

# Wildlife Program

Week of July 30-August 5, 2012

## **LANDS DIVISION**

**Lynch Cove Tidelands** – Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) completed the purchase of two-acres of salt marsh and tidelands in Lynch Cove near Belfair in Mason County from the Belfair Water District. This acquisition is part of the Lynch Cove project designed to secure a migratory pathway for juvenile summer chum and Chinook, along with valuable habitat for shellfish, shorebirds, waterfowl, and other marine resources in Hood Canal.

The property is integral to a large, public land protection complex that includes additional lands owned by WDFW, two land trusts, State Parks, and the local school district, protecting most of the cove. The acquisition and protection of these properties is an action item for the Puget Sound Chinook and Summer Chum recovery plans and also provides important waterfowl hunting access. This project is jointly funded by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Coastal Wetland grant and a Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grant.

## **SCIENCE DIVISION**

**Sage Grouse Conservation** - Mike Schroeder helped to complete a 50-page report for the Sage-grouse Conservation Objective Team that is working on behalf of the Sage-grouse Task Force (Greg Shirato is our representative on the Task Force).

**White-tailed Ptarmigan** - Mike Schroeder wrote a five-page draft on the potential listing of white-tailed ptarmigan under the Endangered Species Act. This letter is meant to serve as the foundation for WDFW's official comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**Burrow Nesting Seabirds** - Scott Pearson's (and others) work on seabird ecology research made Sunday's front page of the Seattle Times (see "Rabbits ravage seabird populations on Destruction Island"). The article focuses on the Rhinoceros Auklet and the impact of European Rabbits on the seabird colonies on offshore islands and Destruction Island in particular. The piece generated a good discourse (on Seattle Times website) on the need to (or not to) manage invasive species like the rabbit.

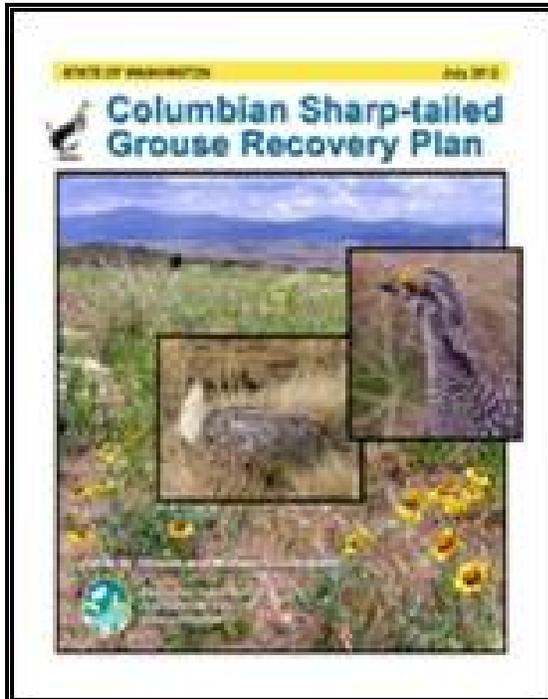
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## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

**Sharp-tailed grouse** – The WDFW Recovery Plan for the sharp-tailed grouse was completed and approved by Director Phil Anderson. The plan identified recovery objectives and strategies to achieve recovery of the species in Washington. Biologist Stinson sent out the completed plan to members of the sharp-tailed grouse working group and a small number of hard copies will be made and provided to the group and reviewers. The plan is posted on the agency website.



**Killer Whale Presentation for Fish and Wildlife Commission** - Biologist Gary Wiles, Special Assistant to the Director Pat Pattillo (Director's Office), and Deputy Chief Mike Cenci (Enforcement Program) gave an hour-long presentation to the Fish and Wildlife Commission summarizing the status of southern resident killer whales, issues surrounding vessel interactions and enforcement, and the effects of Chinook fisheries on the whales. The presentation highlighted the work of the Wildlife, Fish, and Enforcement Programs, together with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries and other partners, on this endangered population.

**Landowner Contact for Pocket Gopher Survey Access** – A mailing of 1,246 letters was sent to landowners on August 3, 2012 in a five-county area to request expressions of willingness to allow WDFW staff access for conducting plot-based Mazama pocket gopher surveys. This mailing was coordinated and completed through cooperative action with the Department of Enterprise Services. WDFW Region 6 staff began making personal contact with about 100 entities on a separate list of owners of three or more tax parcels in the same area. This

landowner contact was preceded by a news release to enhance public awareness of the processes underway.

**Prairie Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Information Development** – A species narrative format and staff role clarifications were distributed to WDFW staff working on information deliverables regarding 12 species for Thurston County to support preparation of the HCP. This collaborative effort involves eight biologists and three managers in Wildlife Diversity and Science Divisions. Species narratives will compile distributional records, review life history and ecology, synthesize habitat associations, and describe conservation status for each species.

**Priority Habitat and Species (PHS) Prairie Mapping Protocol** – Biologist Azerrad made preparations for the next set of field tests of a protocol intended to map prairie (as defined in PHS), primarily at the scale of a parcel. It will be tested on a piece of private property in Thurston County on August 8, 2012. Permission to field test the protocol on this piece of property was obtained with the assistance of the Thurston County Planning Department, who is working with the landowner on a proposal to develop this 5-acre parcel. Azerrad is also working on securing a site to test the protocol on wet prairie in southwest Washington later in the month.

## **WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION**

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

**Wildlife Rehabilitation:** Tricia Thompson issued a new wildlife rehabilitation permit to Dr. Sonnya Crawford, Grays Harbor Veterinary Services in Montesano. WDFW welcomes her as a valuable assistance. Also, Thompson processed and approved another wildlife rehabilitation application for an Olympia location where wildlife rehabilitators are greatly needed.

Tricia also met with Joanne Eide, Administrative Regulations Analyst, to discuss moving forward on the Wildlife Rehabilitation Washington Administrative Code (WAC) revision. All wildlife rehabilitators will get a chance to review the proposed expanded regulations.

Tricia and Ericka Thomas met with Sarvey Wildlife Care Center to assist them in learning the regulations and processes of wildlife rehabilitation in Washington State. Sarvey underwent staff changes and reorganization, in addition to updating and building more enclosures for the care of more animals. Thompson and Thomas toured these new enclosures and inspected the education animals, receiving a review of Sarvey's education program and process. Sarvey's staff redesigned the on-site residence into a large new office with a staff and meeting center.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife awards grants to wildlife rehabilitators every biennium and their invoices are now due. This year's invoices were processed and sent in for reimbursement. Six of the 10 grant recipients completed their projects or purchased their goods. PAWS renovated their black bear enclosures; West Sound Wildlife Shelter replaced their furnace and heat pump; For Heaven's Sake Animal Rescue and Rehab sent staff to a safe restraint and capture workshop; and Kiwani Wambli built a brand new treatment and housing structure. It is very important for the wildlife rehabilitators and the public to keep current on wildlife diseases.

Tricia began revising some wildlife disease handouts created by Veterinarian Kristin Mansfield and Ella Rowan for placement on the WDFW website and as a resource for wildlife rehabilitators to distribute to the public.

**Falconry:** Tricia Thompson received a request from a falconer who has not lived in Washington State for several years, but had a falconry license when he was a resident. Equipped with an active falconry license from Virginia, the falconer was able to transfer directly to Washington at his current master class after an approved facility inspection. Tricia wrote the letter for an out-of-state falconer to trap a sharp-shinned hawk in Washington. WDFW is authorized to grant permission for trapping one hawk per calendar year to out-of-state falconers.

**Scientific Collection Permits (SCP):** Tricia Thompson met with Olympia staff to discuss the streamlining of SCP review and the new SCP applications and instructions. We are producing some good ideas for the new SCP process and will be sending out a request for comments to all district biologists shortly.

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

**Citizen Science, Ecological Inventory Monitoring** – Wildlife Outreach staff Chuck Gibilisco and Margaret Tudor continue work with participants from the Swanson Lake Wildlife Area Ecological Integrity Monitoring workshop (EIM), planning for the next EIM workshop at the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area scheduled for Saturday, September 29, 2012.

Swanson Lake Wildlife Area volunteers are working with WDFW to help improve data collecting procedures. Monitoring and data analysis collected will help determine the status and trends in the condition of various ecological resources, which will provide a scientific basis for adaptive management strategies used on WDFW lands.

Margaret Tudor is preparing for the upcoming Ecological Integrity Monitoring citizen science training at the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. The invitation and recruitment notice to volunteers is being circulated and the entry screen for volunteer registration is available on the CERVIS volunteer management website.

**Outreach** - Tricia Thompson created and presented a talk on hummingbird physiology and migration for this past weekend.

**Hunting Season Opener** - An email advisory was sent to over 43,000 big game, small game, and upland bird hunters with information on changes to black bear hunting regulations, notification of [a grizzly bear-black bear identification and education section](#) on the department's web page, backcountry safety techniques using bear spray, a link to a new set of web pages on [Prepare for Hunting Season Now](#), and a request for hunters to [report any wolf observations online](#). Reaction from the public has been favorable.

## **REGION 1**

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

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Abandoned Campsite** – Natural Resources Technician 2 (NRT2) Jerry “Chris” Christensen cleaned up an abandoned campsite on Sherman Creek Wildlife Area this week. Due to the wetness and mud in the area, staff had not been by here for about one month and didn’t know anyone was in this area. It looked like the campers just walked away and left everything behind. A laptop computer and a piece of mail with contact information were found. Both were passed on to enforcement. Christensen believes a bear had spread thing around.



***Trashed campsite, Sherman Creek WLA.***

## **REGION 2**

None

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Elk Damage:** Deer and Elk Conflict Specialist Don Hand met with crop adjuster Steve VanTassel and farmers from the Anderson Farm to complete a crop damage assessment in their winter wheat fields on Rattlesnake Mountain. Don rode on combines to photo document damage and collected several samples to determine yields in differing parts of the field. The most notable damage areas were caused by trailing, bedding and feeding.



***Trailing and bedding damage caused by elk in winter wheat.***



*Elk bedding areas in winter wheat.*





## **REGION 4**

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Mount Baker and Darrington Area Mountain Goat Surveys and Data Analysis:** Along with biologists from the Point Elliott Treaty Tribes, Biologist Danilson completed the remaining mountain goat surveys on the Darrington Ranger District. Danilson also spent time entering data and summarizing survey results and providing information to partnering entities including the US Forest Service, North Cascades National Park, and participating Tribes. The 2012 goat numbers in the Mount Baker area were much improved over last year, with kid numbers up substantially. On the Darrington Ranger District, another 75 goats were observed on the morning of August 3<sup>rd</sup>, making this the most productive year for goats here in more than a decade. Biologist Danilson and others on board Friday's flight witnessed a rather unlikely event when they flushed a large tom mountain lion from within 15 yards of a maternity group of goats. This occurred in the high alpine terrain and several amazing photographs pictures of this massive cat were taken (see below).



*A lone mature billy observed during the Darrington Ranger District mountain goat surveys. Mike Wolten photo.*



*Mountain lion makes a hasty retreat, moments after being disturbed while stalking a group of mountain goats on the Darrington Ranger District. Mike Wolten photo.*

## **Private Lands/Access**

**Whidbey Deer Hunting:** Biologist Roozen continued preparations for further discussions with Whidbey Island residents regarding their participation in program designed to allow limited access to private land for deer hunting. Roozen evaluated potential properties and identified contact information for them.

**New 2012 Westside Pheasant Release Location:** Biologist Roozen and technician Otto maintained communications with state and county officials as well as private landowners to ensure compliance of regulations pertaining to use within the selected property which is nearing final signature.

**GMU 418 Elk Hunting Access:** Biologist Roozen continued preparations for upcoming elk hunting season. Roozen contacted representative from large landowner within GMU 418 about preparations leading up to elk hunting season and public access. Roozen started collecting and assembling materials that help facilitate the hunter's access within the GMU. Technician Otto surveyed select locations within GMU 418 to identify parking for public in response to road closures.

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Technician Otto surveyed progress of planted waterfowl food plots. Growth is steady and plots should provide additional waterfowl forage within the units. Additionally, technician Otto maintained communication with landowners regarding their participation in the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program.

## **Wildlife Areas**

**Tennant Lake Unit:** Manager Kessler met onsite with the Port of Bellingham managers at the wetland enhancement project site. The contractor has completed the plowing and disking of the reed canary grass, excavating the channels and laying a layer of bentonite on the site.

**Stillwater Riprap Removal Project:** As part of the Region 4 Conservation Initiative's Restoration Project Pilot Project, cross-program WDFW staff met with the Wildfish Conservancy to discuss their proposed revetment removal project on the Stillwater Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. The proposed project is located on the southeast section of the Stillwater Unit along the Snoqualmie River. The revetment removal would create much needed salmon spawning habitat and allow water to flow through Harris Creek during high flow events.

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

## **Wildlife Management**

**Falconry Permitting Assistance:** Biologist DeBruyn banded a wild caught peregrine falcon for a local falconer. Following the federal delisting of peregrine falcons from the Endangered Species Act, WDFW began allowing for the legal take of peregrine falcons for falconry. Twelve such permits were available to Washington falconers in 2012.



*Biologist DeBruyn banding a juvenile peregrine falcon for a Skagit County falconer.*

### Private Lands/Access



*WDFW staff installed two new WDFW property entry signs at the Ebey Island Wildlife Area. Signs were installed next to the Hwy. 2 parking lot on the eastern edge of the property and next to the new parking area west of Homeacre road.*

## Wildlife Areas



*Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resource Tech Cosgrove controlled weeds and began pond rehabilitation work on the Samish Unit.*

A Master Hunter volunteer will begin mapping foot bridge crossings on the site and bridge marker/raptor poles will be installed.

**Samish River Unit:** Manager Rotton contacted CAMP to request quote for road crossing culvert installation to provide access to parking area to be developed as a part of the proposed wetland enhancement project.

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

**Staff Coordination:** Danilson, DeBruyn, Roozen and Otto met on August 2, 2012 for the monthly staff meeting. This meeting has provided staff members the opportunity to highlight accomplishments, identify challenges/needs, share resources and expertise, manage timelines, and keep everyone on the same page.

## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Western Pond Turtle Management:** Biologist Anderson met with Skamania County Weed Control staff and discussed this year's plan for treating Scotch broom and blackberry as part of a cooperative agreement with the USFS to enhance western pond turtle habitat. Significant work has taken place over the past ten years to manage USFS habitat in Skamania specifically for the western pond turtle. Now that the Bonneville Power Administration no longer funds our recovery efforts, it will be a challenge to secure future funding for habitat improvement projects.

Biologists Anderson and George released a second round of pond turtles on Friday. Twenty-four turtles were released into several ponds at the Bergen Road site. These turtles were raised by the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle until they were large enough to have a substantially reduced risk of predation from predators such as non native bull frogs. To date, in excess of 1300 young pond turtles have been released at several sites in the Columbia River Gorge since the onset of this program over the 22 years ago. The Woodland Park Zoo's continual efforts towards raising these turtles as a part of the head starting program are greatly appreciated.

**Band-tailed Pigeon Mineral Site Survey:** Biologist Anderson completed the annual Band-tailed Pigeon Mineral Site Survey at the St. Martin's site on the Wind River in Skamania County. Over the years this site has been fascinating to observe specifically with the increase in the number of bald eagles and osprey that use the same section of river. This year a new osprey nest was located immediately above the mineral spring's site and the activity associated with the nest impacted pigeon movement patterns to and from the surrounding forest and the mineral springs. Pigeon numbers were much lower this year (186 compared to over 400 in 2011). It is uncertain as to whether these reduced numbers are a variation in the daily use patterns at the site, an indication of an overall lower population, or the increase in other avian activity, primarily osprey. Preliminary observations indicate that pigeons are not driven off the site by osprey and bald eagles, but use the mineral springs only when the two raptor species are away from the site.

**Pittman-Robertson Reports:** Biologist Holman completed the annual Pittman-Robertson (PR) report for deer management in Region 5. The report details harvest management strategies, annual deer harvest, deer survey efforts, habitat conditions, research projects, trends in population, etc. Biologists Bergh and Miller completed the elk and Mt goat PR reports. Biologist Bergh took the lead on both of these reports and incorporated input from District 9 biologists, USFS biologists, and the Puyallup tribe of Indians for the elk report. Those interested in reading PR reports for the various hunted species throughout Washington State are encouraged to visit the Hunting page of WDFW's website.

**Columbia White Tailed Deer:** Biologist Miller and Program Manager Jonker participated in a meeting with USFWS and ODFW to discuss a situation at the Julia Butler Hanson National Wildlife Refuge where the dike, that protects the interior from the Columbia River, is eroding and will likely breach during a major storm. The question of how to face the inundation of the ~

2,000 acre Refuge and protect the Columbia White Tailed deer was the main focal point of the discussion.

**Dark Goose Banding Project:** Biologists Berg, George, and Miller met to discuss the evaluation of the dark goose banding project in the Lower Columbia River. Staff will be examining banding and neck collar data, nest survey data, harvest, and other information sources to evaluate this project for future direction and implementation. This project has focused on capturing and marking geese with leg bands and neck collars that resemble the dusky sub species, which has harvest restrictions in place to protect it from overharvest and population decline.

## **Wildlife Areas**

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

**Scotch Broom Control Efforts:** Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hauswald and Natural Resource Technician Pyzik spent two days this past week spraying about four acres of solid Scotch broom on the Mudflow Unit. Most of this acreage would not have been accessible to spray if it had not been for the efforts of the volunteers from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation that had hand pulled the weed and cleared trails earlier this spring. Wildlife Area staff will continue to control Scotch broom and other weeds on the Wildlife Area in the weeks ahead.

### **Klickitat Wildlife Area**

**Sondino Unit:** Manager VanLueven and volunteer Enz went to the Sondino Unit to clean the enameled plates of the three water gauges, so they can be read from the shoreline of the ponds. The plates had a lot of build up and steps were taken to help keep them clean for the future. Current water levels were documented. In addition, VanLueven and volunteer Enz constructed turtle exclusion fences around two piles of sticks that are to be burned this winter.

**Canyon Creek Campground:** Manager VanLueven had four hazardous dead trees cut down and issued two woodcutting permits for salvage of the wood. The trees leaned toward a road in the Canyon Creek Campground and presented a public safety issue. Several standing snags were determined not to be a threat, and were left in place for wildlife habitat.

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

## **Wildlife Management**

**Clark County Fair:** Biologists Miller and Bergh manned the WDFW booth at the Clark County Fair on opening morning. They answered questions about topics ranging from black bear nuisance problems to the northern pike minnow sport reward program.

## **REGION 6**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Western Pond Turtle:** Biologist Tirhi, Skriletz, and Anthony hosted the Woodland Park Zoo media event a juvenile Western Pond Turtle release for 2012. Twenty-five, 1-year old turtles were released at the Pierce County recovery location to join the population of 200+ already there. The release was attended by approximately 25 zoo and WDFW staff and invited guests. The release involved a slide presentation on the recovery program, observation of basking turtles from above the ponds, and then the release of individuals into the recovery ponds. 2012 marks the 21<sup>st</sup> year of this highly successful recovery program which currently involves three recovery locations in Pierce, Mason, and along the Columbia Gorge. To date approximately 2000 turtles have been raised in captivity and released as part of the project.



*2012 Western Pond Turtle Release. Janet Anthony photos.*