

Wildlife Program

Week of July 23-29, 2012

SCIENCE DIVISION

Citizen Science Data: The Washington Reptile and Amphibian Atlas (aka Herp Atlas) continues to link Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) with citizens and professionals around the state. This week Biologists Lisa Hallock & Lori Salzer received several reptile and amphibian observations from citizens. Most notable was a new location for the Sharptail Snake in Klickitat County. This new location is 15 miles from known observations for this species. This snake is a small, secretive, fossorial species that is likely nocturnal and is seldom seen.

Citizen reports are an important source of information to provide us with current information on species abundance and distribution. WDFW receives dozens of reports annually from citizens and professionals that visit this website. The website is a wealth of information on Washington Reptiles and Amphibians: <http://www1.dnr.wa.gov/nhp/refdesk/herp/>

Society for Conservation Biology Presentation – John Pierce recently attended the North American Congress for Conservation Biology, hosted by the Society for Conservation Biology. John participated (abstract below) in a symposium hosted by the National Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (NLCC), to explore the role of LCCs as it relates to landscape conservation. The symposium was one of 7 concurrent sessions during the morning on the 18th.

Title: *Integrating Conservation Priorities and Objectives Across the West.*

Abstract: A major challenge facing natural resource conservation in the west is the lack of a set of agreed upon common conservation priorities and strategies that define the roles and responsibilities of state, federal, and other partners to act on. Some of the reasons for the lack of a common strategy are historic. State and federal agencies each have their own mandates that guide their institutional culture and associated priorities. Other factors include perceptions that mandates compete for resource allocation, restricted or specialized funding support, and a culture of doing 'business as usual' that often stems from insufficient resources that do not allow for creative, proactive efforts to change this historic paradigm. Unfortunately, budgets are getting tighter and tighter and ecosystem stressors (human population growth and associated land use changes, climate change, accelerated fire regimes, and other disturbances) will occur at scales beyond single ownerships or jurisdictions. Given this future, it is critical that a new paradigm emerges that dissolves political, jurisdictional and geographic boundaries in order to achieve successful conservation. Fortunately several significant cross-jurisdictional conservation initiatives have recently emerged that are interested in aligning conservation priorities and strategies across a diversity of partners, including State, Federal, and Local governments. Examples of these efforts include the Department of interior's Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, the Bureau of Land Management's Rapid Ecoregional Assessments, and the

Western Governors Association's Crucial Habitat Initiative. This presentation will highlight the commonalities shared by these efforts that provide an opportunity to develop a collaborative unified conservation strategy across the west.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Priority Habitat and Species (PHS) Field test of Prairie Protocol – Biologist Azerrad organized the first field test of a protocol that will be used to map and rank the quality of prairie habitat. He was joined by Dave Hays (WDFW), Rex Crawford (Washington National Heritage Program), Rod Gilbert (Joint Base Lewis McCord), and Fern Schultz (Thurston County). The test was carried out at the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area. During the test a lot was learned about how well the protocol would be able to map habitat under real-world scenarios. We discussed some modifications for addressing more disturbed areas and ways to lower the cost of carrying out the protocol. Biologist Azerrad subsequently has developed a detailed decision-tree (as recommended during the field test) to help guide users through the process of mapping habitat. We'll be testing a modified version of the protocol again in the coming weeks.

Land Access for Pocket Gopher Survey – Section Manager Bruce Thompson facilitated work among Diversity Division and Science Division staff to prepare a list of 4,664 prospective survey plot locations and associated landowners. The list was separated into parcel owners to be contacted in person by Regional staff and parcel owners that will receive a letter from WDFW requesting access. There are about 1,200 different public, private, and tribal landowners among 2,208 different tax parcels identified.

Taylor's Checkerspot: Derek Stinson continued editing and preparing a Draft Interim Conservation Strategy for Taylor's Checkerspot in Washington. The preliminary draft was prepared by Ann Potter. The document will outline interim recovery objectives, strategies and tasks for the state endangered Taylor's Checkerspot. A full recovery plan will be developed in the future, but this document will help guide implementation of recovery steps in the interim. The draft will be reviewed by WDFW staff, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) partners, and selected experts prior to completion of the final interim strategy.

Raptor Breeding Data Clarification - As part of a quality control assessment of golden eagle territory data, Biologist Gerry Hayes assisted Science Division staff to detect inconsistencies in one of the derived databases used for raptor species; inconsistencies resulted from data entry omissions, data transfer during upgrade from the "old" to the "new" Wildlife Survey Data Management (WSDM) model, and Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) programming issues associated with querying the "old" versus "new" data model. Science Division staff is working to provide an updated accounting of past breeding territory surveys that will inform breeding season surveys in 2013 and a summary of population metrics that will be included in a status report for the species.

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

T&E Annual Report: Biologists Gary Wiles and Derek Stinson completed the final mailing of the Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species Annual Report for 2011. The report is posted online, and due to cost constraints, only a small number of printed copies were made. These were distributed to Commission members, regional program managers, and others.

PHS Fish and Wildlife Planner – Biologist Azerrad released the summer issue of the Fish and Wildlife Planner. This issue focuses on planning for fish and wildlife in Puget Sound. It includes articles on newly developed tools that will help local jurisdictions with watershed and shoreline planning. It also includes a summary of upcoming workshops, conferences, and grant opportunities.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1

Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd met with Biologist Frame and Biologist Chad Heuser (U.S.D.A. Wildlife Services) to discuss hazing and using FLIR (forward looking infrared radar) in the Wedge to assist with decreasing cattle depredations. Shepherd and Heuser spent multiple evenings in the wedge listening to wolves, using FLIR, and discussing hazing of wolves. Shepherd discussed the Smackout Pack, the Range Rider Project, general wolf-cattle issues with ranchers Jeff and John Dawson. Shepherd discussed wolf locations and pack detection with contractor Jeff Flood. Shepherd discussed camera placement with U.S. Air Force survival school liaison Todd Foster near instruction camps in the Smackout area.

Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker scouted for wolf sign and deployed a trail camera in Boulder Creek and scouted for wolf sign and deployed trail cameras in Deadman Creek with Volunteer Janey Robson.

Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Jay Shepherd and Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker checked for missing calves near recent wolf locations near the Aladdin and Big Meadow Lake Roads.

Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker and Volunteer Nick Hill assisted Wildlife Biologist Ben Maletzke checking wolf traps and scouting for wolf sign. Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker and Volunteer Nick Hill scouted for wolf sign and deployed a trail camera off Flowery Trail Road. Nick Hill is job shadowing for a senior project and Wildlife Biologist Ben Maletzke and Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker discussed having a career in the field of wildlife biology with Nick.



Wildlife Biologist Ben Maletzke shows volunteer Nick Hill equipment used in darting wildlife.

Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd sent general Smackout pack information from satellite radio collars to range rider Leisa Hill and WDFW staff via text message every day of the week. Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd discussed deploying a RAG box (radio-collar activated alarm) with rancher Jeff Dawson. Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd discussed a wolf radio-collar issue in the Smackout area with Carnivore Section Leader Donny Martorello and Biologist Paul Frame.

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

Wildlife Areas

Cow and calf moose at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area (SCWA) – This pair was observed for several minutes feeding in a pond along Hwy 20.



Revere WLA maintenance – Wildlife Area Manager Anderson delivered supplies to volunteer Buddy “BJ” Carter on Friday in Davenport, for maintenance and repair of fence line and signs at Revere. Mr. Carter is a Master Hunter candidate who lives in St. John, near the Wildlife Area. He has been performing this crucial task before fall hunting seasons arrive, for a few years now.

Private Lands/Access

Feel Free to Fish: Private Lands Biologist Dawn Davis spoke with landowners who developed a Feel Free to Fish (FFTF) cooperative agreement, which will provide about four miles of fishing access on the Walla Walla River. The landowners own additional river frontage and are interested in enrolling this portion of the Walla Walla River into FFTF, however, they only own property on one side of the river. Because river frontage on both sides of the river is required for payment eligibility, Davis contacted the adjoining landowner to see if they would be interested in enrolling in the FFTF program. The adjoining landowner is interested in participating in the FFTF program, potentially enrolling an additional ½ mile of the Walla Walla River in the FFTF program. The landowner owns other river frontage along the Walla Walla River, which they would be interested in enrolling in a separate cooperative agreement under FFTF if funds are available. Davis will continue to work with the landowners to develop an access agreement under the FFTF program.

VPA Access and Habitat Initiative: *Asotin/Garfield Counties.* Biologist Earl continued his efforts this week to expand the VPA program. It is getting more difficult to contact and sit down with farmers as harvest is ramping up heavily now. *Walla Walla/Columbia Counties.* Biologist Davis spoke with a landowner in Walla Walla County interested in enrolling over 1,000 acres in

the VPA program and will be meeting with the landowner next week. In addition, Davis contacted 7 private landowners in Walla Walla and Columbia counties with expiring CRP contracts within the pheasant focus area to inquire if they would be interested in participating in WDFW's private lands access program under the VPA Access and Habitat Initiative. One landowner has responded and is interested in enrolling 272 acres in Columbia County. To date, Davis has enrolled 6 contracts into the VPA program totaling 3,969 acres. *Whitman County*. Biologist McCanna enrolled nine different properties this week into the VPA Initiative program all being Reservation System and one Feel Free to Hunt. Total access acres are 6,423 and will be inter-seeding forbs/legumes into 205 acres of CRP throughout all nine of these farms. McCanna has three more meetings this week set up with landowners interested in the VPA program. Biologist McCanna continues to contact landowners prior to the startup of harvest and meet with them at all hours of the day.

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

Wildlife Areas

Chief Joseph Wildlife Area – Heller Bar Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) project: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice began putting together a power point presentation for the Heller Bar Boat Ramp Improvement project. The presentation is due to RCO on Tuesday and the practice presentation is scheduled for Friday morning. Dice took several pictures of jetboats and rafters using the ramp on Saturday afternoon.



Heller Bar boat ramp on a busy summer afternoon.

REGION 2

Wolves

Wolf Technician Spence continues to survey areas within Regions 2 and 3 with high probability of wolf activity. Thirteen Game Management Units have been surveyed in Okanogan, Chelan and Kittitas counties. A combination of camera traps, road/trail surveys and howling are being used to detect the presence of wolves. We are currently running 12 digital cameras across the area, with each trap averaging roughly three weeks duration at each location. Based on monitoring in areas with known pack activity, three weeks of camera monitoring has proven to provide a high probability of detecting wolves at individual camera traps. While a single trap may not record activity, a well placed series of camera traps has proven effective when using the 3-week duration. A second set of 12 cameras was ordered to increase the amount of area that can be surveyed.

Other than detections at known activity areas within the Teanaway and Lookout pack territories, no presence of wolves has been recovered within the three counties.

Wolf Technician Spence conducted surveys for wolf presence in Game Management Units in Region 2 and Region 3.

District Biologists

District 6: Okanogan District - Scott Fitkin / Jeff Heinlen

Weather Conditions: The week (July 15-20th) had two very heavy rain events leading to flash floods throughout the Omak and Okanogan areas. One rain event closed State Highway 97 at Malott for a few hours, causing significant damage to the guard rail and shoulder.



State Highway 97 at Malott Washington.



State Highway 97 at Malott Washington.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Methow Beaver/Wetland Restoration Project: The crew has been as busy as beavers over the last couple of weeks having completed their third release while hosting two different film crews. The Canadian Broadcasting Company incorporated our project into a documentary focusing on beaver ecology and the benefits of restoring beavers to the natural landscape. Similarly, Ecotrust, a regional environmental non-profit and beaver project funder is showcasing our project in video highlighting environmental efforts in the Northwest. The Canadian program will air about a year from now; the Ecotrust footage will primarily be used in web-based applications. Coincidentally, the beaver project recently made an appearance in the local Hart's Pass comic strip. This multi-year project is a partnership between the Methow Conservancy, the US Forest Service and WDFW in the Methow Watershed to restore wetland/riparian habitat and improve late season stream flows and temperature profiles. Primary funders include the WA Department of Ecology, the Yakima Nation, Ecotrust, and the USFS.



Hart's Pass comic strip – Methow Valley News.



Ecotrust filming session new wetland habitat, Nature's engineer, and CBC filming session.

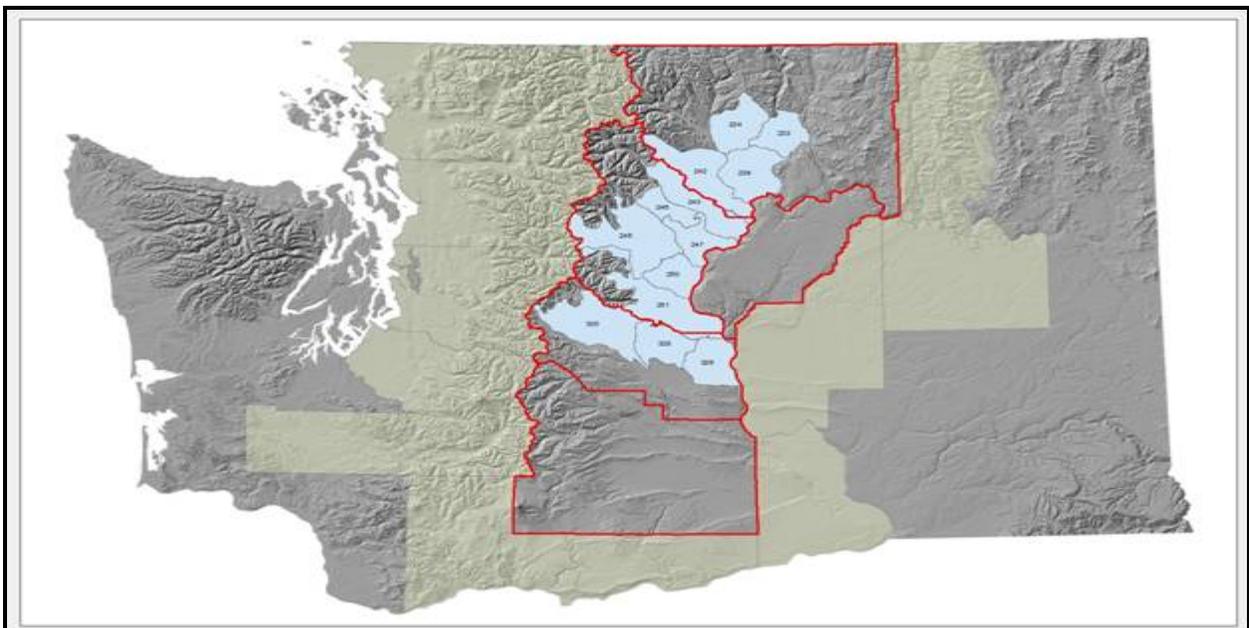
Common Loon Monitoring: Two of the four Common Loon nests in the District have successfully produced chicks this year. As of this week both Lost Lake and Crawfish Lake each have one chick. Staff from the Biodiversity Research Institute again came to the Okanogan to band the loons. The Lost Lake loon chick was successfully banded.



Volunteer releasing banded Loon chick.

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

Weather Conditions: Normal summer weather conditions during the week. Lighting storms that caused numerous fires last week have abated.



Species Recovery

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery - Penny Becker

Husbandry of Enclosures and Monitoring of Released Kits: The final release of pygmy rabbit kits this breeding season was completed on 7/23. Since May 103 kits have been released to the wild and we estimate that well over 150 kits were born in the enclosures. 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.

Coordination for Spring-2012 Translocations: Becker spent time corresponding with Wyoming Game and Fish Department this week. We have received initial support from Wyoming biologists for our request to translocate pygmy rabbits from their state next spring and now the proposal must be presented to their Commission for approval.

Wildlife Areas

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

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Beaver Creek Pivots and fence: Construction on three irrigation pivots on the Beaver Creek lease was completed this week. They should be sprinkling water this weekend. Also, there was a small fire caused by the installers that, fortunately, was extinguished quickly with help from the small excavator that was on site.

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

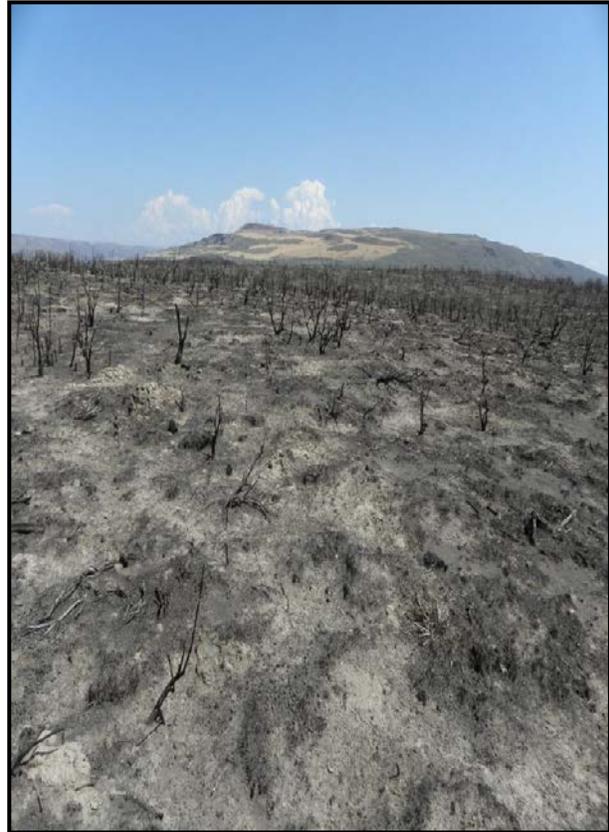
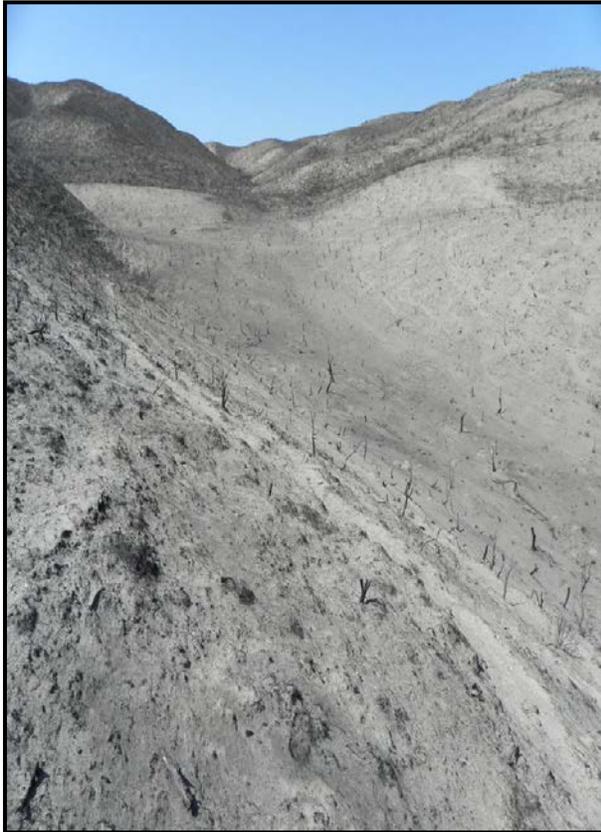
Weather Conditions: Highs were in the mid to upper 90's.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Foster Creek Fire Rehab: Biologists Dan Peterson and Ann Winters met with Restoration Ecologist Richard Tveten from Olympia and toured the burn area. Topics covered during the three hour walk-about included types of erosion and methods to control/reduce them, restoration opportunities and calculating the erosive force of water which happens to be $\% \text{ slope} \times \text{water depth}/3$.



Ann Winters and Richard Tveten discussing use of appropriate restoration equipment.



Post fire landscape post fire, Bridgeport Unit, July 2012.

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

Weather Conditions: Hot, highs near or above 100°, with calm winds. Fire danger is extremely high for the Columbia Basin. Early July thunderstorms with locally heavy rain and, at times, hail damaged crops throughout the Basin.

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

Frenchman Ponds Regulated Access Area: Wildlife Area staff assisted the contractor conducting tillage and planting operations for food plot establishment in the Frenchman Ponds wetland development. Staff assisted with equipment repairs and transport, identifying tillage and planting areas, and planting rates. Late season plantings of millet results in a plant that matures and produces seed, without the excessive top growth from earlier plantings. The abundant rainfall of late has left outstanding soil moisture.

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

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Similkameen – Chopaka WLA Irrigation: Jim assisted O’Connell Drilling to pull the turbine pump on the new wildlife area. The objective is to verify the condition of the pump before purchasing and replacing the 100 hp motor that was removed by the previous owner. The pump will need to be disassembled in O’Connell’s shop before we know the results, but due to the difficulty in removing it from the well, it may not be operable. Our goal is to have irrigation water flowing this season.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Bat Maternity Site News: District Biologist Milner met with Russel Barsh of Qwiat and a landowner on Lopez Island to discuss options for preserving a Townsend’s big-eared bat maternity colony. It’s estimated that the site has been active for many years and at least 30-40 bats use the site. The landowner needs to re-side the building and make other improvements, so options to maintain the site for bats were discussed.



Townsend's big-eared bats.

Citizen Acoustic Bat Monitoring on Lower Snoqualmie Valley Wildlife Management Units (WMU): Biologist Anderson worked with WDFW volunteers, all with Bats Northwest (<http://www.batsnorthwest.org/>) to complete the second round of summer surveys on Stillwater, Cherry Valley, and Crescent Lake WMU. Bat activity once again noted on all units. Last pilot area search survey will be run this August.

Citizen Breeding Amphibian Monitoring with Woodland Park Zoo: Biologist Anderson working with Dr. Marc Hayes in Habitat, provided identification information and particulars/difficulties of ID regarding tadpole pictures sent in from volunteers. Sign-up for the effort next year! Here is the website: <http://www.zoo.org/backyardhabitat>

Wildlife Areas

Lake Terrell Fish Passage Dam Remodel Project: Manager Kessler coordinated with the Whatcom Conservation District manager on the Lake Terrell Dam remodel project. This project to remodel the dam and allow fish passage for the first time since the 1930's will begin in the next couple weeks.

Cherry Valley Waterwheel Creek and Fish Passage Project: Manager Paulson and a construction crew member continued prepping the Cherry Valley Unit for construction. Project areas were mowed to minimize the organic matter, and large woody debris was removal from the laterals so more water could be pumped off of the unit.

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

Wildlife Management

Mount Baker and Darrington Area Mountain Goat Surveys: After weather postponements on Monday and Tuesday, Biologist Danilson was able to get the Mount Baker and Darrington area mountain goat surveys under way. The Mount Baker area surveys were completed and the raw data suggest that numbers (particularly young of the year) are much improved over last year. With low cloud/fog returned to the area on Friday, the Darrington area surveys were not completed. However, the initial data suggests that this may be the best year for goats since WDFW and partnering tribes began conducting surveys using the current comprehensive survey protocols.



A group of mountain goats observed during the Mount Baker area goat surveys. All three age classes (adults, yearlings, and kids) are represented in this maternity group.

Pitman Robertson Reports: District Biologist Milner completed a status report for black-tailed deer in GMU 448 and 450 and drafted a report for bear in BMU 3.

North Cascades Elk Herd Plan: Biologist Danilson provided Regional Program Manager Link with a draft language for a follow up reminder that was sent out to entities that have been provided an initial draft copy of the North Cascades Elk Herd Plan. This stimulated a number of calls and emails that Danilson followed up on. Danilson also met with representatives from Sierra Pacific Industries and North Cascades National Park to discuss issues related to the plan.

Band-tailed Pigeon Surveys: Biologist DeBruyn completed the final survey of Band-tailed Pigeons at mineral springs for District 14. Weather and tidal issues had forced numerous delays.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Biologist Roozen and technician Otto evaluated potential new waterfowl hunting units in Snohomish County. A couple of locations that were looked at will be pursued for the upcoming waterfowl season.

Otto assisted Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program partner/grower install food plot on companies ground. Otto additionally began preparing hunt units for upcoming waterfowl season. Roozen and Otto continued discussions with landowners regarding their potential involvement in the program.

Industrial Timberlands Hunting Opportunities: Manager Link and Biologist Roozen attended meeting with Region 5 and 6 personnel to begin discussions of including Western Washington industrial timberland access programs into the private hunting lands database and private hunting lands opportunities webpage that is under development.

Whidbey Island Private Land Deer Hunting: Biologist Roozen continued discussions with Island residents to secure hunting opportunities for the public. Negotiations are ongoing, and to this point progress is limited.

Wildlife Areas

Island Unit: Skagit Wildlife Area Staff toured the Island Unit to examine field conditions following the decrease in water levels this week. Improved drainage was observed and fields have decreased standing water but the soil is saturation enough to not allow heavy equipment in most areas. Wildlife Area staff will continue to monitor the site and discuss planting and other alternatives since it is past the barley planting window.



Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resource Technician Curran Cosgrove removed over 5 acres of blackberry along the Skagit River in preparation for the WWRP tree plantings later this fall.

Lake Terrell Fishing Pier Parking Area Improvement: Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo built a new cedar rail fence and blocking post for the Lake Terrell Fishing Pier parking area entrance. This will keep people on the entrance road, and stop them from travelling down the closed access road.

Lake Terrell Waterfowl Hunting Blinds: A volunteer from Washington Waterfowl Association checked and assessed the condition of waterfowl hunting blinds on the Lake Terrell Unit.

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

Wildlife Management

Region 4 Pheasant Hunting Public Meeting: Manager Link and Region 4 staff attended the annual Region 4 pheasant hunting meeting with representatives from the hunting community, departments volunteers, and other from the pheasant hunting community. The purpose of the meeting was to provide updates on the upcoming 2012 pheasant season in Region 4 and to provide meeting attendees with an opportunity to provide input to WDFW for the upcoming and future pheasant seasons.



Wildlife Rehabilitation

Little brown bat found along North Creek Trail: Biologist Anderson worked with bat rehabilitators to transfer a juvenile male little brown bat that was dropped at the Region 4 office. Male bats, once flighted, are often kicked out of the maternity roost for good, whereas females are allowed to return. This leads to a higher mortality in young-of-the-year male bats. At this time of the year, bat rehabilitators see a spike in juvenile male bats due to this.

King County DOT Wildlife Consultation: Biologist Anderson consulted with KDOT biologists regarding a late nesting barn swallow situation on a bridge project. It was determined by KDOT that they will likely be able to offset work until the birds fledge their young.

Wildlife Identification Assistance: Biologist Anderson responded to multiple requests for wildlife identification assistance from both citizens and municipalities. Most were digital pictures of a subject animal. No big foot specimen was included in any of the submitted inquiries. However, others included a Russian tortoise, Orange Bishop, raccoon, western harvest mouse, and mink.

Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary: Biologist Anderson worked with the new Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary volunteer to get them familiar with materials and providing for requests.

Educational Wildlife Specimens: Biologist Anderson coordinated Region 4 educational wildlife specimen transfer for use at the Friends of Issaquah Fish Hatchery annual Salmon Science camp for children ages 6-11 (<http://www.issaquahfish.org/education-programs/camps--programs/>). Anderson also coordinated pelt transfer to Region 4 Enforcement staff for upcoming outreach events.

Private Lands/Access

GMU 418 Elk Hunts: Biologist Roozen began assembling information packets for GMU 418-Nooksack Elk permit holders. Roozen spent some time on the telephone with few of the permit holders.



A mature bull still in velvet observed in the North Cascades during the annual mountain goat surveys.

Wildlife Areas

Samish Unit: Manager Rotton, Regional Wildlife Program Manager Russell Link hosted the Restoration framework technical review meeting for the Samish Unit Wetland Enhancement. Project Proponents from Ducks Unlimited, Graham Peters and John Axford and Officer Jeff Lee and Habitat Engineer Bob Barnard were also in attendance. The next steps for the project were outlined to begin the next level of the review and approval process.

REGION 5

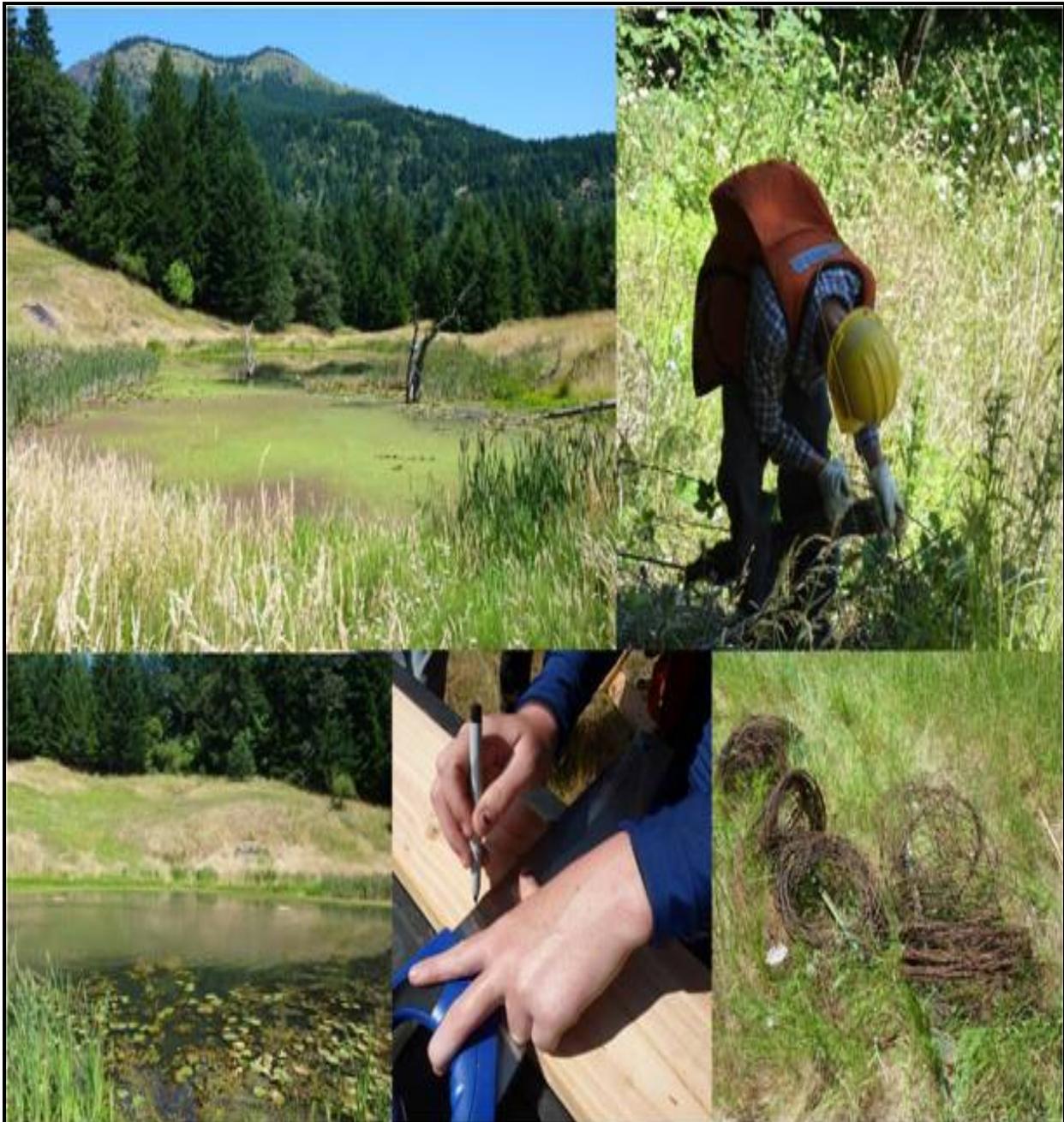
GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Mardon Skipper Survey: Biologist Bergh joined staff at the USFS Cowlitz Valley Ranger District for surveys of a State endangered butterfly, the Mardon Skipper. The group searched for and counted Mardon Skippers at several meadows of known presence on the forest. The lower elevation meadows had greater counts than the higher elevation meadows suggesting that the peak of the adult flight period was just beginning.



Western Pond Turtle Habitat Management: Under the direction of Biologists Holman and George, a work crew from the Skamania Forest Youth Success Program (FYS) spent a week at the Bergen Road western pond turtle site. The crews removed approximately 2000 feet of derelict barbed-wire fencing, constructed enclosures around piles for future burning, re-covered burn piles, and constructed and installed nine basking platforms for use by the turtles. Thanks to the FYS crews, crew leaders, and administrators for their hard work to improved western pond turtle habitat again this year.



Skamania Forest Youth Success Program at the Bergen Road western pond turtle site.

Western Pond Turtle Head Starting Program: Biologists Holman and George released 28 head-started juvenile western pond turtles at Pierce National Wildlife Refuge and Beacon Rock State Park. In excess of 1,300 young pond turtles have now been released over the 22 year history of this undertaking in the Columbia River Gorge. Environmental Education is an important component of the turtle releases at the Refuge and a presentation was given to approximately 100 individuals in attendance at the release. The majority of the attendees were young people associated with various work crews. The event generated some media coverage. Thanks to the Oregon Zoo and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for their respective roles in pond turtle management in the Gorge.



Western Pond Turtle Release at Pierce National Wildlife Refuge.

Wildlife Areas

Cowlitz Wildlife Area

Spears Unit Millpond Recharge: Wildlife Area staff rented a large industrial pump and utilized an existing “water-right” to recharge the 27 acre millpond located on the Spears Unit. The water level was increased approximately 1.5 feet increasing available open water and drowning out less desirable vegetation species.



Spears Unit Millpond.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Western Pond Turtle: Biologists Tirhi, Schmidt, Skriletz and Anthony processed 74 juvenile pond turtles slated for release at two recovery sites in the Puget Sound and 20 turtles slated for release to the Columbia Gorge. The one-year old pond turtles represent eggs that were collected from recovery sites in 2011 and reared at the Woodland Park Zoo for the past year. 25 of the juveniles will be released in early August at the Pierce County recovery site, 49 to the Mason County recovery site and 20 to Columbia Gorge sites.

Each juvenile was weighed, measured, had their microchip number confirmed, and had notches filed into particular marginal scutes as a permanent identifying mark for the future should the microchip be lost or become dysfunctional. 2012 marks the 21st year of this highly successful partnership between WDFW, Woodland Park Zoo and Oregon Zoo on the recovery of the only native western Washington turtle.



Janet Anthony photos.

Snowy Plovers

Midway Beach — Biologist Sundstrom continued to monitor snowy plover nesting activity at Midway Beach, and observed two nests that hatched; both nests were tended by males that were not banded. Sundstrom was unable to band the chicks. The observation of two hatched nests this week brings the total number of nests monitored at Midway Beach to 20 with 12 failures, 3 currently active and 5 hatched (Table 1 and Table 2). The number of observed adults has dwindled significantly at Midway Beach and it is unknown where the birds have gone.

Table 1. Summary of snowy plover nest status at Midway and Leadbetter Beaches.

Location	Observed	Failed Nests				Incubating	Hatched
		Predated	Abandoned	Human	Other ¹		
Midway	20	4	0	0	8	3	5
Leadbetter	26	3	5	0	10	4	4

¹Other = Includes nests that have failed but proximate causes are unknown and nests that failed due to environmental factors.

Table 2. Summary of snowy plover chick survival at Midway and Leadbetter Beaches.

Location	Hatched Nests	Hatched Eggs	Chicks Still Alive	Fledglings
Midway	5	13	6	1
Leadbetter	4	10	7	0

Leadbetter Beach.— Biologist Peterson continued to monitor snowy plover nests at Leadbetter Beach and documented the successful hatching of two existing nests. Peterson also surveyed State Parks land to the south and documented 3 new nests, one of which had 4 eggs. All are now exclosed. According to USFWS Biologist Ritchie, snowy plovers have not nested this far south since 2008. This brings the total number of nests monitored at Leadbetter to 26 with 18 failures, 4 currently active, and 4 hatched (Table 1). Of the 10 chicks that hatched, 7 are still alive (Table 2).

Biologist Sundstrom spent two days at Leadbetter Beach to assist biologists Peterson and Ritchie with nest searches and banding chicks. However, none of the nests hatched while Sundstrom was there. Peterson and Sundstrom did find new banded birds that had moved in from Oregon but it was unclear if any are or will attempt to nest as no new nests were discovered.

Biologist Peterson also assisted USFWS staff with a Tsunami debris survey and participated in a field day where Regional USFWS biologists toured the snowy plover habitat restoration area at Leadbetter Beach.

Streaked Horned Lark

Biologists Tirhi and Schmidt completed the last of three lark surveys at Olympia Airport. Conditions were good for survey with the exception of maintenance personnel that arrived to continue runway repair at approximately 0800. The survey produced 46 total larks including six confirmed juveniles (young of year), 21 adult males, 13 adult females and 6 unknowns. WDFW is appreciative of the Olympia Airport and the Port Commission for supporting on-going monitoring and research of priority wildlife and a great working relationship.

Biologist Michaelis conducted a streaked horn lark survey on a few select Islands in Gray's Harbor and observed two streaked horn larks. The observation was significant because larks were not previously known to use the islands.

Biologist Sundstrom conducted a "follow-up" survey of the only known streaked horned lark nest at Midway Beach and observed two chicks that were alive in the nest with one egg. Unfortunately, Sundstrom also observed one chick that was dead and located approximately 10 feet away from the nest cup. It appeared the chick had been stepped on by a person, but it could not be determined whether or not that was the cause of death.

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

Private Lands/Access

Bio Harris received a surprise visit from one of the larger landowners in the Region. The intention of the visit was to thank Bio Harris and WDFW for working with volunteers to deploy remote camera systems and assisting in cleaning up their lands. These actions have encouraged them to keep a high level of public access.

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

Willapa National Wildlife Refuge Website: Biologist Hoenes coordinated with USFWS staff to ensure the hunting season guidelines provided on the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge (WNWR) website were consistent with current WDFW regulations. In the past, some of the information on the WNWR website was incorrect and had the potential to result in an enforcement issue. All information is current and anyone wishing to hunt on WNWR should visit their website located at <http://www.fws.gov/willapa/>.