable sections of fence for a total of 20 miles.



**Private Lands - John Cotton / Eric Braaten / JoAnn Wisniewski**

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

**State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE):** Private Lands Biologist Braaten and PL Biologist Baarstad completed more Douglas County SAFE field surveys this week on 22 fields and visited several fields getting prepared for this falls SAFE seedings. Private Lands Biologists Cotton and Wisniewski completed SAFE field surveys and continued writing plans and contacting landowners to discuss plans prior to sending the plans in to Foster Creek Conservation District.

**Habitat Development:** Private Lands Biologist Braaten visited several habitat projects, to see how much maintenance will be required this summer. Private Lands Biologist Braaten was impressed with tree and shrub growth.



*05/2009.*



*07/19/2012.*



*Sharp-tailed grouse habitat project.*

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Mourning Dove Banding:** District Wildlife Biologist Mike Livingston completed trapping and banding mourning doves for the season. He banded a total of 195 doves (143 hatch year; 52 after hatch year) at the Ringold Fish Hatchery. Two doves were recaptured that were originally banded in 2011, one as a hatch year and one as an after hatch year. Hatchery worker Kyle Huwe provided significant assistance by keeping baits replenished and setting traps.



*A banded mourning dove being examined by a volunteer banding assistant.*

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Road Maintenance and Abandonment Planning:** Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager Ross Huffman continued RMAP inventory work for newly acquired sections in the Rock Creek Unit. Access to the remaining area was very difficult with the only access on foot or ATV. One road segment still remains to be inventoried. No major road issues were discovered, however there are extensive weed infestations on the unit. Both USFS trails and un-authorized jeep trails are causing resource damage and will need to be addressed.



*Milk Lake, located in Section 5 of the Rock Creek Unit.*



*Devil's Slide in background.*



*Spring flowing down USFS jeep trail and into pond on WDFW land.*

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Blakely Island Species of Greatest Conservation Need Surveys:** District Biologist Milner was graciously hosted by Seattle Pacific University at their field station on Blakely Island. With the assistance of Dr. Eric Long, the University's wildlife science professor, surveys were conducted for bats and small mammals throughout much of the island. This was a brief overnight visit, scheduled around everyone's busy activities. We set 70 snap traps at various stations, 6 live traps and spent one evening recording bat calls. The Shaw Island vole is a species of greatest conservation need and may be absent from Blakely Island. No voles were caught, and we saw no evidence of the typical runways through grasslands this species is known for. However, we documented a roosting Townsend's big-eared bat in a historic cabin, and a western toad breeding site. Both of these species are also designated as species of greatest conservation need by WDFW.



*A roosting Townsend's big-eared bat was observed in an historic cabin on Blakely Island.*

**Canada Goose Banding at PAWS Rehabilitation Center:** At the request of biologist Milner, biologist Roozen and technicians Otto and Deyo stopped at center after Regional meeting to band Canada geese due for release the following day. The birds were recovering from symptoms/injuries incurred from an oil spill.

**Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Projects:** Several Region 4 staff attended an informational meeting discussing the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project. Ten of the fifteen sites selected for Puget Sound fall within Region 4 and five sites include lands that are owned or managed by WDFW. The next phase is to request Congressional authorization and funding for these projects. For information, see: [www.pugetsoundnearshore.org](http://www.pugetsoundnearshore.org)

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Mount Baker and Darrington Area Mountain Goat Surveys:** Biologist Danilson made final arrangements for the upcoming survey flight, which begin Monday July 23<sup>rd</sup>. This involved obtaining access to local helipads, coordinating the survey crew personnel and helicopter contractor, preparing data sheets and field equipment, testing real-time GPS tracking system, and monitoring weather conditions through the weekend.

**Mountain Goat Augmentation Meeting:** Biologist Danilson worked with District 13 Biologist Milner to prepare graphs and handouts for an inter-agency planning data analysis and for future mountain goat augmentation efforts in Washington. Danilson presented information from mountain surveys of the Mount Baker and Darrington Ranger District area conducted between 2004 and 2011.

**Band-Tailed Pigeon Surveys:** Biologist DeBruyn surveyed a Band-tailed Pigeon mineral spring site. Survey numbers were quite low due in part to the presence of a Great-horned owl. DeBruyn also met with volunteer Doug Huddle to visit another potential mineral spring site on the edge of a logging road. Dense fog hampered observation of pigeons but there were signs of heavy use by Band-tails.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Food Plots:** Technician Otto completed installation of food plot located on hunt unit properties. Private lands staff look to build off this test plot and add more in the future. Otto negotiated access with the landowner, prepared the ground, and planted barley on the site with minimal cost and employee time. Region 4 private lands personnel will continue to monitor the progress on the food plot.



*Technicians Brad Otto and Chad Deyo planted the above waterfowl unit with barley.*

**Replacement Pheasant Release Location:** Biologist Roozen continued negotiations for access to potential new pheasant release site. Roozen is working with WA Department of Natural Resources staff to facilitate a two Department agreement which would allow pheasant release and hunting for at least the next several hunting seasons. Additionally, Roozen is negotiating adequate parking access with neighboring landowners.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Cherry Valley Fish Passage Project:** Construction crews for the Cherry Valley fish passage project began prepping the unit. Areas that have been designated as fill storage have been mowed and potholed roads have been filled. Prep work will continue and construction will start in the beginning of August.

**Geese Released on the Crescent Lake Unit:** Six geese (2 adults, 4 juveniles) caught near Point Wells just south of Edmonds, had oil on them and could not fly due to molting and age. The source of the oil was not confirmed. The geese were caught by Focus Wildlife <http://www.focuswildlife.net/> by herding them into an improvised funnel trap that they had constructed on site with mist netting on July 6th. Focus Wildlife contracted with PAWS in Lynnwood to use their facility to rehabilitate the birds. Biologist Milner and other biologists helped facilitate getting the birds banded. The birds took 11 days to go through the rehabilitation process and were released at the WDFW Crescent Lake Unit.



*Oiled Canada geese were rehabbed and released on Crescent Lake.*

**Tennant Lake Unit:** The Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park held a Bat Watch program at Hovander Park. A talk was given on bat ecology, then as it got dark, bats could be seen in great numbers leaving the maternity colony in the Hovander House. There is an estimated 3,000 bats in the colony.

**Lake Terrell Unit:** Natural Resource Tech Deyo completed repairs to the pheasant pens. The loading shoots were cleaned and rebuilt, trees were removed from the pens and the watering system was cleared and checked. Natural Resource Tech Deyo mowed fields and trails on the Lake Terrell and Intalco units.

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

**Private Lands/Access**

**Region 4 Big Game Hunting Access:** Biologist Roozen continued preparations for upcoming elk hunts on private ground in GMU 418. Additionally, Roozen continued preparations to facilitate deer hunting access on Whidbey Island.

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Biologist Roozen and technician Otto toured Snohomish County to evaluate waterfowl hunting locations. Roozen and Otto discussed potential new locations as well as agricultural crop progress in the area. Roozen and Otto met with landowners in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties to negotiate access for the public.

**Wildlife Areas**

**Leque Island:** Staff checked sharecrop lease barley plantings and treated additional areas of poison hemlock.

**Samish Unit:** Staff surveyed for and treated poison hemlock.

**Skagit Bay Estuary:** Staff began to survey and GPS locations of purple loosestrife and knotweed in the Skagit Bay Estuary. The Skagit Bay Reserve Boundary signs were also checked and will be repaired when river and tidal conditions improve.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Program MARK Tutorial:** Biologist Danilson met with Deer and Elk Specialist McCorquodale and tribal biologists at the North Bend Ranger District of the US Forest Service to discuss population estimation and data analysis methods for the North Cascades Elk Herd population. This “workshop” included McCorquodale providing an overview of data preparation and analysis using statistical program MARK.

**First Aid Training:** Five Region 4 Wildlife Program staff completed four-hour training on First Aid and CPR at the Mill Creek office.

## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Western Pond Turtle Data Population Estimation:** Biologists George and Holman completed work to compile four years worth of capture data for western pond turtles at the Sondino site. This task involves reviewing archived data sheets and entering capture information for approximately 400 individual turtles, approximately 1,000 total captures, and nearly 10,000 "trap days". The data have been compiled and submitted to Research Division for development of population estimation for this, the State's most robust pond turtle site.

**Western Pond Turtle Management:** Biologists Holman and George marked 28 western pond turtles in preparation for release into the wild. These animals will be released next week at two different sites in the Columbia River Gorge. To date, 1,284 western pond turtle juveniles have been released into the 4 Gorge populations over a span of 21 years.

**Black-tailed Deer Research Project:** Fawn mortality searches associated with the Region 5 black-tailed deer research project continued during the third week of July. Twelve study does and their associated young are being monitored by a combination of remote (satellite) and field (VHF) methods. The does are located in two study clusters concentrated within the Washougal and Coweeman Game Management Units. To date, in the Washougal cluster of 5 does, 11 fawns have been captured and 5 remain alive. In the Coweeman study cluster, 7 does and 3 fawns remain alive.

**Willapa Hills Elk Herd Plan:** Wildlife Management staff from Regions 5 and 6, statewide deer/elk specialist, and Olympia section manager met to discuss the Willapa Hills elk herd plan. Biologists Hoenes and Dobler have done a great job of compiling the background information and identifying issues with this elk herd to be addressed in the plan. Input was received at a meeting this week and more revisions will be developed.

**Dark Goose Banding Project Review:** Biologists are gathering information from a variety of sources over the past decade to develop a comprehensive examination of the Dark Goose Banding project and develop recommendations for future action on this complex goose issue.

**Band-tailed Pigeon Mineral Site Survey:** Biologists Bergh and George conducted the Soda Springs Band-tailed Pigeon Mineral Site Survey. This was the first year for the site and approximately 50-60 pigeons were counted. Two different viewing locations were used, although a third (hopefully better) location was scouted for next year.

## Wildlife Areas

### **Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area**

**Hall Road Baseball Field:** Technician Pyzik and volunteer Braaten finished the final phase of removing the baseball backstop fencing on the Hall Road Unit, as outlined in the Wildlife Area Management Plan to return this Unit as an educational interpretive/wildlife viewing area. They also put in fence post for the parking area at Hall road.



*Removing the baseball backstop fencing on the Hall Road Unit.*

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

Biologist Bergh met with Biologist Miller and Program Manager Jonker to conduct a 6 month probationary review. Biologist Bergh is an excellent employee and adapting well to the ever changing tasks and assignments that are common in the assistant District Biologist role. She is rapidly becoming a critical member of the Region 5 team.

## **REGION 6**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Western Pond Turtle:** Bios Skriletz, Murphie and Anthony wrapped up their daily monitoring of female turtles at the Mason County site on July 21st. Two more nests were located this week. Bio Anthony found another nest along an old skid road in the clear-cut at the south end of the pond. Once again, Janet located this nest without the aid of radio tracking. Ten eggs were found. Unfortunately, 5 were cracked due to the female turtle covering the nest with very rocky soil. And Bio Anthony found a nest containing four eggs in one of the new nesting mounds

WDFW staff created earlier this spring (Figure 1). Bios Murphie, Michaelis, Harris and Skriletz transported ten yards of sandy nesting soil into the Nest Hill location in an attempt to create improved conditions for egg laying and survival. While the other four experienced nesters returned to the vicinity of their former nest sites, this young female chose a manufactured nest mound for her first clutch of eggs. It was rewarding to see the new nest habitat used in the first nesting season.



*Western pond turtle nest found in new nesting hill created in 2012.*

All 36 eggs from the Mason County site were transported to the Woodland Park Zoo.

It should be noted that no turtle predation from eagles or otters was observed this year at the Mason County site. However, Bio Murphie did observe two adult turtles aggressively feeding on metamorphosing Western Toads at the water's edge as thousands of toadlets began their terrestrial life stage.