

Wildlife Program

Week of March 19-25, 2012

SCIENCE DIVISION

Professional Award: Congratulations to Andy Duff! He has recently been honored as a recipient of a 2012 College of Sciences and Humanities Circle of Merit Award. This is the first year that the College of Sciences and Humanities has celebrated the Circle of Excellence awards, which include three categories (Circle of Merit, Circle of Distinction, and Circle of Excellence). These awards honor alumni who have distinguished themselves in their chosen professions as well as through service to the broader public and, therefore, are examples of achievement for our students to emulate. The Circle of Merit award, which Andy won, is given to relatively recent graduates who have established a trajectory of success and can demonstrate important milestones from their professions and public service—in his case, as a wildlife biologist and geospatial data analyst working with federal and state government and non-profit organizations.

USFWS Colonial Waterbird Breeding Atlas Contract: WSDM Biologist Blatz completed and submitted all 2011 data and map deliverables in satisfaction of the USFWS Colonial Waterbird Breeding Atlas contract. Work involving a corporate database review and field surveys was initiated in 2009, including a comprehensive Wildlife Program review of existing WDFW records, external data sources, field visits by regional Biologists and extensive database updates. The first data delivery was completed in 2010 (634 breeding records), followed by expanded survey efforts and data compilation in 2011. Approximately 150 waterbird sites were visited last year, with the majority of surveys conducted by regional staff in central and eastern Washington.

The 2011 corporate data delivery included 747 historic and recent breeding locations for waterbird species outlined in the contract, supplemented by a Diversity Division compilation of over 1800 additional records for species locations not typically mapped in the wildlife database.

WSDM Field Form Generation for Raptor Occupancy Productivity Surveys: Since October, Acting Wildlife Data Systems Manager Duff has been working with Environmental System Research Institute (ESRI) regional staff to develop a prototype batch map reporting tool for Raptor Occupancy and Productivity data. This project was an attempt to replace the existing Crystal Reports/ArcObjects/.NET tool, which over time has become difficult to maintain due to various software update cycles, overall tool complexity, and a split in direction from ESRI recommended development strategies which limited support from ESRI. The new prototype tool has been completed and moved to the production environment for final testing by WSDM Biologist Blatz. The new tool developed solely in ArcMap using ArcPy Mapping (Python based programming similar to AML) significantly reduces the volume and complexity of code that needs to be maintained by the WSDM shop for raptor form generation. Based off of the work on this prototype, additional reports can be developed using the new technologies available in ArcGIS 10 for Colony Productivity data, Marbled Murrelet, and Herps. This new tool is built in such a way that it will be easy to move to ArcGIS Server to support self-service report generation through the web and we anticipate doing so for the 2013 field season.

Big Game Harvest Statistics: Biometrician Knapp and Eastside GIS and Data Support Analyst Owens have been working on the projected big game harvest statistics for 2011. Their current emphasis has been on deer and elk as this is the most urgent demand from the Commission as

relayed from Game Division Manager Ware and Deer and Elk Section Lead Nelson. Draft projected results have been delivered to Nelson for review to identify any obvious glaring errors. Issues with irregular bear and turkey question sets and resulting data will require “custom” programming for 2011 statistics for these 2 species.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Spotted Owl Conservation and Management: Biologist Joe Buchanan and other technical team members met with the Northern Spotted Owl Implementation Team to receive a briefing from USFWS about the proposed critical habitat rule for Spotted Owls. The technical team is tasked with identifying landscapes where incentives programs may be used to enhance habitat conservation on non-federal lands. The modeling work conducted in support of the proposed critical habitat rule, in addition to a new model, runs specific to Washington landscapes, and will inform the identification of the incentive landscape areas.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Butterfly Conservation Recognition: Biologist Ann Potter was among a group of interagency staff that received the U.S. Forest Service Wings Across the Americas-Butterfly Conservation Award for work over multiple years with Mardon Skipper. This national award was presented on March 14 in Atlanta, Georgia as part of the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. The Interagency Mardon Skipper Work Group began in 2005 with a goal to determine key information and conservation gaps regarding this federal candidate species and outline tasks to address them. Group efforts have helped to reduce the US Fish and Wildlife Service listing priority for this species from a 3 to an 8 and created strong interagency cohesion aimed at species conservation.

WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION

Wolf Training: Presentations at Spokane and Ellensburg regarding the new wolf management plan, the on-line reporting tool, non-lethal wolf management practices, and determining the cause of death of livestock (predatory or natural and accidental causes) were video recorded for future editing and combining with slides for internal and external refresher courses.

Carter Niemeyer performs a necropsy on deer to determine cause of death. Assisting is Dr. Kristen Mansfield, WDFW veterinarian.



Scientific Collections Permits: Tricia Thompson compiled reviews, approved, and sent in to permit one SCP application, reviewed five more SCP applications and sent for comments. Interesting questions always arise in the review of these permits such as “is an SCP needed for bullfrogs?” No.

Wildlife Rehabilitation: Tricia Thompson discussed the current status and future of the Washington Wildlife Rehabilitators Association with President Jennifer Convy and it was concluded that membership would be suspended until the association could be reorganized and re-energized. The desire is to provide benefits to the members but membership was falling. The WWRA will hopefully be a training and education resource in the future. But for now, web requests were sent to remove the several links to the WWRA from our “How to Become a Wildlife Rehabilitator” and “Resources for Washington State Wildlife Rehabilitators” pages and substitute the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council web site for one of the WWRA’s.

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

Falconry: Every year Washington Master Falconers get the chance to take a peregrine eyas (nestling) for use in falconry. Only ten eyases may be taken from the wild in Washington State and the eyas take permits are issued on a first come/first serve basis up to the limit. If more than ten Master Falconers request eyases, then ten names will be drawn randomly from the list. This year Tricia Thompson mailed out 101 letters to all Washington Master Falconers informing them of the opening of the eyas take season.

Community Wildlife Festivals: Spring heralds the kick-off time for the return of community wildlife festivals in Washington, and March 23-25 are the dates for the **Othello Sandhill Crane Festival** <http://www.othellosandhillcranefestival.org/> . Chuck Gibilisco, Watchable Wildlife Section lead worked with regional staff to discuss agency displays and formulate agency messages for the attending public on upcoming festivals. WDFW staffs often help plan such festivals and provide workshops, presentations and field trips for the visiting public. Following on the heels of the Sandhill Crane Festival are numerous other wildlife festivals in spring 2012, including: **Olympic Birdfest, in Sequim** <http://www.olympicbirdfest.org> ; **Leavenworth Spring Bird Festival** <http://www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com/> ; **Backyard Wildlife Festival, Tukwila** <http://www.backyardwildlifefair.org/> ; and **Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival** - <http://www.shorebirdfestival.com> . Numerous studies have confirmed that communities organize and host wildlife festivals to provide recreational opportunities, celebrate local natural or cultural heritage, enhance a community’s image, and bolster travel and tourism dollars at a time of the year that often tends to be the off-season for motels and restaurants.

Video Interviews for Use on WDFW Web Site: A series of short (45-second to 2 ½ minute) videos were recorded and edited on: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area with manager Julie Anderson; and deer and elk conflict management with Anthony Novack. These will be placed on the WDFW web site.

Radio interview on the New On-line Wolf Reporting Tool: Steve Pozzanghera, Region 1 Regional Director, was interviewed by KOMW Radio of Omak, regarding the new on-line reporting tool for wolf sightings. Scroll to the bottom left of <http://wdfw.wa.gov/> to listen.

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

Wildlife Outreach Volunteers: Volunteer Management Coordinator, James Chandler, trained 25 additional agency staff on how to use the CERVIS volunteer management program to register volunteers. To date over 1,100 volunteers have self-registered, and around 400 volunteers have been imported from the previous excel database.

Citizen Science: Citizen Science coordinator Margaret Tudor met with the Wildlife Lands program staff, to specify tasks for implementing a Citizen Science project on 4 pilot Wildlife Areas to measure Ecological Integrity.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Southeast Washington Bighorn Sheep Survey: District Biologist Wik and Assistant District Biologist Vekasy were able to complete the Asotin bighorn sheep herd annual survey. The 2012 count was approximately 40% lower than the 2011 (110 vs 69), a result of the *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* outbreak that has been occurring this winter. All age classes and sexes showed similar declines. All but one ewe appeared to be healthy during the survey, although pneumonia is not a disease that is visually detectable until it has entered the last stages.





Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Project: Biologist Atamian prepared vehicle ATVs and travelled to Oregon to trap Sage Grouse with the WDFW crew for the next week. The capture target is 50 birds. The capture effort began Friday night with a good start of 11 males and 3 females. Saturday wasn't as good with only 1 female. Sunday's effort was better with 8 females and 1 male captured. These birds will be transported to Washington for release. Biologist Ferguson radio tracked grouse at Swanson Lakes on Friday.

Grouse Augmentation Planning: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA) staff has coordinated with sage grouse trappers who will be bringing birds back to SLWA this coming Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. The first batch will arrive the afternoon of Saturday, March 24, for release near a lek the next morning. Reardan High School biology teacher Rick Perleberg will also be on hand to help with the Sunday morning release, and may bring a student with him. Wildlife Area Manager (WAM) Juli Anderson and Wildlife Area Assistant Manager (WAAM) Mike Finch set two Musil boxes out by a sage grouse lek, Tuesday, testing them and repairing holes to the fabric before leaving the field. These boxes are used to hold the birds for several minutes before they are released. The morning of each release, birds are placed into the boxes from a trap door in the back. The front door is pulled open remotely using a pulley and cord. The birds get a "soft" release this way, walking or flying out, moving generally forward to where the active mating ground or "lek" is located.



Biologist Finch setting up a Musil Box at Swanson Lakes WLA, 3/20/12



Volunteers Rick Perleberg and Doug Pineo prepare to release a sage grouse on Swanson Lakes WLA, 3/25/12

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

Private Lands Access Provided: Habitat Biologist Dotts met with a 270-acre landowner north of Valley and discussed the NEW-HAB program. The landowner has experienced hunting/trespass issues in the past (especially with elk hunters) and would like to sign up for “Hunting by Reservation” to help address the problem. The property is already almost entirely planted to attractive deer/turkey (and elk) forage, so forage improvement opportunities are limited to weed control in a small upland area and possibly reed canary grass control/riparian vegetation establishment.

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

Wildlife Areas

Chief Joseph Wildlife Area – Boundary Stock Fence: Bob Dice and Debby Flynn spent Monday buttoning up boundary fence above Joseph Creek. Staff began work on the project about a month ago and left tools on the hillside. Though there is quite a bit more work that could be done on this fence, budget constraints will not allow it. The fence is secure for now and our tools are off the hillside. We did observe trespass cattle on the wildlife area while we were working. Dice reported the livestock to enforcement.



Fencing in the rims above Joseph Creek on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area.

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: The Columbia Plateau has been unseasonably cool and dry. This seems to have delayed migration of some species slightly.

Weekender Opportunities: Cranes and curlews have arrived to the Columbia Plateau. Burrowing owls do not appear to have moved into the area in good numbers yet but a few have been spotted. A Washington ground squirrel litter was observed at Sage Hills Golf Course during the Crane Festival so ground squirrels should start to become very active and visible over the next few weeks. Sandhill cranes were observed on Mansfield Pond in the Gloyd Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area, likely for the first time in many years.

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

Sandhill Crane Festival: Finger assisted at the Sandhill Crane Festival by setting up and manning a WDFW Columbia Basin Wildlife Area booth, lecturing about Washington ground squirrel history, current status, and ongoing research and management actions, and providing a tour of the Sage Hills Golf Course Washington ground squirrel nuisance issue followed up by a visit to a successfully completed translocation site where a population of 100+ individuals was established, and a new reintroduction site that will be evaluated this week. A litter of Washington ground squirrel pups was observed at the golf course, which was a big highlight. At the successful release site we observed two curlew pairs, a prairie falcon hunting, considerable evidence of coyotes attempting to dig up squirrel burrows, and lots of active squirrel burrows and activity. At the new release site we also observed lots of active burrows and strong evidence of a successful release due to peanut consumption in pre-baited traps for this week's reproductive assessment of translocated females. A couple from Ireland, who were attending the Sandhill Crane Festival squirrel talk and tour, arranged to volunteer their assistance to capture adults males from Sage Hills Golf Course this week. This couple has been birding the US and just came to the Columbia Plateau from six weeks in Florida.



A couple checking out the display board and materials.



A young boy waves to a burrowing owl on video.



The group takes a look at a prairie falcon on a cliff ledge.



Finger explaining the enclosures purpose and the testing of different materials.

District 6: Okanogan District - Scott Fitkin / Jeff Heinlen

Weather Conditions: Winter is still lingering in the Methow with lows to the upper teens and snow still on the valley floor in the upper half of the watershed above Twisp. Spring is progressing a little faster in the Okanogan with highs in the 50s and early green-up beginning. Week was mostly rain and wet snow with no significant accumulations in valley locations.

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 county and should be fixing up nests and laying soon. Great horned owls have been observed sitting on nests and water fowl including seasonal migrants are plentiful on abundant open water in the Okanogan Valley.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

North Cascades Lynx Research Project: More success! Wildlife Biologist Fitkin and USFS staff placed a GPS collar on a new adult female in the Methow study area. This is the second adult female radioed this year. Another new adult female has been routinely visiting traps in the Black Pine Basin area, so the crew is optimistic for another capture in the last two weeks of the season. In the previous five seasons, only one female had been captured and collared. This year's effort will go a long ways towards filling a significant hole in our data set. In addition to recent female captures, we continue to capture and release the two males caught earlier in the season.



New adult female lynx - Aurora

Project Review - Buckhorn Mountain Gold Mine: Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Heinlen attended a meeting focused on raptor survey protocol within the project area boundary of the Buckhorn mine located in the northeast portion of District 6. In addition to WDFW the USFS, WDNR, BLM and consultant Tetrateck also attended. The mine is proposing to expand its project area to survey for additional gold bearing ore deposits. Raptor surveys need to be conducted within this expanded project area before the NEPA analysis can begin. Discussions centered on what habitat parameters to use to determine the best available habitat for the Northern Goshawk and the Great Gray Owl within the project area. Surveys will focus within all Late and Old Structure for Goshawks and around all natural and man-made openings >5 acres for the Great Gray Owl. Surveys will start this spring and follow the USFS protocol for each species.

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 lower habitats in Chelan County 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.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Sage Grouse: Biologist Gallie, Braaten, Area Managers Peterson and Winters, Researcher Schroeder have been monitoring Douglas County 22 lek sites. Thus far we have completed about 2 counts on most of sites and a couple more on others. We have counted a total of 272 males on those leks. March is when most females and breeding males attend the leks. Peak male attendance does not occur until mid-April when younger males begin attending the leks, as such the high count of males is certain in increase.

We have also recorded two possible new sites. Longer monitoring will be needed to determine if they are indeed stable leks.





Pygmy Rabbit: Biologist Gallie was the final leg of several shuttles releasing 15 pygmy rabbits caught in Utah into large enclosures on Sagebrush Flats WLA. Most were in good condition, but at least one died in transit. I also monitored the weasel trapping effort at the release enclosures. The effort has yet to capture a weasel. Biologist Volsen traveled to Utah to assist with trapping efforts over the past week.



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

District 7 donated a stock pile of frozen animals to the Burke Museum in Seattle. The Wenatchee Office consistently gets carcasses from staff and the public. Rather than let them accumulate indefinitely in our freezer, staff from the Burke came to Wenatchee and collected 22 birds (mostly raptors, grouse, and even a heron), and 11 mammals for their collections under their SCP.

WILDLIFE AREAS

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

Weather Conditions: Sunny, highs in the 40's and 50's with lows in the 20's. With the arrival of warmer daytime weather the snowpack is starting to fade quickly.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Forest Management: Methow Manger, Tom McCoy continued discussion with USFS personnel concerning a joint project aimed at forest health improvement and mule deer winter range rehabilitation in the Frazer Unit of the wildlife area. This particular area supports one of the highest wintering mule deer densities in the state of Washington. It hasn't burned in decades, and while there is a large abundance of Bitterbrush throughout the Frazer Unit resulting from our management efforts, the deer are over browsing these plants in many places. If we can successfully implement the proposed project we expect much of the bitterbrush to be rejuvenated, but moreover, we will see a significant increase in ceanothus throughout the burned area.

Salmonid Habitat Reclamation: Tom McCoy also met with representatives from the Bureau of Reclamation and Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation to go over the final details of a major project on the Methow's Obanion property. This project has been in planning for over a year and everyone is anxious to see phase I implementation begin this summer. This project will feature numerous engineered log jams in a degraded side channel.

Irrigation Efficiency: Methow staff continued discussion with several NGO's and agricultural lessee's to work on details of implementing irrigation efficiencies (pivot irrigation) on all of the wildlife areas irrigated agricultural leases. By the end of 2012 we are hoping to have 6 new pivots at least partially installed if not fully functional. This is a very exciting development.

Chelan Wildlife Area Complex - Ron Fox

Weather Conditions: The low elevations of Chelan County had a week of below normal temperatures (highs 6-10 degrees below normal) and slightly more than 0.5 inches of precipitation mostly in the form of snow with little accumulation.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Swakane Canyon Unit: Chelan Manager, Ron Fox, with Fidel Rios, Maintenance Mech. 2, at Swakane Canyon to review last season's work on 100 acres of agricultural fields that are being prepared for seeding to native grasses, forbs and shrubs this fall. Fidel has many years of experience working in the Chelan Wildlife Area units and he shared his abundant knowledge of the area's history and management issues with Ron. They also examined the quirky irrigation

system for the area and discussed a pond development, weed control, and water developments to be completed this year with Chelan Public Utility District (CPUD) mitigation funds.



Swakane Unit Agricultural Field 3-21-12

Chelan Butte Field Restoration: Chelan Manager, Ron Fox, completed a Request for Bids (RFQ) for aerial application of glyphosate herbicide on 491 acres of old agricultural fields being fallowed for seeding to native grasses and forbs in 2012 and 2013. The RFQ will cover applications this spring and next fall. Herbicide for the application was also ordered.

Chelan Butte Unit Transmission Line Road: Chelan Manager, Ron Fox, contacted James Caldwell, CPUD Transmission Systems Engineer, concerning a 450' long road constructed on the Chelan Butte Unit to access a power pole that caught fire last summer. The fire was restricted to only the pole with no vegetation was damaged except for the destroyed by the new road. Mr. Caldwell agreed to send a crew in to complete raconteur the disturbed area and have it seeded by the end of the week.



New transmission line road (purple) on Chelan Butte Unit

Beebe Springs Phase 4a Design: Chelan Manager, Ron Fox, along with Michael De La Cruz, Engineering and consultants from J. A. Brennan Associates continued working the design of trails and a parking area to be completed this year. Complications State Highway access points and access easements on an adjoining property are slowing down progress. On a positive note, the Phase 4a SEPA Determination of Nonsignificance became final on March 20.

REGION 3

Winter Weather: Cool mornings and seasonal daytime temps were present this past week. Elk are ranging off the feed sites daily and coming back at feeding time. There is still minimal grass growth on the winter ranges. Weather for this coming week is expected to be mild with lows in the upper 30's to 40's and highs in the 50's. Rain showers are expected several days.

Elk are in fair condition and are starting to show signs of a long winter.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Study: Swan mortalities continue to trickle in to District 14. Biologist DeBruyn received another three swans while another sick swan was taken in by a local rehabilitator. DeBruyn collected tissue samples and updated the swan mortality log that has now reached 179 swans for the year. Tissue samples will soon be sent to our project partners at the Canadian Wildlife Service.

Peregrine Falcon Monitoring: Biologist DeBruyn confirmed occupancy at a Peregrine nest in Whatcom County that has a co-management agreement with Washington Department of Natural Resources. DeBruyn also coordinated with DNR personnel to develop a plan to monitor this and

two other peregrine territories with a similar agreement. DeBruyn also began to contact volunteers and City of Anacortes personnel who have been involved in previous efforts to monitor the peregrine falcons nesting at Mt. Erie. This citizen science project is intended to assist Anacortes Community Forest Land management personnel on managing rock climbing activity at this very popular early season rock climbing area.

Bald Eagle Secondary Poisoning Consultation: Biologist Danilson consulted with personnel from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington Dept. of Agriculture, WDFW Veterinarian Mansfield, and Wildlife Research Scientist Watson to provide input and guidance regarding a massive rat extermination effort associated with a local poultry farm that is being shut down in Skagit County. There are several eagle nests in the vicinity of the subject property and eagles have been observed frequenting the site. Washington Dept. of Agriculture is developing a plan to address the rat issue and is working with USFWS and WDFW. This plan will ensure that, if poisons are used, that eagles (and other wildlife for that matter) are not also poisoned if they feed on dead or dying rats.

Oregon Spotted Frog Survey: Oregon Spotted Frog (OSF) egg masses were discovered at both new sites and sites that were occupied last year. Despite the cold temperatures and light snow, Biologist Bohannon and her crew continued to survey sites in Skagit and Whatcom Counties. At



one new site, Biologist Bohannon and Forest Technician Widner located 211 OSF egg masses. One exceptionally large egg mass cluster measured 1 m by 1 m and had 60 egg masses. At another site, an adult male frog was captured in a funnel trap and project volunteer Les Meade captured some nice images of this frog and OSF egg masses at another site. At yet another site in northern Whatcom County, Biologist DeBruyn found OSF egg masses. This is the first site on the U.S. side of the border that has been found in the Fraser drainage. Finally, U.S. Forest Service Technicians Widner, Bauman, and Johnson checked a site from last year and reported that activity has started there with 15 egg masses and a captured adult.

Spotted frog egg mass cluster measuring 1 m x 1 m with 60 egg masses.



Egg mass cluster near the Samish River Preserve, Whatcom County. Photo taken by Les Meade.



Adult male Oregon Spotted Frog, Skagit County. Nuptial pads clearly visible on thumb. Photo by Les Meade.



First Oregon Spotted Frog captured in Skagit County along the Samish River. Note the upturned, chartreuse colored eyes. Photo by Les Meade.

Ross Lake Wolf Project: Biologist DeBruyn attempted to retrieve images from trail cameras on the Upper Skagit focused on wolf activities; however this effort was stymied by snow conditions when another storm cycle came through. DeBruyn did install one more camera and consulted with National Park Service staff who installed two cameras in an area on Ross Lake that had had wolf tracks earlier in the winter.

Peregrine Falcon 2012 Delisting Monitor Effort: Biologist Anderson visited one of the federal delisting sample sites for Peregrine Falcon 2012 monitoring efforts. He had both birds and a copulatory event. Anderson met with Falcon Research Group associates, including a local researcher who bands urban Peregrines for monitoring and collection of demographic data, at this particular site as well. They discussed the new nest location that the pair has chosen and ongoing monitoring efforts. Anderson also heard from Falcon Research Group associates that one of the other eyries included in the federal monitoring list for the King Co. area appears to have a pair checking out the site.

For more information on birds WDFW includes in the state Species of Concern list and works collaboratively with groups such as Falcon Research Group to provide ongoing monitoring and management efforts for species such as Peregrine Falcons; see these websites:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/endangered/birds.html>

[http://www.frg.org/U PEFA.htm](http://www.frg.org/U_PEFA.htm)

<http://sdotblog.seattle.gov/2011/05/25/baby-birds-3/>

Bald Eagle Interview and Survey: Biologist Anderson met with a graduate student from the Seattle Film Institute. The graduate student is putting a film together regarding urban wildlife. The film interviews a number of local professional biologists regarding urban ecology, urban wildlife management, and the connections people make with urban wildlife. One particular aspect of the project is the SR520 “light standard” eagles; one of which died when hit by a bus last August. Anderson discussed the public reaction and also surveyed the local nest with the

student. The nest is active and the female has found a new mate. Many citizens have continued to check with WDFW and USFWS about this nest since the bus hit “Eddie” the eagle late last summer. While in the area, Anderson also surveyed the other Union Bay eagle nests, both of which are also showing initial activity. Anderson made local contacts to assist with keeping tabs on those nests due to proposed development near them. Bald eagle management and how citizens can assist with documenting nests and providing activity data can be found at the WDFW Bald Eagle website:

http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/bald_eagle/

Great Blue Heron Management: Biologist Anderson provided site-specific heron plans at the request of Seattle per their local code. WDFW provides wildlife management consultation to local cities and counties under the Growth Management Act. More information regarding this relationship and WDFW wildlife management assistance can be found at the WDFW Priority Habitats and Species website:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/>

Wildlife Areas

Whatcom Wildlife Area: Manager Kessler checked the water controls on the Lake Terrell and Intalco units. He cleared the water control at the Intalco Unit that beavers keep plugging up. Manager Kessler monitored the water level at the Tennant Lake Unit. The lake has dropped so that 90% of the boardwalk is now dry.

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

Wildlife Management

North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt Coordination: Biologists Danilson and Roozen continued make arrangements for a pre-hunt coordination meeting with spring bear hunters drawn for the North Skagit hunt and Washington Department of Natural Resources and private landowners. With the assistance of WDFW Mill Creek administrative personnel, Danilson drafted and sent out a notification letter to all hunters, while Roozen coordinated meeting logistics and prepared access agreements. The objectives of this meeting are to improve hunter participation and success, reduce the administrative burden of DNR and participating private timber companies, and highlight landowner concerns and conditions associated with the access permits.

Lesser Snow Goose Banding and Collaring: Biologist Roozen and Technician Otto were successful in capturing the remaining snow geese necessary to complete the capture work for this spring. A total of 198 lesser snow geese are now outfitted with brown plastic neck collars. Since the first snow geese were collared in the Skagit Delta earlier this month, sightings have been trickling in from various locations in Skagit County.



This photos was taken moments before the rocket net deployment where 35 snow geese were captured and later banded and collared.

North Cascades Elk Clover Trapping Project: With upcoming elk surveys and the March 31 trapping deadline nearing, the elk Clover trapping project has now wound down for the year. Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn retrieved the traps this week. This cooperative project between WDFW, local Tribes and volunteers has proven to be relatively successful. During the off-season, some trap design modifications and a few logistical tweaks will be made to improve the capture success rate.

Mountain Goat Augmentation: District Biologist Milner began assembling and reviewing materials as part of preparations to resume discussions and develop a plan to augment declining mountain goat herds in the Cascades. Mountain goat augmentation is a goal specified in the Game Management Plan and we will soon begin serious analysis of how to achieve this goal.

Wildlife Tree Lecture to Friends of Camano Island Parks: Biologist Anderson provided a lecture to a group of 30-40 citizens with Friends of Camano Island Parks regarding the importance of snags to wildlife. The lecture discussed use of snags by wildlife as well as management and creation techniques of snags on one's property. More information on snags as "Wildlife Trees" can be found at the WDFW Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary – Snags website:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/snags/index.html>

Backyard Wildlife Outreach and partnership with National Wildlife Federation: Biologist Anderson provided Backyard Wildlife outreach at a booth for the community celebration of Mukilteo attaining "community backyard wildlife certification" status. Mukilteo is the 56th

community in the country and 13th in the state of WA to attain this status. WDFW is the first state agency to partner with National Wildlife Federation in offering joint certification with NWF in their national Certified Wildlife Property program, as well as certifying in the WDFW Backyard Wildlife Program. Anderson represented WDFW and the state Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Program at the event and recognized the efforts of the local community. A native plant demonstration garden has been installed adjacent to the Mukilteo Library as part of these ongoing community wildlife enhancement efforts. More information on how to enhance your property for wildlife can be found at the WDFW Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary website:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/backyard/>

Wildlife Areas

Intalco Unit: Manager Kessler coordinated with the Custer Sportsmen's Club on the Archery Course on the Intalco Unit. The course is now open and getting much use by the public. Manager Kessler finished construction and installation of the new reader board and Archery Course Entrance Sign. Manager Kessler also ordered in the handicapped accessible porta-potty for the unit. These were all funded by the Shooting Range Enhancement Grant money secured last year.



New signage at the Whatcom Wildlife Area

Private Lands/Access

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

Wildlife Management

Urban Raccoons – Vashon Beachcomber Interview: Biologist Anderson provided information on Living with Raccoons as well as recent science findings regarding urban raccoon behavior to a reporter at Vashon-Maury Island Beachcomber. Anderson emphasized that preventative measures such as exclusion are most effective in reducing potential problem individuals in local raccoon populations. More information on reducing conflict with raccoons and other common urban wildlife can be found at the WDFW Living with Wildlife website:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/species/>

Wildlife Areas

Stillwater Ag Lease: Manager Paulson met with a producer that wants to farm the Stillwater Unit. The producer is interested in planting barley and oats in the first year of the three year lease.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Wildlife Management

Performance and Development Plans: Supervisors and staff conducted Performance and Development Plans for the next 12 months.

Wildlife Areas

Performance and Development Plans: Supervisors and staff conducted Performance and Development Plans for the next 12 months.

REGION 5

Wildlife Management

Mt. St. Helens Elk Surveys: Biologists Stephens, Holman, and Bergh along with Deer and Elk Specialist McCorquodale conducted the first week of elk surveys for the Mt. St. Helens elk herd. 472 groups of elk were located and classified from the air during 4 days of surveying. This is part of the sightability effort to establish a more accurate protocol for determination of population status for the herd. Thank you to Jess Haggerman, pilot at Northwest Helicopters, for his safe and efficient flying during the week.



Mt. St. Helens elk survey.

Golden Eagles: Biologist Anderson assisted Biologist Watson with golden eagle trapping in eastern Klickitat County. The goal of this project is to learn more about golden eagle behavior around recently built wind farm projects. Although no eagles were captured this week, we were successful in attracting the target male adult eagle to the capture site. Another capture attempt will be made in two weeks.

Biologist Anderson and Stephens conducted a site visit in the Columbia River Gorge to begin the 2012 field season survey for golden eagle and peregrine falcons. Although the weather made it impossible to complete any meaningful bird observations, a strategy was developed for surveys of two of the sites for the rest of the season. Observation sites and methodology were discussed for initiating this work.

Cackling Canada Goose Population Estimate: In cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Fish and Game, as well as British Columbia, Region 5 Wildlife Biologists conducted surveys for cackling Canada geese. The survey involves locating flocks of cacklers and examining the birds for neck collars. Twelve-hundred cackling Canada geese were captured and marked on their breeding grounds in western Alaska's Yukon/Kuskokwim National Wildlife Refuge during the summer of 2011. The survey protocol involves two repetitions of the effort and will generate a mark/re-sight estimate for the total population of cackling Canada geese. The small Canada geese are of particular management concern because they are used extensively for subsistence by the native peoples of western Alaska; provide recreational hunting in Washington, Oregon, and California; but also

cause extensive damage to agricultural crops. Biologists encountered in excess of 18,600 birds during five days of surveying in the Vancouver Lowlands and Woodland Bottoms. Approximately 7,545 of the birds were examined for collars per the survey method with 20 collared individuals documented.

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

Wildlife Management

Deer Hunting: Biologist Anderson met with the manager of the Six Prong Hunt Club in eastern Klickitat County to discuss deer hunting opportunity, season setting, and habitat management. The Six Prong Hunt Club encompasses over 20,000 of land and represents a significant ownership in that part of the County.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Wildlife Areas

Training: Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven attended red card training in Goldendale with rural fire district staff. This is required annual training. Manager Van Leuven also attended the Klickitat-White Salmon Rivers Science Conference. Presentations were given on the Condit Dam removal, studies of fish usage of Rock Creek as well as tributaries of the Klickitat River, sturgeon population on the Columbia River and tributaries, and the effects of the removal of a dam on a tributary of the Wind River, among other topics.

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. Early March was a typical period fluctuating between warm dry and cold wet weather. This turned to a series of mid month storms with probably the most severe conditions we have seen in the foothills all winter.

Short-Term Forecast: A shift to milder weather conditions is expected over the next week with more normal temperatures and moderate precipitation. Valley temperatures will range from the low 30's to low 50's and snow levels are expected to be above 3,000 feet. The 6-10 and 8-14 day outlooks both suggest normal temperatures and above normal precipitation. Given the recent low elevation snow, this could make flooding or erosion impacts on the Wildlife Area a potential concern.

Long-Term Forecast: No Change. Long range forecasts still suggest below normal temperatures through April and perhaps May. However, it appears that we can expect relatively normal amounts of precipitation.

Habitat: Snow is still present in the lowest elevations perhaps making foraging more difficult. However, we frequently observe animals feeding on grasses and forbs through several inches of snow with little difficulty.

Snow Depths: Some snow present at low elevations, which may continue to concentrate animals for a while. Snow depths in the valleys however, are not such that conditions would be considered extreme. Snowpack is now above average in the Southwest Cascades. See spreadsheet below for detailed information ([26March2012-MSH_Sno-Depth.pdf](#)).

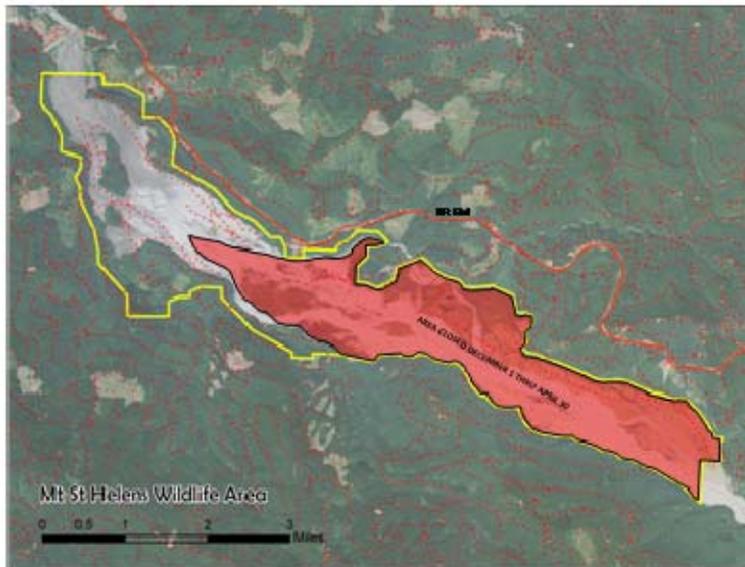
Animal Concentrations: Although a count was not conducted, it is apparent that numbers increased over the past week on the mudflow with the more severe weather conditions. 152 elk were observed on the mudflow monitoring area on March 7, 2012. Previous counts include 120 elk on February 1, 2012; 176 elk January 3, 2012; and 116 elk on December 5, 2011.

Animal Condition: Despite the recent observation of mortalities, only a very few animals have been observed 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. The recent weather conditions may cause some weaker animals to decline rapidly.

Mortality: Several mortalities were observed on the mudflow during aerial surveys conducted this week.

Public Contacts: None to report related to winter conditions. Violations of the winter closure on the Wildlife Area have occurred. Technician Pyzik observed antlers cut off of one dead bull and also encountered one individual within the closed area. Enforcement followed up and we believe that a citation has been issued.

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 significant new snow this week in the South Cascades down to 1000 ft. Temperatures have been cold and winter weather has been significant in March. Eastern Klickitat County received approximately 6 inches of snow mid week but melted off quickly as warmer weather on Friday returned to the area.

Winter Severity: Overall winter severity is still considered insignificant in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County. Eastern Klickitat County is generally snow free and the winter has been mild.

Habitat: At the Klickitat Wildlife Area the majority of habitat is snow free and south facing slopes are starting to green up.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations reported.

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

Mortality: 3 road kill deer were reported in Klickitat County this week. No others were reported.

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

Biologist Tirhi lead a survey of historic spotted frog occupied habitat in Spanaway, Pierce County using citizen scientists who had taken the citizen science amphibian monitoring program

offered jointly by WDFW and Tacoma MetroParks. This survey was intended to assist volunteers with applying the skills they had learned in class while at the same time, assisting with the survey of a very large wetland complex historically occupied by spotted frogs. Citizen scientists learned the hazards of wetland field conditions, learned what track logging routes with GPS systems entailed, and saw egg masses of three of our more common amphibians (Northwestern salamander, chorus frog, long-toed salamander).

Deer Project

Bio Schmidt monitored the remaining collared deer (2 does, 1 fawn) at Vail as part of Cliff Rice's research project. All are alive.

Bio Murphie along with Bio Michaelis, District Bio Hoenes, and Dr. C. Rice continued deer collaring efforts this week. Volunteers D. and D. Seigner provided assistance during ground darting. A total of 7 deer were collared (3 females captured during ground capture efforts and 4 females captured using aerial net-gunning techniques). Deer were captured and fit with GPS radio-collars as part of an ongoing study that is determining habitat use patterns and survival rates for female black-tailed deer that inhabit commercially logged forests. The photos below are from these capture efforts.



Volunteer Dan and Dawn S and Bios Michaelis and Hoenes pose for a photo at the end of a successful night of deer captures. Photo B. Murphie



Volunteers Dan and Dawn S with a successful deer capture. Photo B. Murphie

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

Harlequin Ducks are being seen around the mouth of Morse Creek.



Private Lands

Weyerhaeuser Access: At the request Weyerhaeuser coastal operations staff Bio Harris and Eyes in the Woods (EITW) volunteers began mapping unauthorized ORV trails. This is an effort to assist the landowners with problems associated with public access. Obviously in this case the access is related to unwanted activity on their lands. Data collected will be used by the landowners to address the problems of illegal ORV use. Volunteers used GPS's with property boundaries loaded as tracks. They look for trails and followed to the property boundary. In addition to mapping the collected GPS locations of ORV water crossings and unauthorized bridges.

This is a new effort to assist landowners who allow public access in hopes of alleviating some of their problems. Our goal is to maintain reasonable public access. We started off small with a few riders to refine our protocol for this activity. Needless to say the volunteers had a great time and unanimously agreed that it was more enjoyable than garbage clean ups and check stations.



EITW volunteers mapping a trail.

Quality Waterfowl Hunting: Bio Skriletz met with a landowner and a representative from Duck Unlimited to discuss future Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program expansion and eventual purchase of the E. Jefferson County farm.

Letters, emails and phone calls continue to come in to District 15 staff concerning the success of the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program during the last waterfowl season. Despite terrible weather conditions for hunting, both hunters and landowners are asking for expansion of the program next year. This program is vital in a district that has very few remaining opportunities for public waterfowling.



Successful duck hunters at the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program site in East Jefferson County.

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

Wildlife Area Management Plan Update: Wildlife Area staff hosted a District Team meeting and a Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) meeting covering the Olympic-Willapa Hills wildlife area plan update. The district team meeting had solid participation from Fish, Habitat, and Wildlife Programs (No Enforcement Program) and the meeting was beneficial to discuss a variety of issues that are currently affecting the wildlife area. The meeting also fostered as a showcase of the work that had been completed over the past year along with the performance measures planned for 2012. Turn-out from CAG was minimal; however several valuable discussions occurred on the topics such as recent acquisitions, shot shell limits at particular water fowl sites and the Discover Pass. The final draft of the update was completed and forwarded to RPM for final review before being sent to Olympia.