

# Wildlife Program

Week of March 5-11, 2012

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

**Western Washington Grassland Species:** WDFW received funding approval for 6 projects to conserve threatened and endangered species and their habitats in south Puget Sound. Funding by the Department of Defense Army Compatible Use Buffer Program will provide approximately \$360,000 to WDFW for projects beginning May 2012. Funded projects included multi-species habitat restoration, Mazama pocket gopher translocations, Taylor's checkerspot translocations, streaked horned lark genetic rescue, and Mardon skipper habitat research.

**South Puget Sound Prairie Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP):** Section Manager Bruce Thompson met with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Thurston County representatives to further develop expectations, timelines, and funding prospects for prospective work by WDFW to advise HCP development. That survey and data review work by WDFW involves 12 bird, mammal, amphibian, reptile, and butterfly species. Section Manager Thompson is facilitating among Divisions and Programs to organize the necessary work force to prepare the scope and accomplish any work funded. The discussion also explored ways for WDFW to diminish non-federal match obligations associated with any prospective funding.

**Nongame Migratory Birds Technical Committee:** Biologist Joe Buchanan attended the annual late winter meeting of the Nongame Technical Committee of the Pacific Flyway. Emphasis was placed on completing draft final reports that provide guidance on management of fish predation by Double-crested Cormorants and American White Pelicans. These 2 documents will be presented to the Pacific Flyway Council on March 13<sup>th</sup> and final plans will be completed for Council approval in July.

## **WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION**

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

**WildWatchcams – Heroncam:** Watchable Wildlife Section Manager Chuck Gibilisco worked with Heron Habitat Helper volunteers to initiate camera monitoring of the great blue herons which have only recently arrived at the heronry. Two treetop cameras are operational for the first time and hope to give WDFW biologists and other heron specialists an index on the level of nest flushing caused primarily by bald eagles and crows.



**The Whale Trail:** Chuck Gibilisco worked with the Executive Director of The Whale Trail to review final changes of a new Whale Trail interpretive poster with illustrations and life history information on a few of the most likely to be seen marine mammals from the Northwest Office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries, another supporting partner and now official site along The Whale Trail. Gibilisco also discussed recent Whale Trail outreach and education events in the Seattle area and future cooperative efforts.

**Young 'orca kids' viewing the Whale Trail display. Courtesy Donna Sandstrom.**

**Sunnyside Ecosystem Study:** Gibilisco assisted with planning and preparations for the spring field trip and NatureMapping data collection at the Sunnyside Wildlife Area (SWA). Fourth grade students from the Chief Kamiakin Elementary school have been involved in a long-term study of the wetlands and riparian habitat along a section of the Yakima River on the SWA. Will Moore, WDFW wildlife biologist, and Robert Sak from SWA, lead spring activities including camera monitoring of the 41 bird nest boxes to determine occupancy, riparian habitat restoration and plantings, as well as the 8<sup>th</sup> year of wetlands NatureMapping.

**Western Governors Association Annual Conference:** Plans continue to develop to provide high-quality outdoor experiences to participants in the WGA conference, June 9-13, 2012. Thanks to the Hunter Education staff, Carl Klein in particular, the conference will offer a pellet gun and archery range and trout fishing opportunity to families and youth. An individual world-class fishing event using local guide services on the Yakima River is also being developed. Bill Tweit is developing a birding, butterfly and dragonfly field event, led by world-class scientists. Special one-hour birding classes are also being offered for families. The Cle Elum/Roslyn School District will conduct activities and training events on the outdoor skills components of their school offerings.

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

**Wildlife Outreach Volunteers:** Volunteer Management Coordinator, James Chandler launched the Community Event Registration Volunteer Information System (CERVIS) program on the WDFW website. CERVIS is a web based volunteer management and tracking system, enabling WDFW to engage volunteer interest in participating in stewardship and citizen science projects for fish, wildlife and their habitats.

**Citizen Science:** Citizen Science coordinator Margaret Tudor worked on developing a webinar on field investigation techniques for citizen science projects with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). The webinar will be archived on the AFWA site and available for all citizen science groups interested in designing and conducting rigorous fish and wildlife citizen science investigations.

## **REGION 1**

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

#### **Interagency Meeting between Colville National Forest and WDFW Region One Staff:**

Regional WDFW personnel including Wildlife Program staff participated in this interagency meeting with Colville National Forest (CNF) staff on Wednesday, March 7<sup>th</sup> held at the CNF headquarters in Colville. Included in the agenda was a short presentation and executive summary of the Selkirk Elk Herd Plan, a discussion on wolf management, and a presentation on the white-tailed deer research project. On account of complementary goals the hope is to hold these interagency meetings on a more regular basis from now on, possibly annually.

**Yakima Training Center Grouse Project:** Biologist Atamian delivered the Department's 2 generator backpack setups to the Yakima Training Center (YTC). Atamian helped train the YTC contract biologists on how to nighttime spotlight sage grouse and how to apply bands and radio transmitter necklace collars.



*WDFW Grouse Researcher Mike Schroeder, YTC Biologist Kevin White, and WDFW Biologist Mike Atamian work up a sage grouse captured using spotlighting.*

**Blue Mountains Annual Elk Aerial Surveys:** District Wildlife Biologist Wik and Assistant Biologist Vekasy spent the week conducting annual aerial elk surveys. All of the units except Game Management Unit (GMU) 169 and 186 were surveyed. Two days of bighorn sheep sightability surveys remain and will hopefully be completed this coming week, if weather allows. Data has not been summarized yet.

### Wildlife Areas

**District One Team Meeting:** Wildlife Area Manager Anderson attended the quarterly District Two team meeting in Colville, Tuesday, March 9. Private Lands Biologist Todd Baarstad carpoled with Anderson. On the drive to Colville, they spotted two moose attempting to cross a barbed wire fence along the Miles-Creston Road. Photos below show one moose's ordeal in getting over the fence. On the return trip, they watched a herd of over 30 mule deer cross Mile-Creston Road. Items of interest to Wildlife Area (WLA) staff at the team meeting included a proposal to accept a donated parcel of land at Sacheen Lake, an unauthorized combination lock found at a road on West Branch Little Spokane (WBLS) Wildlife Area, and plans to develop field check in/check-out safety procedures for WDFW staff. The parcel donation issue was tabled until the next district team meeting, when Habitat Biologist Jeff Lawlor will report back with photos and a verbal description of the site.



### Private Lands/Access

**Establishing Brood Habitat for Pheasants:** Biologist Merg consulted with a landowner that is at the midpoint of establishing 126 acres of pheasant brood habitat for our Partnership for Pheasants (PFP) program. The landowner offered to burn off residue from crops and weeds before undertaking a chemical fallow over the growing season. He will seed the remainder of the project this fall. The project is adjacent to another PFP site that is currently flooded. It had nearly two hundred pintails on it when Merg visited the site.

## **REGION 2**

**Region 2 – Okanogan, Douglas, Chelan, Grant and Adams Counties Regional Wildlife Program Manager: Matt Monda**

### **DISTRICT BIOLOGISTS**

**District 5: Grant / Adams District - Rich Finger / Brock Hoenes**

**Weather Conditions:** Highs in high-40's lows in low-20's. Generally windy conditions.

**Weekender Opportunities:** Sandhill Cranes have begun to trickle in and can likely be observed around Columbia National Wildlife Refuge. Around 35,000 lesser Sandhill cranes migrate through the Pacific Flyway. Many of these birds travel through eastern Washington during their spring and fall migrations. These cranes winter in the southern portion of California's Central Valley and pass through on their way to nesting sites in the Matanuska River Valley and Bristol Bay areas of south-central Alaska. The greatest concentration of lesser sandhill cranes arrives in March and can be found frequenting areas such as the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge Marsh Units, Frenchmen Reserve, Potholes Reservoir, Scootney Reservoir, and Winchester Reserve. Long-billed curlews are typically observed during March-June in agricultural fields such as alfalfa and hay or in large expanses of very short vegetation. Farm fields near Othello, Moses Lake, George, and Quincy all have potential to support curlew. Long-billed curlew nest commonly in the short grasses that occur in the Seep Lakes Unit.

**District 6: Okanogan District - Scott Fitkin / Jeff Heinlen**

**Weather Conditions:** Temperatures ranged from the mid 40s to low 50s during the day and lows to the mid twenties. Week was mostly sunny with no new precipitation. Deer winter ranges continue to become more exposed with the warming weather.

**Weekender Opportunities:** Deer are easily observed foraging in the evenings throughout the lower elevations of the district. Bald eagles are being observed on their territories throughout the district, Great horned owls have been observed sitting on nests and waterfowl are easily observed with the ice coming off the lower elevation waters.

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

**North Cascades Lynx Research Project:** Assistant District Biologist Heinlen and US Forest Service staff successfully captured, immobilized, and collared a new 16-pound female lynx (#330) in the Methow portion of the study area. This is the first female capture in two years of trapping in the Methow study area and the second since 2006 for the project. A GPS collar was deployed on this lynx and should provide valuable habitat use and home range data for this lynx. This part of the study area lacks data on denning habitat so it is especially hopeful that denning habitat will be identified from this female.



*Female Lynx #330.*

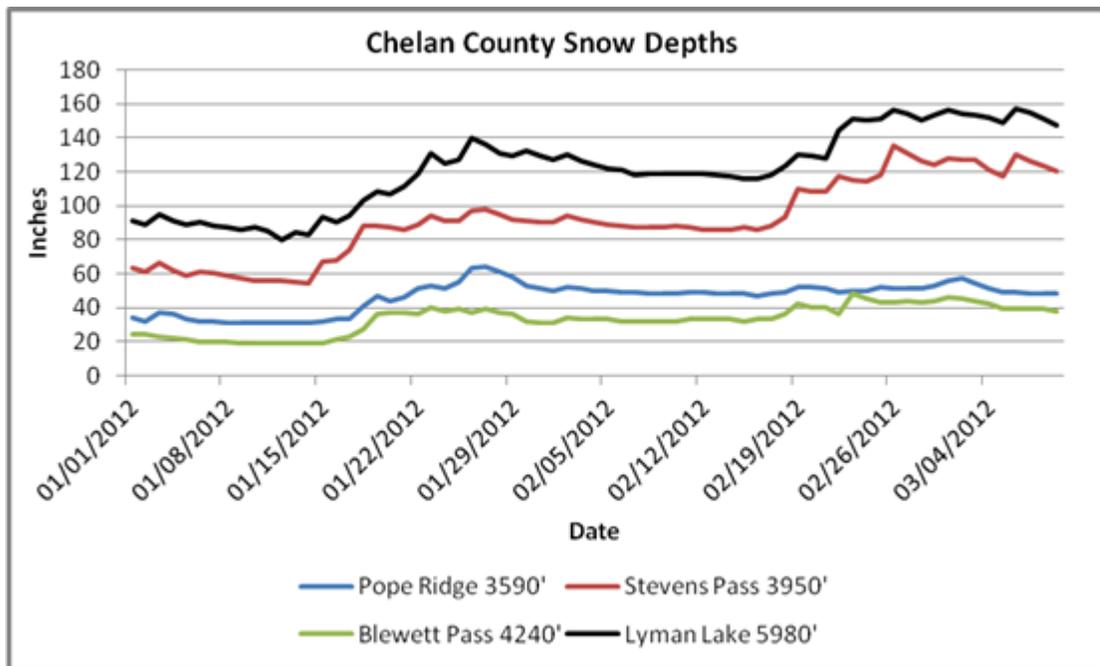
A male lynx (#311) first captured in 2011 and previously fitted with a radio collar this season has figured out the traps provide an easy source of food and has been captured and released multiple times this season.



*Male Lynx #311.*

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

Typical of spring weather, temperatures are getting warmer, yet day-to-day conditions can change from sun to rain to snow. Green-up is starting on south facing slopes and in open habitats in Douglas County. Road conditions are improving, but watch out for water and mud on remote roadways. Upper elevations in Chelan County are still snow packed, with some areas still retaining almost 160 inches of snow. Accumulation is starting to taper off, so we should see snows starting to decrease. The Chelan basin snow pack is at 101% of average and the Wenatchee basin is at 96% of average. Both basins are above last year's accumulations.



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

**Mule Deer on Winter Range:** Biologist Volsen worked with Chelan PUD and the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust to contribute to a newspaper article highlighting the importance of undisturbed winter range for deer. Trails in the Wenatchee foothills are under a winter range closure from 1 December to 1 April each year to protect deer. With the advent of warmer weather, people have been violating the closure prior to the trails opening. The newspaper article is intended to alert people to the importance of giving deer a break during this critical time.

**WILDLIFE AREAS**

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

**Weather Conditions:** Sunny, highs in the 40's and lows in the 20's.

**Weekender Opportunities:** The snowpack is receding quickly but skiing is still great in the upper valley. Mule and Whitetailed deer can be readily seen on the recently thawed out south facing slopes. Spring is on its way and the first flush of wild flowers should be here shortly!

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

**Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting:** Methow staff held the first CAG meeting of the year on Wednesday the 7<sup>th</sup>. The theme of the day was public access to WDFW lands. Topics ranging from the Discover Pass to private gates along WDFW boundaries were discussed, but there were a couple of underlying themes that kept coming to the surface. First, the public wants access to WDFW lands. More than once members of the CAG expressed that if public funds were used to purchase lands then they want access to them unless there is an overriding resource concern. Second, they want sufficient parking at each site. On the Methow there are several WDFW owned parcels that can't be readily accessed because of a lack of safe parking sites. And lastly, all of the members of the CAG wanted a map of WDFW lands (especially the new acquisitions) and sufficient signs to allow them to locate these sites and know the private property boundaries. Members of the CAG unanimously felt that a *good map and abundant signs* would be the highest and best initial use of Discover Pass funds. This was one of the most useful (for the wildlife area staff) CAG meetings of the last few years. The recommendations of the CAG have been noted and will be incorporated into our near-term priorities.



*Members of the Methow Wildlife Area CAG discuss public access issues on WDFW lands.*

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

**Nelson Weather Conditions:** The Columbia Basin experienced normal spring-like conditions, mostly clear and breezy this week with wind gusts at times to 40 mph. High temperatures were generally near and above 50°, lows most nights were below freezing. Farming operations are beginning, the US Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) has scheduled March 14 for charging irrigation canals.

**Weekender Opportunities:** A local birder reports the Great Blue Herons and Double Crested Cormorants are out in full force in the colonial nesting area of the North Potholes Reserve. The North Potholes Reserve is accessed from the South Frontage Road of I 90, approximately 2 ½ miles west of Exit 174 near Moses Lake.

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

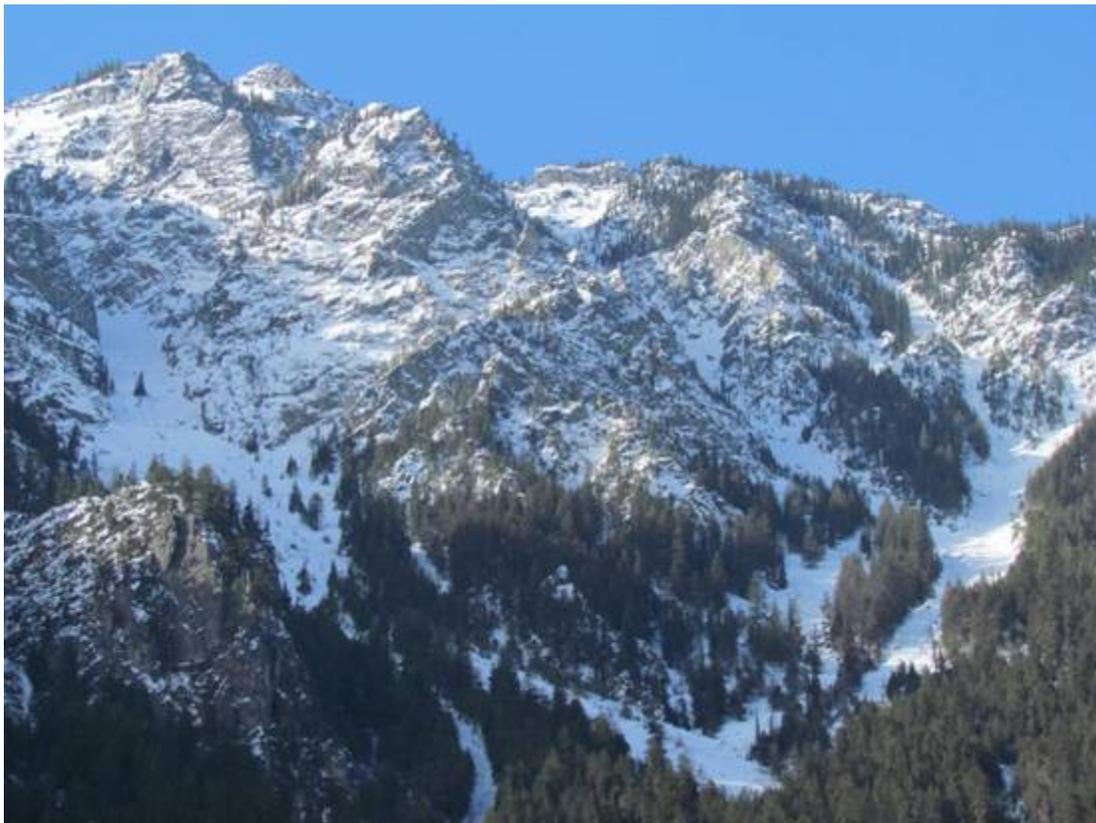
**Mansfield Pond Waterfowl Enhancement:** Assistant Manager Brian Cole, Vegetation Management Specialist Roger Nelson, District 5 Wildlife Biologist Rich Finger and Assistant Biologist Brock Hoenes, conducted another prescribed burn at the Mansfield Pond. The goal is to provide vegetation control, reduce closed wetlands and provide open shallow water habitats for waterfowl. Water level management should stimulate desirable moist soil vegetation. Cole and Finger went back later in the week to mow and clear a firebreak for more controlled burning when weather conditions are favorable.

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

**Weather Conditions:** Temperatures are average for this time of year, with highs near 50, and lows slightly below freezing. Still patches of snow in the Scotch Creek area.

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

**Similkameen – Chopaka Wildlife Area:** Manager Olson visited the wildlife area to gather information on location and feasibility of the RCO trail proposal and how that will fit into other management plans.



***Chopaka Mountain above the new Similkameen – Chopaka Wildlife Area***

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

**Prescribed Fire Conference:** Manager Olson and Assistant Manager Dupont attended the first annual Washington State prescribed fire conference in Wenatchee. The presentations over the two-day conference were excellent. We are currently considering a prescribed fire treatment on Pogue Mountain after this winters thinning project.

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

**Weather Conditions:** For the week daytime temperatures ranged from a low of 40 to a high of 55, nighttime temperatures ranged from a low of 22 to a high of 35. Wind averages ranged from .4 to 3.3 mph with gusts ranging from 7 to 23 mph. Received about .1 inch of rain. North slopes and shaded areas still have patches of snow and south slopes bare. Roads are soft and muddy. Signs were posted on muddy roads to keep traffic off them.

**Weekender Opportunities:** Bird watching opportunities include species previously listed in weekly reports - Red-tailed hawks, pileated woodpeckers, ring-necked pheasant, American goldfinches, pine grosbeak, American robin, northern shrike, northern harriers, redpolls, trumpeter swans, Bohemian waxwings, Clark's nutcrackers, black-capped chickadees, northern flicker - red-shafted variety, sharp-shinned hawk, and hooded mergansers, rough-legged hawk and prairie falcon.

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

**Prescribed Fire Council Conference:** Manager Swedberg and Assistant Manager Haug attended the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Washington Prescribed Fire Council Conference – Shaping the Future of Prescribed Fire in Washington, at the Coast Wenatchee Center Hotel in Wenatchee. After 6 months of planning, the 2-day conference could be considered a success with 130 people in attendance representing 45 Federal, Tribal, State, County, NGOs, private landowners and



contractors.

Presentations will be posted on the Washington Prescribed Fire Council website:

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

The numbers and diversity of attendees at this event is a strong value statement regarding the importance of prescribed fire in managing fire dependent habitats, restoring fire effects and fire by-products to ecosystems, reducing severity of wildfires, increasing firefighter and public safety.

**Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration – Phase 1** – Assistant Manager Haug took post-thinning photos from points where he took photos before thinning.



Sinlahekin Creek Campground

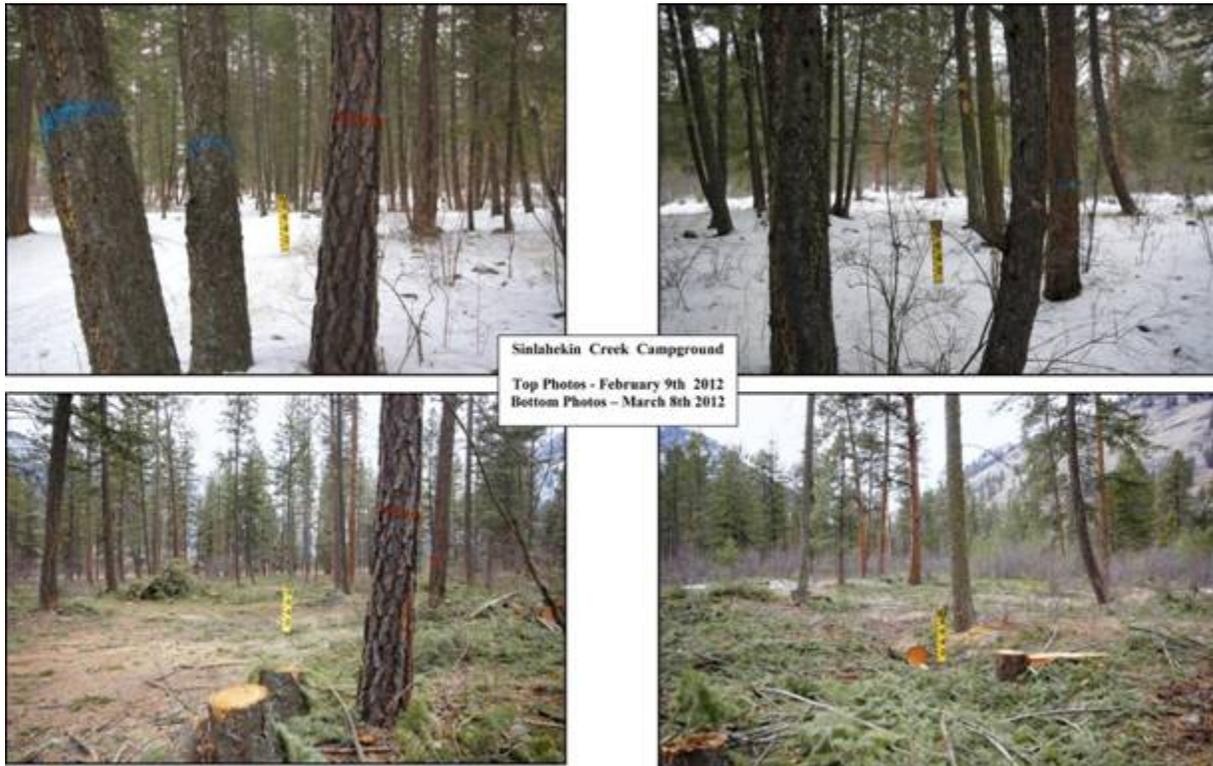
Top Photos - February 9th 2012  
Bottom Photos - March 8th 2012



Sinlahekin Creek Campground

Top Photos - February 9th 2012  
Bottom Photos - March 8th 2012





### **Chelan Wildlife Area Complex - Ron Fox**

**Weather Conditions:** The week started with an unseasonably warm and sunny Sunday but quickly settled to week of average temperatures without precipitation. Lower elevations of the Chelan Wildlife Area are free of snow and green up is just beginning.

**Weekender Opportunities:** Steelhead are beginning to show up in Beebe Creek and are being greeted by a new beaver dam and lodge that are visible from the trail system along the creek.

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

**Chelan Butte Field Restoration:** Chelan Manager, Ron Fox, met with Dan Peterson, Wells Wildlife Manager, to look at the twenty-nine agricultural fields encompassing 1,079 acres that will be planted with native grass, forbs, and shrubs. The restoration process was started in 2010 and the first 146 acres in four fields were seeded last fall. Dan provided Ron with the history and unique challenges found in each field to allow him to begin planning weed control and fallow operations to occur this growing season.



Chelan Butte mule deer (if you can find them)

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

**Weather Conditions:** Temperatures for the week were slightly above historic averages. Highs were 40 - 50F and lows at or below freezing. Farming got under way with many corn stubble fields being cultivated to prepare for spring crops.

**Weekender Opportunities:** Waterfowl stop over on northern migration – Banks Lake Unit – Columbia Basin Wildlife Area.





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

**2012 DOUGLAS COUNTY State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)**

**SIGNUP:** Private Lands Biologist Braaten talked with more landowners about SAFE even after signup was over. There is still a lot of interest out there amongst Douglas County landowners. Biologist Wisniewski completed assimilating Ron Fox's SAFE data and organizing all SAFE files in preparation of field season. Biologist Wisniewski began creating the necessary ArcGIS files and spreadsheets necessary for the third sign-up of SAFE. Biologist Cotton coordinated with Farm Service Agency (FSA) to finalize acres enrolled in 2012 SAFE sign-up. Approximately 12,000 acres were enrolled in Douglas County and 1,000 acres in Grant and Lincoln Counties.

## **REGION 3**

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

**Sage-grouse:** District Wildlife Biologist Mike Livingston assisted Yakima Training Center staff in capturing and attaching radio transmitters to greater sage-grouse. Ten males and two females were captured and fitted with transmitters using spotlights and nets. Females were more difficult to locate which is typical this time of year, and the full moon made it difficult to capture females when they were located. Attempts at capturing more females will continue next week. Mike Schroeder and Michael Atamian from WDFW also assisted along with personnel from USFWS, Central Washington University, Washington State University, and Pheasants Forever (PF).



*Kevin White (YTC) operating night lighting equipment*



Mike Livingston (WDFW) with a captured male sage grouse.



Kelli Bartholomew (PF Sage Grouse Initiative) with a male sage grouse

**Winter Conditions:** Cold mornings in the 20's with several sunny days in the 50's were present. Most of the winter range is snow free. Elk are ranging off the feed sites daily and coming back at feeding time. Weather for this coming week is going to be seasonal with lows in the 20's or 30's and highs in the upper 40's and 50's. Rain and snow is expected on Monday and Tuesday with the remainder of the week being partly cloudy.

Elk are in fair condition, and are starting to show signs of a long winter. Due to a lack of grass green up counts on the feed sites are holding steady.

## **REGION 4**

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

**Winter Marine Waterfowl and Marine Bird Aerial Surveys:** A break in the weather allowed Marine Bird Specialist Evenson and Assistant District Biologists Murphie and Cyra to continue the detectability portion of the annual winter marine waterfowl survey. This survey, utilizing two cameras (Forward facing and Point-of-View, see below), and simultaneous dual, isolated observers will provide correction factors for aircraft disturbance of birds before entering the transect, and observer misidentification/miscount for past (20 years) and future surveys when utilizing DeHavilland Beavers, and will lead to more accurate calculations of marine bird numbers, distribution, and trends.

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/psamp/>



Forward facing camera captures images 300m forward of aircraft to quantify numbers before aircraft disturbance. Point-of-view camera obtains images of transect line as observers see it.

**Ebey Island Oregon Spotted Frog Surveys:** District Biologist Milner, Wildlife Area Manager Paulson, Biologist Bohannon, and Citizen Scientist Les Meade conducted Oregon spotted frog surveys on portions of Ebey Island owned by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Unidentified frogs were seen in one of the wetlands on the site last fall, and portions of the habitat look reasonable for Oregon spotted frogs. No frog egg masses were found, but an unidentified frog was seen, but escaped before it could be identified. Follow-up surveys are planned.



**Biologists Milner and Paulson search for Oregon spotted frog egg masses on Ebey Island.**

**Whatcom County Oregon Spotted Frog Survey:** Biologist Bohannon surveyed last year's occupied Oregon Spotted Frog locations in Whatcom County. Despite cooler water temperatures at most sites, one site had nine egg masses clustered in shallow water and unattached to vegetation, characteristic of Oregon spotted frog egg masses. A funnel trap was placed near the egg masses and the following day an adult male Oregon Spotted Frog was captured. The photographs (taken by Magenta Widner, U.S. Forest Service) are the first ever voucher photographs of an Oregon Spotted Frog in Whatcom County.



**Biologist Bohannon holding an Oregon Spotted Frog caught in Whatcom County.**

**Bald Eagle Response and Note to the Public:** Biologist Danilson received several calls during the week regarding potentially injured/dying eagles. These were determined to be eagles that likely had gotten wet while pursuing waterfowl or other aquatic species. A note to citizens, while eagles may appear injured when they are in water or recovering from immersion, they are generally fine. This is not at all uncommon, particularly during the winter months when eagles tend to be more food stressed.

**Heron Cam:** Biologist Anderson has had reports of area heronries picking up activity, including new heronries in the area. Watch herons progress through their breeding season at the WDFW heron cam: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch/>

**Peregrine Falcon Activity:** Biologist Anderson has been receiving reports from local Peregrine enthusiasts of eyries showing activity and going through courtship activities and copulation events. Many urban eyries have birds on eggs by the end of this month, typically.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Stillwater Habitat Restoration:** Manager Paulson met with Ducks Unlimited Biologists about possible habitat restoration projects. The first stop on the tour was the oxbow lake in the center of the Stillwater unit. The lake is surrounded by blackberry bushes and reed canary grass. The recommendation of group was to remove the blackberries and plant trees and shrubs around the lake. The biologists were also interested in possible riparian restoration projects on the south side of the unit.

**Wood Duck Boxes at Stillwater:** Washington Waterfowl Association volunteers serviced wood duck boxes at the Stillwater unit. With nesting season just around the corner, wood duck boxes need to be cleaned and in some cases repaired.



**Wood duck box**

**Whatcom Wildlife Area:** Manager Kessler cleared the Lake Terrell dam of debris. He and Tom Wampler cleared a water control at the Intalco Unit that beavers had completely plugged up. They removed a board in the control to help lower the high water level in the system. They also worked on the Tennant Lake Unit clearing the beaver deceiver pipes and some dams on Tennant Creek to lower Tennant Lake and dry out the boardwalk.

#### **Private Lands/Access**

**Farming for Wildlife Workshop:** Biologist Roozen attended a meeting held by The Nature Conservancy at the Washington State University cooperative extension center in west Mount Vernon. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss updates and findings on their Farming for Wildlife Program. Landowners, researchers, and managers addressed impacts and benefits of flooding private ground in part to benefit wildlife, but also how flooding ground impacts soils and crops in this area.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**North Cascades Elk Trap and Radio Collar Project:** Because the capture of an elk late last Friday resulted in some trap damage, the elk Clover trapping project continued with only one trap deployed during the week of March 5<sup>th</sup>. And, this was confounded when a logging operation was initiated in close proximity, necessitating relocation of the trap. By the end of the week, both traps were back in the field, and will be set to trigger Sunday evening. Several sites are being baited and monitored daily.

**Lesser Snow Goose Neck Collar Project:** The week of March 5<sup>th</sup> was a big move forward for the snow goose neck collar project. Biologist Roozen, Technician Otto, and Volunteer Smith pulled off the largest snow goose capture to date with a rocket net effort that yielded approximately 130 geese on March 7<sup>th</sup>. This triggered our mobilization plan which quickly pulled together a processing team of 8 individuals who bagged, weighed, sexed, aged, measured, banded and collared the geese. Besides those involved in the capture, the processing team also included Biologist Danilson, former seasonal Technician Deyo, Volunteer Maynard Axelson, and visiting snow goose biologist Vasiliy Baranyuk and his wife Yhanna.

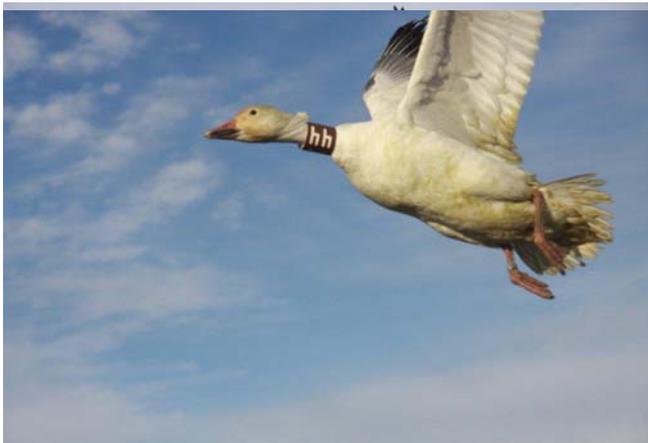


**Technician Otto and Volunteer Smith bag up snow geese captured by rocket net.**

Throughout the week, District 14 personnel were able to capture additional geese in small groups using a net gun, validating the effectiveness of this capture method. To date, 168 geese have been safely captured and released back to the wild with no injuries or mortalities. This mass marking project is intended to be phase one of a future project that will use traditional radio telemetry and satellite telemetry to provide information regarding snow goose migration, winter distribution and movements, and habitat utilization.



**Biologists Danilson and Roozen take morphological measurements on lesser snow goose**



**Adult lesser snow goose taking flight after being banded and neck collared**

**Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Presentation to 2012 Bellevue Master Naturalists Class:** Biologist Anderson provided a 3 hour lecture to the 2012 Bellevue Master Naturalist Class. The presentation covered urban ecology and influence on the natural environment; various taxa life history and urban habits including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrate pollinators and invertebrate predators; as well as providing for area wildlife and conflict reduction techniques.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Island County Private Lands Deer Hunt Pilot Project:** Biologist Roozen continued work on continued access to private lands in Region 4. Roozen made a site visit to Whidbey Island to proposed property for pilot deer hunting program.

**Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewing Private Lands Access:** Roozen and Otto continued discussions with landowners interested in providing viewing opportunities for the public. Roozen worked on proposals for both programs to secure funding and time needed for each program.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Fir Island Farms:** Skagit Wildlife Area Manger Belinda Schuster and Natural Resources Specialist 2 (NRS2) Greg Meis met with Brandon Roozen to evaluate the winter forage plantings on the Snow Goose Reserve. The agricultural lease for the WDFW property is up for renewal this season. The larger Snow Goose Reserve agreement that includes private and public land is scheduled to be renewed in 2013. WDFW staff has received comments from the public concerned about the available forage on the Reserve and how this impacts Snow goose use and distribution in the area.

**Island Unit:** Access Area Manager Derek Hacker and NRS Meis toured the Island Unit to discuss the farming program and specific field conditions during the farming season. Boards were removed from the water control structures to begin dewatering the site for the season. Waterfowl numbers were good on the site as the birds are utilizing the shallowly flooded fields.

**Intalco Unit:** Manager Kessler coordinated with the Custer Sportsmen's Club on the Archery Course on the Intalco Unit. They held a Spring Cleanup work party cleaning up the area and hanging archery targets. Manager Kessler ordered in a load of gravel to improve a very muddy access road.

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

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Waterwheel Creek Project:** Manager Paulson met with Wild Fish Conservancy and Recreation and Conservation Office staff. The meeting was to ensure that the project will not permanently close public recreation at Cherry Valley. Manager Paulson and Wild Fish Conservancy staff insures that this project will enhance public recreation on the unit.

**Skagit Headquarters/Wiley Slough:** Skagit Wildlife Area staff continues to monitor the Wylie Slough water surface elevations. Manager Schuster continues to coordinate with Dike District #22 Commissioner, Stan Nelson regarding additional pumping needs for the Koetje farm. An additional pump was temporarily set up on the Koetje farm to lower water level to allow field access.

**Island Unit:** Manager Schuster and NRS Meis began evaluating other methods for farming on this site due to the logistical constraints that have resulted from the loss of the WDFW barge last farming season. The use of private barge services is costly and an acquisition plan for a new or used barge has not been fully developed. NRS Meis began researching contracts regarding aerial seed/ fertilizer application for potential use on the Island.

## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Forest Carnivore Project:** Biologist Anderson received some new “preliminary” results this week from Jocelyn Akins’s graduate study of native Cascades red fox (*Vulpes vulpes cascadensis*) in the south Cascades of Washington. Results suggest that there is limited gene flow between the MtAdams/Goat Rocks and Mt Rainier fox populations. This may also suggest that the Mt Rainier population may have lost genetic diversity due to its small population size and limited gene flow. In addition, these genetic samples indicate that there has been no genetic mixing between the high elevation native red fox and the lower elevation non-native fox more typically found in other areas of Washington. The Cascades red fox is currently found from Mt Rainier south above 5000 ft. in the Cascades. There have been no detections yet near Mt St Helens.



Recent sighting of Cascades red fox near Mt Adams

**Oregon Spotted Frog:** Biologist Anderson conducted the first early season spotted frog egg mass survey at the Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve. Although water temperatures are starting to warm up, there was no indication that egg laying had started. Water levels are still low as snow and ice gradually melt around the wetland. Conditions should improve towards mid-March.



Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve

**Black Tailed Deer Project:** Biologists Bergh and Holman joined Research Scientist Rice to capture Black-tailed deer in the Coweeman and Washougal study clusters. Each doe was outfitted with a satellite GPS collar and a vaginal implant transmitter (VIT). The VIT will be expelled when the doe gives birth allowing us to know the general location of the fawn so that we may also radio-collar the fawn(s). Information will be gathered on habitat use as well as deer reproduction and survival.



Collared deer with helicopter in the background.



Biologist Holman with a deer waiting to wake up.



Biologist Bergh inserting a VIT under the direction of Researcher Rice.



Collared deer after waking up.

**Oregon Spotted Frogs:** Biologist Bergh met with a landowner in Wahkiakum County about the possibility of having Oregon Spotted frogs on her property. Red-legged frog and salamander egg masses were located, but no Oregon Spotted frog egg masses were found nor were any frogs seen. We greatly appreciate the reports of rare wildlife species and encourage the public to consult the WDFW website for identification tips, range maps, and other wildlife related documents.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Oak Habitat Retention Project at the Klickitat Wildlife Area:** As a follow up, Sue Van Leuven worked with District Wildlife Biologist Anderson to distribute the larger diameter woody

debris will be distributed on the project site to improve upland hibernation habitat for turtles as well as provide cover for other small species such as western fence lizards.

**Hall Road Unit:** Wildlife Area Manager Calkins and Natural Resource Technician Pyzik installed two Wood duck boxes on the northern portion of the unit and posted No Woodcutting signs along hall road where several trees had fallen recently and wood theft had occurred in the past. While on the Unit, Calkins located a small fire area that apparently occurred last year but only burned up one tree and otherwise mostly smoldered underground in a cedar stand covering several hundred square feet. We do not know if a local fire district or DNR responded, but there was an obvious fire trail around the burned area. The small burn did not cause any significant resource damage.



Burned Area on Hall Road Unit

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

**Orientation:** Wildlife Area Manager Calkins showed Natural Resource Technician Pyzik around the Northern portions of the Hoffstadt and Mudflow Units and discussed future work projects. Two Wood Duck Boxes were installed on the East Pullen Creek Lake during the site visit. Winter forage conditions were observed to still be in good shape for elk on both units and two elk mortalities were found, both showing signs of hoof rot.

**Corps of Engineers Sediment Related Issues:** Wildlife Area Manager Calkins submitted six pages of comments to Program Manager Jonker on the Draft Spillway Raise EA to be included in WDFW's response. Simply stated the EA's analysis misses most of the fish, wildlife, and recreational impacts that would result from the proposed action. Calkins and Jonker also attended a separate meeting to discuss the potential for partnering with the Corps and others on an ecosystem restoration feasibility study that they have received funding for. We will be moving forward with a scoping meeting as a next step.

**Equipment:** Technician Pyzik finished building a new tool bar for the large pasture harrow. The original part was rendered useless last year when it encountered a large rock stopping the tractor in its tracks.

### **Shillapoo Wildlife Area:**

**Weed Control:** Our weed control season has begun. Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hauswald coordinated with Corrections Crews from the Larch Corrections Center to clear Himalayan Blackberry on the Vancouver Lake Unit. Over the past several years, these crews have been a tremendous help as our initial strike at new areas where we are removing this invasive plant. Next steps in our integrated approach generally include mechanized mowing, selective herbicide applications, and over seeding with grasses to compete with sprouting blackberry seeds. Hauswald also made the first “once over” on the North and South Units treating poison hemlock. This year he was able to accomplish this task in one day which is an indicator of long-term progress as it used to take several days to hit all of the infestations on these units.



Before and after  
blackberry clearing

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Turkey Season:** Biologist Anderson received numerous calls from hunters interested in hunting turkey this spring in Klickitat County. Hunting prospects should be good this year as mild winter conditions have had negligible impacts to local populations. Numerous large flocks of turkey have been seen in the lower Klickitat River drainage, and around large private timber lands between Snowden and the Glenwood Valley.

**Late Goose Season in Management Area 2A:** The late goose season in management area 2A ended this past Wednesday March 7th. A total of 100 hunting parties assisted landowners in hazing geese while harvesting 227 geese on farms in Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. The parties consisted of 54 master hunters who were authorized to hunt geese in management area 2A and any accompanying youth hunters. A total of three duskies were harvested out of zone 3 during the late season hunts.

Hunters were required to submit applications to participate in the late season depredation hunts. Master hunters that have not participated in the past and are interested in becoming involved can

find more information by calling the WDFW Region 5 office. Landowners suffering from goose damage in Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties are encouraged to contact WDFW Region 5 if they are interested in enrolling in the program. Enrollment for next season can take place at any time throughout the year.

**Wildlife Areas**

**Jenny Creek Access:** Natural Resource Technician Pyzik finished pulling scotch broom in the parking lot and cut additional plants just outside the fenced area. Pyzik also attempted to locate the old bridge across the creek but did not find it, which may indicate that the structure is completely gone or collapsed.



Before clearing

After clearing

\*\*\*\*\*

**Winter Conditions:**

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

**Past Weather:** November temperatures were below normal and precipitation was slightly above average. Snow accumulated in mid and low elevations early in the month but was later melted off by a major warm rainstorm. Most of the month of December was unusually dry with below normal temperatures except the last week, which was warm and wet. The first half of January was mild with relatively warm and dry conditions but was followed by a mid-month storm with significant low elevation snow and valley accumulations. The latter part of the month was relatively normal with occasional rain and snow elevations generally above 2500 feet. The month of February fluctuated between almost spring like conditions and cold and wet periods including some low elevation snowfall at the end of the month. So far March has been a typical fluctuation between warm dry and cold wet weather.

**Short-Term Forecast:** Weather over the next week is again expected to be cool and wet with some snowfall below 1500 feet. Valley temperatures will range from the low 30's to mid 40's. The 6-10 and 8-14 day outlooks both clearly predict below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation.

**Long-Term Forecast: *No Change.*** Colder and wetter than normal through March and potentially into April.

**Habitat:** Snow melted off areas below 2000 feet over the past few days. Low elevation snow is again in the forecast but it appears that the expected amounts will have little impact on forage availability in the mid to lower elevation winter range areas. Utilization of grasses on the mudflow would still be considered light compared to what we would normally expect to see by this time in the winter. Palatable shrubs, however; were heavily utilized recently while snow was present.

**Snow Depths:** Some snow present in mid-elevations but the lowest, most critical, areas are clear. Snowpack is now near average in the Southwest Cascades.

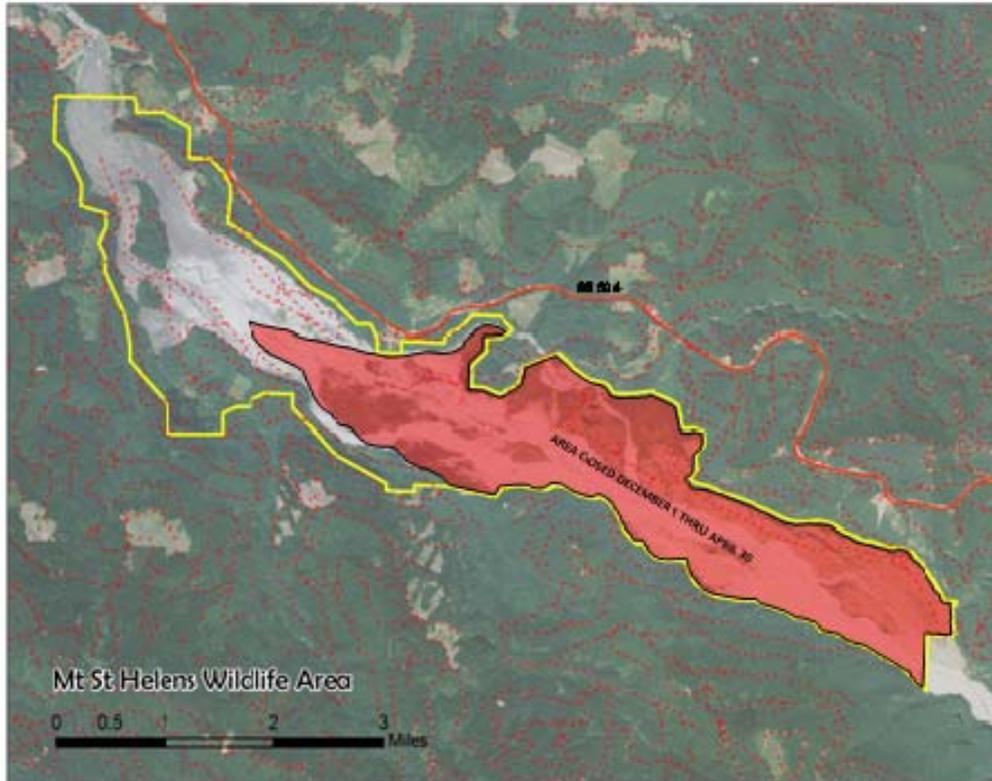
**Animal Concentrations:** No unusual concentrations noted to date. 152 elk were present on the mudflow monitoring area on March 7<sup>th</sup>. 120 elk were on the Mudflow monitoring area during the February count. Previous counts included 120 on 2/1, 176 on 1/6 and 116 elk on 12/5.

**Animal Condition:** To date only a very few animals have been seen that appeared to be in a relatively poor body condition and these have typically been associated with apparent hoof rot. None observed in severe decline that could be linked to winter conditions. One deer was seen near Silver Lake in very poor condition but this was also associated with disease (hair loss).

**Mortality:** Two found on or near the Wildlife Area this week; both had hoof rot. Also two observations in the Region 5 enforcement weekly from the previous week that also noted hoof rot.

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

*The public is reminded that the Mudflow Unit of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area lying East of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30 to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.*



Mt. St. Helens  
Wildlife Area  
Elk Winter  
Range Closure  
Area

The highlighted  
area is closed  
to public  
access  
December 1 to  
April 30 each  
year to limit  
human  
disturbance of  
elk wintering in  
the valley.

### **District 9: Winter Conditions**

**Weather This Week:** There was little snow this week and daytime temperatures were warm as snow continues to slowly melt at elevations below 2500 ft.

**Winter Severity:** There is still little concern for the overall severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County. Eastern Klickitat County is snow free and the winter has been mild.

**Habitat:** The Klickitat Wildlife Area is snow free and south facing slopes are gradually increasing in forage. In the South Cascades of Skamania County there is still considerable snow pack above 3000 ft elevation, typical of late winter conditions in this area.

**Animal Concentrations:** No unusual concentrations reported.

**Animal Condition:** Deer and elk appear to still be in good condition.

**Mortality:** None documented this week.

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

## **REGION 6**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Oregon Spotted Frog Surveys and Management:** Biologist Tirhi met with biological consultants hired by TransAlta to conduct amphibian surveys in the jointly managed Skookumchuck Wildlife Area, northern Lewis County. All amphibians are recorded but the impetus for the surveys is locating new state endangered Oregon spotted frog oviposition (egg laying) locations. The 960-acre Skookumchuck Wildlife Area has significant wetland, riparian and flooded pasture that could potentially support spotted frogs. Although this river drainage is not historically known to support spotted frogs, District 11 has been systematically surveying all available habitat to fully document distribution.

Volunteers were able to locate a new Oregon Spotted Frog oviposition site associated with the Black River watershed. This new location marks the sixth known creek or river system used for egg-laying by spotted frogs in Thurston County. The only other counties in Washington that continue to support spotted frogs are Klickitat and Whatcom counties.



*Cooperator Blake Murdon with Port Blakely Tree Farms collecting Oregon spotted frog eggs for captive rearing and reintroduction.*

**Winter Marine Waterfowl and Marine Bird Aerial Surveys:** With funding provided by a grant from the Sea Duck Joint Venture, Bio Murphie along with Marine Bird Specialist J. Evenson and Assistant District Biologist T. Cyra conducted 3, of an anticipated 6, surveys to evaluate detectability of marine birds and sea ducks during aerial surveys. Annual winter surveys of the inland marine waters of Washington provide trend data on the health of marine bird and sea duck populations wintering on the Salish Sea, and are also used in the annual harvest setting negotiations in the Pacific Flyway for waterfowl. The current effort, if

successful, is designed to provide an assessment of observer ability in detecting and identifying birds encountered during aerial surveys conducted at an altitude of 200 feet and air speed of approximately 80 knots. Digital imaging will be used to document species present during surveys, while Bios. Cyra and Murphie simultaneously record observations they make. This is a somewhat novel approach to evaluating observer ability. Comparisons between observers and between observers and the digital images can be made. Areas in both northeastern and southern Puget Sound were sampled this week. Thousands of images were taken. The key to this assessment will be the quality of the images taken and the ability to discern and count species present. In preliminary tests so far, the results have been positive. Data transcriptions are ongoing and analysis will be conducted upon completion of the survey effort.



**A digital camera taking ~4 frames per second records all observations along the 50 meter survey strip.**



**Forward facing camera records bird species on the survey path before the arrival of the plane.**