

Wildlife Program

Week of June 24-July 1, 2012

GAME DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Canada goose banding efforts in Eastern Washington resulted in 615 new bands applied to resident birds, which is the second highest total since the project began. District staff and temporary Warren Becker were instrumental in continuing the success of the project. Before leaving the agency on June 8, former Waterfowl Specialist Mikal Moore drafted a report summarizing banding data and providing recommendations for future work on eastern Washington Canada geese. Following further review, this report will be incorporated in the 2012-13 PR reports later this summer.

Don Kraege summarized the breeding population and harvest data in preparation for Pacific Flyway meetings during July 9-13 in Spokane. Although wetland conditions throughout most breeding areas are not in as good of condition as last year, breeding populations appear to be similar or improved. More details on 2012 breeding population indexes will be available later this month. Preliminary reports from Alaska indicate improvement is dusky and cackling goose populations in 2012.

Deer & Elk Specialist McCorquodale received notification that the manuscript entitled “Mark-resight and Sightability Modeling of a Western Washington Elk Population” has been accepted for publication in the Journal of Wildlife Management. The paper’s co-authors were Biometrician Knapp, former WDFW biologist Davison and Bohannon, District Biologist Danilson, and Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission biologist Madsen.

Donny Martorello and Dave Ware attended a wolf-ungulate research meeting with the Oregon Department of Fish Wildlife (ODFW). The purpose of the meeting was to coordinate research efforts for wolves in Washington and Oregon. ODFW is preparing to conduct research and is developing priorities. We discussed the current status of wolves in both states and compared notes on livestock depredation issues.

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

We finalized the special permit formatting with improved language regarding harvest reporting requirements. The permits are being sent to the Department of Enterprise Systems (Printing) this week for printing and distribution.

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

We made a final determination for the recent wolf depredation on a domestic sheep in near Spokane. The determination was a confirmed depredation based on the preponderance of information and the recommendation of the principle investigator. This was the second reported depredation and we are continuing to improve our evaluation process and the criteria for making a final determination of the cause.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Recruitments are underway for a management analyst, primarily to assist with harvest management and permitting process; a new temporary position for the snow goose monitoring project in Region 4; and to fill the vacant Waterfowl Specialist position in Ephrata. Interviews will be conducted later this month.

LANDS DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

DNR Land Exchange: After seven years of work, we have completed the land exchange with DNR. Our first phase, which involved the exchange of WWRP-funded parcels in the Wenas, and Scotch Creek for DNR lands in the LT Murray, Colockum and Quilomene, was completed in April of 2011.

Our final phase was completed this week. It involved the exchange of USFWS-funded parcels and LWCF-funded parcels in the LT Murray, Oak Creek, and Scotch Creek for DNR lands in six counties: Asotin, Kittitas, Yakima, Chelan, Okanogan, and Klickitat.

In total: 52,400 acres changed ownership; a combined value of \$36.8 million.

For each of our fund sources, this was the largest conversion and replacement project in the state: 34,900 acres of DNR lands were converted to WDFW land; 5,100 acres of WWRP-funded lands were converted to DNR land; 4,429 acres of LWCF-funded lands were converted to DNR land; 7,676 acres of USFWS (P-R) lands were converted to DNR land. It is also said to be the largest conversion in the history of the LWCF program nation-wide. That’s probably true for Pittman-Robertson, as well.



New Discover Pass Sign Design: With input from Region 3 (Leah Hendrix, Jorge Garcia, Ted Clausing, Captain Richard Mann, and Jeff Tayer), Paul Dahmer, Steve Sherlock and Melinda Posner worked with DNR’s graphics department to revise Discover Pass signage for Wildlife Areas and Access Sites. The revised entrance and parking signs are more clear about the need for a Discover Pass OR Vehicle Access Pass. In addition, the entrance sign will include information about where Discover Passes can be purchased, and the existing parking sign material will be replaced with a more durable “polydura” product. The new signs will used to replace worn out, stolen, or otherwise damaged signs.

More Flexible Discover Pass Volunteer Program Policies Approved: Working with feedback from the Council of Outdoor Groups (COG), which includes Backcountry Horsemen, Pacific Northwest 4 x 4, Washington Trails Association and other user groups, Steve Sherlock and Discover Pass Volunteer Program staff from DNR and State Parks have modified the volunteer policies to provide more flexibility. Monitoring activities are now considered “approved activities” as long as they are located on and improving WDFW recreation lands and or facilities. In addition, volunteers can be reimbursed for up to 2 hours of travel time to the event.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Partner Interest in Financial Support for Golden Eagle Survey – At the request of USFWS Lacey Office, Section Manager Bruce Thompson began processing documents to receive a nearly \$25,000 grant toward costs of conducting aerial surveys of golden eagle breeding territories in 2013. This is the first of what is hoped to be several federal and energy industry contributions toward survey costs based on a proposal recently transmitted to multiple prospective cooperators by WDFW.

Demonstrated Merits of Interagency Personnel Act Agreements – USFWS contacted Section Manager Thompson to express interest in extending IPA Agreements for Biologists Steve Desimone and Colleen Stinson through September 2013. These interests will provide nearly \$110,000 in additional funding to support these professional experiences for WDFW staff assisting USFWS with conservation programs for at-risk species. For Ms. Stinson, the agreement will provide for an expanded assignment to 0.8 FTE. Formal communication has been received from USFWS to initiate the IPA extensions and funding.

Magnitude of WDFW Golden Eagle Territory Data – Ongoing review by Biologist Gerry Hayes of WDFW’s golden eagle database for metrics on occupancy and reproductive status of breeding territories has encompassed nearly 6,000 records. Breeding territories were monitored as early 1965 and periodic statewide surveys occurred in 1990, 1999, 2000, 2004, and 2005.

Mazama Pocket Gopher Survey – Section Manager Bruce Thompson and Biologist Gerry Hayes have consolidated 33 opportunistic/directed pocket gopher survey forms submitted thus far, primarily representing open forest and clear-cut sites. Records have indicated 7 sites with no mound evidence and 26 sites with detection of uncertain mounds judged to be possible for pocket gophers. Trapping has not confirmed any sites.

Spotted Owl Habitat Enhancement – Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan participated in a planning meeting for an upcoming field trip to visit forest areas that will potentially be included in a pilot project to assess effectiveness of various timber harvest prescriptions to recruit or enhance Spotted Owl habitat.

Marbled Murrelet Survey Information Interpretation – Surveys and Forest Wildlife staff prepared an “explanatory revision” of a draft report on marbled murrelet surveys on habitat delineation and survey design on an Olympic Peninsula landscape for use in clarifying a Public Disclosure Request involving a previous draft report. This explanatory draft is necessary to promote enhanced understanding of what was a roughly prepared report draft that became subject to public disclosure but was not adequately interpretable in original form.

WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Outreach to Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation – At the request of the editor of Washington Tracks, the newsletter for the 17,000 members of the rocky Mountain Elk Foundation in Washington, a compilation of successful grants from RMEF to WDFW was submitted for publishing. Also submitted were several photographs of actual activities to control invasive species on department and adjacent private lands, and to improve winter range through application of fertilizer and lime. RMEF is contributing \$48,000 to this \$182,320 effort for five projects over the next year to help improve conditions for elk on WDFW Wildlife Lands. Wildlife Area staff are photo-documenting treatment sites at application areas, for comparisons in future years.

Wildlife Rehabilitation – We are in week two of a burrowing owl rescue beginning in Moses Lake and with an email from Washington State University wildlife veterinarian Dr. Nicole Finch. Some residents of Moses Lake reported an abandoned burrowing owl site with four chicks left behind. The rescue team involves Region 2 and Region 3 Biologists, Wildlife Rehabilitators from Regions 2 and 3, Blue Mountain Wildlife in Pendleton OR, the WDFW Wildlife Rehabilitation Coordinator, and the reporting parties who are taking care of the chicks under doctor's orders. Last week the burrow collapsed due to heavy rains. The caretakers covered the burrow enough for the little guys to get out and eat the mice being fed to them. So far so good.

Good news for a blind little peregrine fledgling initially gone to live with a falconer, before he knew she was blind. The falconer is so fond of her now he has agreed to rehabilitate her. Teresa Yamamoto of Wolftown put him on her Wildlife Rehabilitation permit giving him permission to keep her. The falcon has regained a little of her sight and will eventually begin serving as an ambassador as an Education bird.

Falconry – Tricia Thompson reviewed and approved two former Washington falconers transfer back into Washington from out-of-state, and two falconers who are in the military and being assigned to Washington State who also wish to transfer their permits. Military orders serve to establish residency in Washington, and the 90 day residency requirement plus a valid Washington state drivers license are waived for military personnel.

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

Citizen Science, Ecological Inventory Monitoring – Wildlife Outreach staff, Margaret Tudor, James Chandler and Chuck Gibilisco continued working with other WDFW staff in Lands and Research to organize final details for the first citizen science oriented training and project taking place on July 11, at the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. The long-term project is one of four similar WDFW Wildlife Area ecological monitoring projects utilizing a citizen science approach for specific tasks of the projects that will yield baseline data used both by WDFW resource and policy makers to base management decisions and policies regarding WDFW wildlife areas.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Gray Wolf Management – Huckleberry Pack: Wolf Technician Baker recovered photos of wolf pups in the Huckleberry Mountains and turned over the information to Carnivore Section leader Donny Martorello who announced the formal discovery of the Huckleberry wolf pack.



Five wolf pups in Huckleberry Mountains southwest of Colville June, 2012. This photo confirmed the existence of the Huckleberry wolf pack.



Grizzly Bear Conservation: District Wildlife Biologist Base checked bear hair-snares deployed in the Wedge (GMU 105) and collected 6 hair-snag (DNA) samples from 3 of the 6 stations deployed there. Base also retrieved a self-activated camera that had been deployed at one of the stations. Photographs obtained included a coyote, white-tailed deer, and turkey vulture, but no bears. All hair samples will be routed to Wayne Kasworm, Grizzly Bear Biologist with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Montana, at the end of the sampling effort next month.

Hair sample on barb wire collected at bear hair-snare station in the Wedge on June 28, 2012.

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

Private Lands/Access

Southeast Washington Access and Habitat Initiative: Biologist Earl worked this week contacting private landowners to enroll properties in the VPA program. Biologist Earl entered a contract into the CAPS system and it was sent off for approvals. This contract carries with it 145 acres of habitat improvements as well as Feel Free to Hunt on 792 acres in Garfield County. Biologist Earl also sent out additional information to 32 landowners who will review the requirements and meet with Earl in the next two weeks for further discussions. Biologist Davis continued to contact private landowners in Walla Walla and Columbia counties to inquire about their interest in enrolling properties in the VPA program. Two landowners in Walla Walla County are interested in access only agreements (~1,200 ac). Another Walla Walla County producer is interested in establishing a native grass planting with forbs (~13 ac) adjacent to fields enrolled in CRP. The proposed cooperative agreement would include up to 340 acres of hunting access under the Feel Free to Hunt program. Davis will continue to work with landowners to develop cooperative agreements to assist private landowners improve pheasant and wildlife habitat on their property and promote wildlife-related recreational opportunities through access and habitat agreements on private lands.



Proposed site for native grass and forbs/legume plantings under the VPA initiative. The cooperative agreement would include up to 340 ac of hunting access under the Feel Free to Hunt Program.

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

Wildlife Areas

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Weed Control: Cuevas Winegeart and Debby Flynn spent three days spraying weeds in George Creek. Leading Edge aviation sprayed approximately 150 acres of yellowstar thistle and other weeds in George Creek this week as well.



Spraying Yellow Star Thistle in George Creek.

REGION 2

Region 2 – Okanogan, Douglas, Chelan, Grant and Adams Counties

Regional Wildlife Program Manager: Matt Monda

***Wolf Monitoring:** The probable mated pair using the traditional Lookout Pack territory made another recent appearance on a USFS remote camera deployed to monitor potential pack activity. This is the first visual or photo verification since late April. As of yet, we have no evidence of pups in the territory.*



Lookout Pack wolf pair.

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 2nd weekly visit to monitor the Western grebe colony at Job Corps dike; this is the second visit of the season. Water levels dropped 10” over one week (1.4” per day). Total estimated number of nests since last week has increased by 26% (196 to 247). Of the 60 individual nests monitored, 1) 77% had stable clutches, 2) 5% lost one egg, 3) and 18% increased in clutch size. Four of 60 nests (7%) failed over the 1-week period. Thus far conditions appear favorable for grebe productivity but declining water levels may begin to tip an increasing number of nests.



Grebe nest tipping from lowered water levels.

Nests securely attached to willows (top of photo) are likely at a much greater risk than those that are more free-floating (bottom of photo). There is a 26" difference between the high water mark (where top nest is attached) and current water level on June 27th.





Parent returns to nest after an egg check. Eggs are individually marked to track rates of egg loss and replacement through the season. Thus far, no nests have exceeded 7 eggs total and none have had more than 6 in a nest at one time.



Preferred survey method is by whitewater kayak. Relatively flat bottoms without keels make them very stable when hopping over downed willows. The small size helps to maneuver into tight areas.

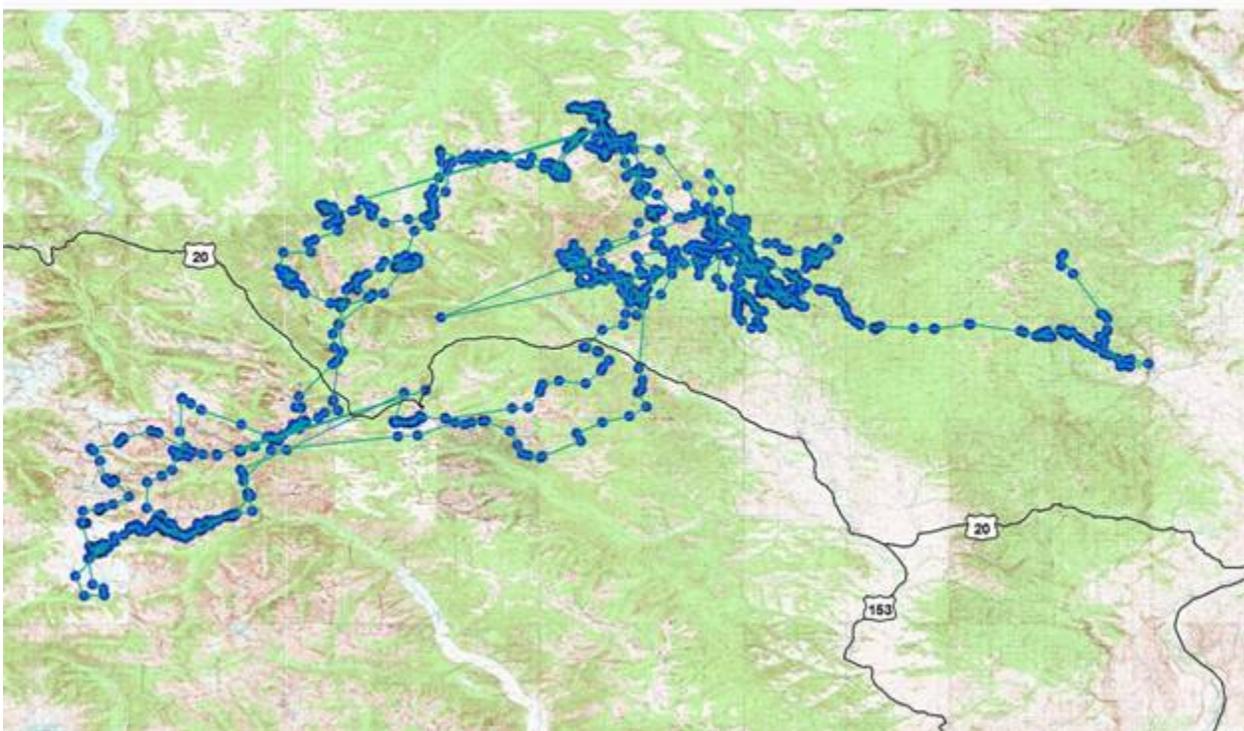
GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Middle Crab Creek Habitat Enhancement: Biologists Finger and Cotton attended a Pheasants Forever meeting (Fife Chapter) to seek additional funding for habitat enhancements of the Crab Creek Supplemental Feed Route. Finger presented the habitat work that was planned and underway in hopes that this chapter would be willing to contribute funding or volunteer assistance. The visit appears to have been worthwhile but details on their contribution were not discussed. The Wildlife Area is currently in the site preparation stage for about 180 acres of upland habitat restoration and about ½ mile of riparian development. We will continue to try to cobble together funding to make the best of the situation and establish native perennial vegetation prior to the wholesale invasion of noxious weeds which is expected to come with feed water next year.

District 6: Okanogan District - Scott Fitkin / Jeff Heinlen

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Lynx Research: We recently obtained the data from the GPS collar of adult male lynx 312 from Vectronix. This is the animal whose carcass a hiker found out in the shrub-steppe east of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area earlier this spring. Lynx 312 traveled far and wide over the last year covering an area much larger than a traditional lynx home range. More detailed analysis of this data will take place as part of the ongoing research effort.



Movements of lynx 312.

Flammulated Owl Surveys: Biologist Fitkin and Heinlen spent many recent evenings conducting flammulated owl surveys in the District's lodge pole pine habitat. We have detected flammulated owls on two of the five routes surveyed to date, as well as two boreal owls (a much rarer species on one of the routes). We've also incidentally encountered a variety of other wildlife including moose, lynx, bear, rubber boas, a raccoon, and others; however, only the species below held still long enough for a good photo.



Western Toad

Habitat Conservation: Biologist Fitkin delivered his powerpoint presentation for the Okanogan-Similkameen project before the RCO review board in Olympia. This effort seeks to continue ongoing work to protect high quality habitat important for conserving the extraordinary

biodiversity of this watershed. The project's score and ranking relative to other projects will be determined soon; however, how the number of projects that will actually receive funding will not be known until after next year's legislative session.

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

Hunter Assistance: Biologist Fitkin returned many calls and provided information to hunters that successfully drew special species or late season deer permits. The buck below should be a quality animal for a permit holder come November, but it will likely be much harder to find at that time of year.



White-tailed deer buck in velvet.

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

Environmental Education: Biologist Fitkin gave a carnivore presentation to a Sierra Club outing group that spent the week in the Methow at the North Cascades Base Camp retreat center. The talk focused on the four ongoing rare carnivore projects in the Okanogan District (lynx research, wolverine research, grizzly bear hair-snag surveys, and wolf monitoring).

WILDLIFE AREAS

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

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

North Potholes Watchable Wildlife Trail: Wildlife Area Manager Fitzgerald met archaeologists from the firm Plateau Archaeological Investigations, LLC in Moses Lake and escorted them to the site of the proposed North Potholes Trail. Fitzgerald showed them the placement of the trail and viewing blinds so they could conduct the cultural resources survey prior to construction activities anticipated for this fall.

Stan Coffin Lake Water Level: Information from the Warm Water Fishery's Team indicated that the water level in Stan Coffin was unusually low and they suspected the inflow was reduced after the Quincy Irrigation District (QID) rebuilt the gates on the West Canal. Manager Fitzgerald inspected the outlet culverts, inlet gates and beaver activity in the inlet and outlet streams. Inflow did not appear to be significantly lower than in the past, and no beaver dams were found in the inlet stream, and the outlet culverts were clear. When the QID tested the rebuilt gates in May, Wildlife Area and Access Maintenance Staff made the effort to ensure the outlet culverts were cleared, lowering the lake level. Normally, beaver would plug the culverts as fast as they are cleared, but this time the culverts remained clear, lowering the lake level even more. When the outlet culverts become plugged, the water level in the lake should rise.

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

Weed Control: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Cole applied herbicides to annual weeds (Russian thistles and Kochia) that had broken through the gravel on roads and parking areas in the Gloyd Seeps, Quincy Lakes, and Desert Units. He also applied broadleaf herbicides to Canada thistle, Russian knapweed, and perennial pepperweed in the Quincy Lakes and Gloyd Seeps Units.

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

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Pogue Mountain Thinning Project: Bryan worked with the Wenatchee Washington Conservation Corp crew this week on hand thinning and piling of small diameter trees to promote a healthy forest and improved habitat. Some pole thickets approach 10,000 stems per acre.





Shrub Steppe Restoration: Staff completed bottom plowing on this year's 90 acre restoration project. Mike used the hydraulic rock picker and cleared the entire field of rocks, to save on equipment for the rest of the field preparation. Last year's seeding was mowed to eliminate annual weeds prior to seed set, and give the seeded perennials more resources.



2011 restoration field in the foreground, with 2012 project in the background, Scotch Creek Unit.

Weed Control: Clark and Mike worked the Chesaw unit this week. The target weeds included Musk Thistle, Hounds Tongue & St John's Wort. A total of about 2 acres spot spraying and included some hand pulling on steep hillsides in the Mary Ann Creek area. Jim sprayed about 1/3 acre of Scotch Thistle on the Scotch Creek unit.

Chelan Wildlife Area Complex - Ron Fox

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Knowls Unit Yellow Star Thistle: For the past 15 years a concerted control effort by Wildlife Area staff, most notably Fidel Rios, has reduced the presence of this weed to individual plants and very small patches from a 100-acre infestation in 1998. This year combined staff from Wells Wildlife Area and Chelan Wildlife Area including Ron Fox, Chelan Manager; Anne Winters, Wells Assistant Manager; Fidel Rios, Maintenance Mechanic; Angel Anderson-Hasting, Utility Worker; Brad Zabreznik, Utility Worker; and a two-person Forest Service crew spent three days searching for and spraying yellow star thistle plants scattered over 200 acres of steep terrain. Additional effort will be needed in July to locate flowering plants missed during this effort.



Angel and Brad spraying yellow star thistle on the Knowls Unit

Chelan Butte Field Restoration: Brad Zabreznik, Maintenance Mechanic, completed mowing 60 acres of fields seeded with native grasses and forbs last fall to reduce annual weeds competition. The weed of greatest concern is cereal rye that infests many of the old farm fields on the Butte. He and Ed Pierson, Trades Helper, made repairs to a cultivator and then proceeded to maintain the fallow on fields to be seed this fall.

Beebe Springs Natural Area: Chelan Manager, Ron Fox, teamed with Chelan Middle School and the North Cascade Institute to provide an opportunity for a group of middle school students to see and participate in habitat restoration work at Beebe Springs. The students had just returned from the residential environmental education program at the North Cascade Institute and were interested in completing a stewardship project that involved invasive plant removal. The middle school students spent a morning at Beebe Springs hand pulling common mullein and diffuse knapweed in riparian plantings completed in 2011. The enthusiastic group of students covered ¼ mile of Columbia River shoreline and were pleased to have not seen any snakes.



Chelan Middle School students at Beebe Springs

**PRIVATE LANDS - John Cotton / Eric Braaten / JoAnn Wisniewski
Banks Lake Unit – Columbia Basin Wildlife Area**



GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE): Private Lands Biologist Braaten and PL Biologist Baarstad completed 24 SAFE field surveys this week. Weather has been very wet and landowners are having a hard time keeping ahead of spraying due to inadequate conditions. In some cases field work has been delayed a year so that adequate time is given to field preparations.

Private Lands Biologists Cotton and Wisniewski continued with field surveys on SAFE acres and meeting with landowners to discuss methods for ground preparation prior to seeding native grasses and forbs.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Target Shooting Fire Season Restriction: Staff posted signs at all the entrance points and the main user-developed shooting sites, for the Wenas target shooting restriction (target shooting allowed only from sunrise to 11:00 am, July 1 to September 30 this year). Manager Confer Morris also did an interview with KIMA TV news and provided information to local newspapers. Several of the radio stations also picked it up and a news release went out on Thursday.



Target Shooting Restriction Sign at Cottonwood

Cowiche Unit Fire: Oak Creek Manager Huffman responded to a call from DNR and CWICC on Wednesday about a fire near Cowiche Mill Road and Sunset Way. The first reports of the fire stated it was approaching the elk fence. By the time Manager Huffman arrived on scene the fire had crossed on to the wildlife area, the 3rd alarm had gone out for more resources from the county, and they were requesting a helicopter because the fire was burning towards a residence adjacent to the wildlife area. WDFW fire investigator, Assistant Manager Taylor, was brought in to investigate and the cause. The fire burned approximately 20 acres, including some excellent shrub steppe and a portion of the elk fence.



Incident 106 on the Cowiche Unit burned approximately 20 acres of shrub steppe, you can see the burned and unburned areas of the 2010 Cowiche Mill Fire in the background.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Pelagic Cormorant Nesting Colony Surveys: District Biologist Milner and Biologist Cyra completed this spring's surveys for Pelagic Cormorant colonies in the northern Puget Sound. All historically known colonies were surveyed along with more recently noted locations, all appropriate navigational aids, and appropriate looking natural and human-built features. An analysis of the surveys and brief report of the work will be completed later in the summer.



Pelagic Cormorants utilizing navigation aid for nesting ledges

Black Oystercatcher Follow-up: Several locations where Black Oystercatchers were banded and transmittered in 2009 were visited opportunistically during other marine surveys. Several sites retained marked birds including one observed with young. The unique Alpha color bands used to identify individuals had been modified by the birds in all cases to prevent positive individual identification, but with the birds known site fidelity and distance to other marked birds it was confidently felt that these birds had remained successfully faithful to their breeding sites for at least 3 breeding seasons.



Black Oystercatcher with modified color band

Bald Eagle Management: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn responded to an injured bald eagle that was reported on the Swinomish reservation. Danilson and DeBruyn conducted a search of the area where the mature eagle was observed the previous evening, but the bird was not located.

Peregrine Falcon Survey: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn visited two of the five peregrine falcon sites in the District that are being surveyed as part of the US Fish and Wildlife Service post-delisting process. Falcons were observed at both sites, however the final breeding success remains in question at one, because only one individual briefly sighted away from the nest site and it is unclear if juveniles have been successfully fledged. At the second site, prey exchange and feeding activity were observed. The one juvenile bird in the nest still appears to be quite young (i.e. two weeks old). A disparity in nesting chronology is being witnessed at these sites this year, where the current age of juveniles is at least a month apart. Three fledged juveniles were observed at a different site in the vicinity and three nestlings were observed being fed at another.



Three week old Peregrine chicks being fed by their mother. Photo by Paul DeBruyn.

Biologist Cyra along with volunteer Leah Renzel, performed productivity surveys on the two active peregrine sites on the federal monitoring list for District 13. The southern site produced three young, seen actively sunning, and being fed on the ledge by the adults. These eyases appeared to be within a week of fledging. The northern site produced two fledglings, both observed making their way flying from tree to tree near the ledge, with appropriately awkward landings for this age.

Common Loon Monitoring: Biologist Anderson observed the Calligan Lake common loons on to determine fate of high water events last week. The adult pair was observed loafing and feeding together. Unfortunately, the nest appears to have failed. It is likely the water drop and

fact that the nest was a shoreline nest resulted in abandonment due to land exposure. Loons do not move well on land and would have difficulty accessing the isolate nest far up from the water's edge and shallows.



The breeding pair or adult Common loons on Calligan Lake failed this year. The damaged egg is shown above.

Seattle Parks Kiwanis Ravine Heron Colony Management: Biologist Anderson met with Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR), Heron Habitat Helpers (HHH), and Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (SDN). The meeting involved planning for the HHH grant received from SDN to study various options to increase awareness and assist in management of the colony. Options include citizen monitoring and habitat mapping, installation of onsite video interpretation stations at Discovery Park Environmental Learning Center and the US Army Corp Chittenden (Ballard) Locks, as well as other camera options. A study is being conducted to determine feasibility of various options. Information on Kiwanis Ravine heron colony can be found at: <http://heronhelpers.org/>

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch/heroncam/>



An observation of heron nest predation was captured on the WDFW Heron Cam. Citizen observation volunteers witnessed this event and reported it to Biologist Anderson.

Citizen Volunteer Acoustic Bat Monitoring in Lower Snoqualmie Management Units:

Biologist Anderson worked with citizen volunteers, including members of Bats Northwest, to run “bat bioblitz” surveys at Stillwater, Cherry Valley, and Crescent Lake wildlife management units. Bats were recorded at all locations, including finding a roosting situation at the Cherry Valley barn. More work will be conducted at this barn to determine species status and type of roost. Continued acoustic work will occur in July and August. Information on Washington’s bats and wildlife lands in District 12 (King Co.) can be found here:

http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/snoqualmie/

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/bats.html>

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch/batcam/index.html>

<http://www.batsnorthwest.org/>

Wildlife Areas

Tennant Lake: Manager Kessler coordinated with the managers at the Port of Bellingham on the wetland enhancement project on the Tennant Lake unit. Natural Resource Tech Deyo mowed 30 acres of invasive reed canary grass adjacent to the Port’s project. This will prevent the grass from going to seed and lessen the chance the newly disturbed areas will be reinfested with reed canary grass.



The 50 acres of planted barley at the Lake Terrell unit is growing quickly. Natural Resource Tech Deyo applied herbicides to half the planted barley fields.

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

Wildlife Management

Band-tailed Pigeon Mineral Site Investigation: As a prelude to a potential band-tailed pigeon project later this year, Biologist Danilson has recruited former WDFW employee Doug Huddle as a volunteer. Huddle has been investigating areas with known band-tailed pigeon concentrations and/or mineral springs in Skagit and Whatcom Counties. During the week of June 25th, Huddle conducted surveys in the Baker River and North Fork Nooksack River drainages and has observed pigeons at both locations.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Agriculture Program: Weather and river conditions continue to hamper field preparations on the **Island Unit**. Habitat Tech Cosgrove monitored drainage but higher than normal water levels on the Skagit River sub-irrigate fields allowed for limited drainage even during lower tide cycles.

Leque Island: Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Habitat Tech Cosgrove verified acreage to be planted in barley as the state share of lease. Oxborough Farms completed field prep in planting area. Natural Resource Specialist Meis has coordinated barley planting with vendors and planting should occur early next week.

Conservation Initiative Pilot Restoration Framework: Wildlife Program Manager Link led a restoration framework technical review team meeting for the proposed wetland enhancement project on the Samish River Unit. Natural Resource Conservation Service holds a Wetland Reserve Program conservation easement on this property and has funding to implement a

freshwater wetland enhancement. The next step for this project is for the Regional Management team to consider project review team recommendations.

Wildlife Program Manager Link led a restoration framework technical review team meeting for the proposed wetland restoration feasibility study for the Barnaby Slough reach of the Skagit River. WDFW has been working with Skagit River Systems Cooperative and neighboring land owners, Seattle City Light and the Nature Conservancy to consider potential restoration alternatives for this site. The next step for this project is for the Regional Management team to consider approval to move forward with the feasibility study.

Headquarter Unit/Wiley Slough: Manager Rotton met with Shirley Solomon of the Skagit Watershed Council and a film crew from BrandQuery to film an introduction for the new Puget Sound Partnership web based information system called Salmon Trails and Tales. The Wiley Slough restoration project will be one of the Skagit County projects highlighted on this new website.



Wildlife Program Manager Russell Link and Manager Rotton and Regional hosted a Wiley Slough Work group meeting to discuss the status of various proposed adaptive management actions. Proposed projects include dredging, berm construction and building a new pump station to improve drainage system function.

Leque Island: Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Habitat Tech Cosgrove constructed and placed a new footbridge on Leque Island to improve fishing access for the sturgeon fisherman.

Lake Terrell Unit: Manager Kessler coordinated with several volunteers who will be performing repair projects on the Tennant Lake and Lake Terrell units. He also coordinated with the Custer Sportsmen's Club on the Archery Range at the Intalco unit. He will be working with them to apply for another archery range improvement grant.

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

Wildlife Management

Bats: Biologist DeBruyn responded to a call from a homeowner reporting dead bats in their yard. Four myotis were recovered and prepared for shipment to the National Wildlife Health Center for necropsy. A potential roost/maternity colony was located on an ivy covered stump in the yard. The situation will be monitored for further mortality.

Private Lands/Access

Food Plots: Region 4 private lands staff monitored barley and corn plots at Bayview Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program sites. Currently, weed growth is minimal and the planting look good.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Wildlife Management

Skagit Wildlife Area staff attended a barley workshop at the WSU Cooperative Extension Office in Mount Vernon, the workshop covered discussion about new varieties of barley being cultivated that may have better yields for Western Washington. WA Staff will pursue the potential to experiment with some of the new varieties that may be better suited for our short growing season and wet field conditions.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtles: Biologists Anderson, Stephens, George, and Holman worked with dog handler Dave Vesely at the Bergen Road and Sondino pond turtle sites. The trained dog “Rogue”, attempted to locate western pond turtle nests in prime locations at each site. Unfortunately no nests were discovered during the effort. Please see the attached photos of Rogue searching for turtle nests.



Trained dog “Rogue” searching for western pond turtle nests.

Black-tailed Deer Research Project: Fawn mortality searches associated with the Region 5 black-tailed deer research project continued during the fourth week of June. Thirteen 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 6 does, 11 fawns have been captured and 7 remain alive. In the Coweeman cluster of 7 does, 9 fawns have been captured and 5 remain alive. Fawn 200COM's collar was on mortality signal during this week's checks. All that was found was the collar resting on top of a pile of coyote scat, indicating a likely predation-caused mortality.



Fawn 200COM's collar.

Mazama Pocket Gopher Survey and Trapping: Biologist Bergh assisted Research Scientist Olson and her crew with a two-day trapping effort on DNR land in the Coweeman unit. Traps were set to determine if moles, Northern pocket gophers, or Mazama Pocket Gophers were responsible for mounds in a recent clear-cut area. Nothing was caught during the effort and no sign of gopher activity was recorded overnight.



Setting traps.

Flammulated Owl Survey: Biologists Holman and Stephens conducted a Flammulated Owl survey in Klickitat County west of Goldendale. This was the last of three survey efforts on this survey route. Several Great-horned owls were heard including 3 juveniles during the survey. This is part of a collaborative effort to document Flammulated owl distribution throughout its breeding range in the US and to estimate occupancy rates by forest habitat type.

Wildlife Areas

Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area:

Hall Road Baseball Field: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hauswald and Technician Pyzik started phase one of removal of 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 posted signs and laid out plans for parking lot fencing.



Initial phase of back stop fencing removal

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

New Team Member: Tom Rhodes has joined the Region 5 Wildlife Program team as a Natural Resource Worker 2 in our Access program. Tom will work with Chris Spangler in providing safe and clean recreational areas/access sites for the purpose of general outdoor activities including, boating, fishing, wildlife watching, and camping. Tom brings extensive work experience in this arena to our team and we are very pleased to have him on board – welcome Tom!

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Wildlife Management

Starkey Experimental Forest Field Tour: Biologist Holman attended a field tour of the Starkey Experimental Forest near LaGrande Oregon. The field day was organized and primarily funded by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Natural Resources professionals from Washington and Oregon working in the fields of Wildlife Management, Forestry, Range Management, and Recreation Management attended the conference. The research conducted at Starkey has focused on a variety of ungulate ecology issues including; hunting management, habitat manipulation, interactions of elk, cattle and deer, forestry, disturbance, etc. Those interested in learning more about the fantastic work conducted at the Starkey Experimental Forest over the past 25+ years should visit the Starkey website at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/starkey/index.shtml> Thanks to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation for organizing the field day and to the researchers associated with Starkey over the years.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Snowy Plovers:

Midway Beach — Biologist Sundstrom continued to monitor snowy plover nesting activity at Midway Beach. Because there was substantial raven activity in close proximity to a nest, Sundstrom installed a nest enclosure to prevent predation of the nest (see pictures below). Biologist Sundstrom continued to monitor snowy plover nesting activity at Midway Beach and documented three new nests this week which brings the total number of nests monitored at Midway Beach to 17 with 9 failures, 5 currently active, and 3 hatched (Table 1 and Table 2).



Nest before enclosure installation.



Nest after enclosure installation.

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	17	4	0	0	5	5	3
Leadbetter	20	3	3	0	9	4	1

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

Leadbetter Beach.—Biologist Peterson continued to monitor snowy plover nests at Leadbetter Beach and documented three new nests and observed the first successfully hatched nest of the year. This brings the total number of nests monitored at Leadbetter to 20 with 15 failures, 4 currently active, and 1 hatched (Table 1).

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

Location	Hatched Nests	Hatched Eggs	Chicks Still Alive
Midway	3	7	1
Leadbetter	1	3	2

Band-Tailed Pigeon - Biologist Tirhi finalized a draft grant application for the 2013 WDFW Non-waterfowl Projects category of the Migratory Bird Stamp and Art Print Program (e.g. Duck stamp). Tirhi is coordinating with Sheila Wilson of the Nisqually River Education Project and the Nisqually Indian Tribe on enhancing a 1-acre upland site for band-tailed pigeons. The projects involves blackberry and invasive control, planting 1000 1-gallon native trees and shrubs, and follow up maintenance and monitoring. Fruit producing trees and shrubs used by bandtails were targeted. The project location sits on the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge on which two band-tailed pigeon mineral sites are located that have a long history of use by bandtails. Hunting bandtails is a traditional recreation on the refuge that this project is expected to benefit.

Streaked Horned Lark - Biologist Linders was at Pacemaker Airstrip on JBLM when a large military vehicle arrived to move port-o-potties away from a streaked horned lark nest at the north end of the runway as per our request. Contrary to our request, no one was contacted in advance to monitor the process. As a result, Linders witnessed the truck driving off the runway and over the streaked horned lark nest while preparing to remove the toilets. All four eggs in the nest were destroyed. The soldiers said they were told the task was urgent, but they received no details on why or where the toilets should be moved. By the time Linders returned to the nest the eggs had been depredated. Photos are attached (credit A. Wolf) showing the vehicle track and the smashed vegetation, which was moved to reveal the nest.



Wildlife Area

Dungeness Wetlands Grant Modifications - Bio Ament and Bio Guzlas made modifications to the Phase 5 National Coastal Wetland Conservation grant application last week. The USFWS review staff provided ideas and suggestions to improve the draft application that was submitted in May. Written comments provided from USFWS staff were considered and efforts made to make requested improvements. This good work was done in cooperation with the North Olympic Salmon Coalition and is critical to acquiring a key piece of property in the area.

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

Wildlife Management

Black-tailed Deer:

Vail: Bio Schmidt checked on the one remaining collared doe at Vail. The doe was out of range to connect to her collar in order to get a fix on her location. Lead researcher, Cliff Rice, indicated that it is probable that she has not fawned. Fawn searches will resume once her movements settle into a more localized area, likely indicating fawning has occurred.

Pysht: The first 2012 fawn mortality occurred at the McDonald site, 243PYM. The aerial check was conducted on June 22nd; the PET code indicated a June 19th mortality. The fawn carcass which was field checked on June 22nd. The dead fawn showed no signs of predation or wounds. No nearby tracks or scat other than deer. It was laying on its side with its legs straight out.



Bio Ament was contacted by Bio Kim Loafman on June 29th after she had conducted a ground check of all deer and determined that the West Siebert male fawn was in mortality mode. Bio Ament met Bio Loafman on site to investigate. Unfortunately, Bio Loafman was only picking up the signal from one (higher elevation) spot that was quite the distance from the actual site. It certainly would not have been such a field adventure if the signal had originally come in from a few other places. The two encountered blow down, nettles, salal to their necks, forests of devil's club, mud to their calves, dense brush, and steep slopes. After nearly four hours of tracking the signal they ended up finding the collar, along with a few hoof and small bone fragments w/in 8 m of Siebert Creek. No scat, tracks, or hair were observed to really conclude what killed and ate the young male fawn. Bio Loafman provided Researcher Rice with a report of the investigation.

Capital Forest: Biologist Michaelis continued to monitor radio-collared black-tail deer in Capitol Forest. To date, no mortalities have been reported. Michaelis WDFW pilot Kimbrel searched for missing black-tailed deer frequencies using the department twin-engine airplane equipped for radio telemetry. They located three missing fawn collars and were unable to locate any missing VIT's (vaginal implant transmitters). Search study areas were in Cowlitz and Mason counties.

Private Lands

Private Forest Lands Access

Bio Harris began updating the Private Forest Lands Access handout for region 6. As part of the process landowners are being contacted for current access rules. We hope to have available on line this year.

Bio Harris sent emails to current active region 6 lands access volunteers to schedule our next play day (work party). July 7th was chosen as our next day for private timberlands clean up as 7 volunteers are available that day.

As a separate note: Many landowners are closing their lands to all public access over the fourth.

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

Wildlife Management

Japanese Eelgrass: Biologists Hoenes and Regional Wildlife Program Manager Cope participated in an educational tour of sites in Willapa Bay where efforts to control Japanese eelgrass (*Zostera japonica*) on commercial clam beds will be first initiated. The intent of the tour was to make participants aware of research findings relating to the control of this species and its influence on the commercial clamming industry. The tour was extremely informative, but also raised several pertinent questions relating to effects Japanese eelgrass control on native wildlife species.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Wildlife Management

Marine Mammal Identification Training: Biologists Hoenes, Sundstrom, Michaelis, and Peterson participated in a marine mammal training workshop that was organized by WDFW Biologist Lambourn. The purpose of the training was to provide training that would allow biologists not familiar with marine mammals to accurately identify stranded marine mammals and to make them aware of the protocol that has been established for reporting stranded marine mammals.