

# Wildlife Program

Week of March 26-April 1, 2012

## **GAME DIVISION**

### **Waterfowl Section**

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

**Winter Aerial Marine Bird/Sea Duck Surveys:** Marine Bird Specialist Evenson and Assistant District Biologists Murphie and Cyra completed the field component of the winter aerial marine bird/sea duck survey detectability flights. These flights are designed to derive correction factors for the agencies winter aerial survey efforts (correct for bird reaction to aircraft as well as observer mis-counts and species mis-classification). The weather made it a challenge to complete these efforts this year, but with crew and vendor flexibility the surveys were completed on time. The project is funded in large part by the Sea Duck Joint Venture.



*Review of the Puget Sound Assessment and Monitoring Program marine bird and mammal indicator materials.*

**Sea Duck Publication:** Joe Evenson co-authored a paper that has been accepted for presentation at the International Wildlife Management Congress, July 2012, by Dan Ester of Simon Fraser

University. The paper is titled “Continental-Scale Conservation Research: A Case Study of North American Sea Ducks”.

**Canada Geese - Banding:** Waterfowl Specialist Mikal Moore and Waterfowl Section Manager Don Kraege coordinated with Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and staff from Regions 4 and 5 to capture and band 116 Canada geese at Ridgefield NWR using rocket nets. Scott Ford and Yana Podobedova assisted to implant satellite transmitters in four adult female Taverner geese, as part of an ongoing Arctic Goose Joint Venture grant.

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



**Partenavia Aircraft Imaging Camera:** Marine Bird Specialist Evenson worked with the Department’s Aviation Division to set-up an imaging camera mount on the agency Partenavia aircraft for brant test flights in April. He also worked on other tasks to prepare for test flights that included calibrating focal length with altitude and transect strip width.

**WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

**Nongame Migratory Birds Technical Committee:** Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan worked with Committee members to revise and finalize a letter in response to a scoping notice in the Federal Register regarding an EIS that will address an existing depredation order for Double-crested Cormorants.

**Spotted Owl Conservation Incentives:** Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan met with David Whipple (Habitat Program) to review modeling options that will be used to identify landscapes where incentive-based conservation actions will be beneficial for Spotted Owls. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is supporting the modeling work, but the Northern Spotted Owl Implementation Team must decide on the sideboards of the modeling in terms of identifying a baseline for comparison and ensuring that modeling costs stay within budget.



**Olympic Fisher Reintroduction Project:** Biologist Jeff Lewis completed revisions of the annual progress report for the Olympic Fisher Reintroduction Project, and the report will now go out for review. Lewis revised the proposal for a Cascade habitat re-analysis in preparation for a proposed Cascades fisher reintroduction.

Jeff Lewis and coauthors Roger Powell and Bill Zielinski published a paper this week in the online journal PLoS ONE entitled “**Carnivore Translocations and Conservation: Insights from Population Models and Field Data for Fishers (*Martes pennanti*)**”. See the link below to access the paper:

<http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0032726>



## **WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION**

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

**WildWatchcams:** Chuck Gibilisco, Watchable Wildlife Section lead, tried to trouble-shoot problems with the Libby Montana, Army Corps of Engineers eaglecam. New staff members and an older camera system with poor documentation can create conditions for an interesting start to an eagle viewing season. Avid eaglecam watchers do not like downtime during the eagle nesting season. Gibilisco is still providing suggestions and assistance for the off-line Montana eaglecam.

**Oroville Ospreycam:** Chuck Gibilisco received a call from George Thornton a math and social studies teacher at Oroville High School announcing that their Ospreys were back and a request to provide a WDFW connection. Almost 1 year ago the Oroville School District approached



Photo Courtesy Okanogan PUD

Okanogan PUD to install a camera to monitor an existing Osprey platform. The nest platform rests atop a 65' pole installed along the eastside of the Similkameen River near Oroville High School's football field. The local PUD decided to partner with the school district and provide a camera capable of streaming live video over the PUD's fiber network. In partnership with the school district, a student – Jose Viveros incorporated this into his senior project. Jose spent many hours with the crews documenting the installation process. The school district will utilize the streaming video to monitor Osprey nesting habits, egg laying, incubation and development that will soon be viewed as a WDFW WildWatchcam.

**WildlifeWatching:** Gibilisco worked on a Lewis County short article to be used in the county to produce a full color promotion piece on wildlife viewing and outdoor recreation available in Lewis County.

**Reardan Lake:** Gibilisco and Mike O'Malley worked with WDFW Spokane Regional staff, Howard Ferguson and Madonna Luers to prepare interpretive signs for display at Reardan's Audubon Lake in Lincoln County near Spokane. The 277 acres of wetlands, grasslands, and



channeled scablands supports more than 200 species of birds and other wildlife, and is an important migratory stop-over for many birds. The site includes thirteen species and four bird communities of special concern status. The property, located on the edge of the town of Reardan was scheduled for a housing subdivision development until the Inland Northwest Land Trust and Spokane Audubon Society secured an option to acquire. The Trust and Audubon, along with Ducks Unlimited, City of Reardan and

Reardan Chamber of Commerce, have committed to cooperatively preserve and develop this unique and valuable ecosystem and wildlife-viewing site. This project implements the Washington State Legislature's directive to develop wildlife viewing sites near small rural communities that can reap the economic benefits of new visitors.

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

**Scientific Collections Permits (SCP):** Tricia Thompson compiled reviews, approved, and sent in for permit three SCP applications, reviewed 14 more SCP applications and sent for comments.

**Wildlife Rehabilitation:** Wildlife Rehabilitator Coordinator Tricia Thompson along with Biologist Will Moore conducted an inspection of Raptor House in Yakima for a re-issuance of a WDFW Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit. They have plans to expand their long-time education facility on site with an amphitheater and additional housing for education raptors. Rehab raptors will be completely isolated from any public, education birds, or education facilities. Raptor House has a contract with Skamania Lodge for a weekly raptor presentation.

## **REGION 1**

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Sage grouse translocation at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area:** This has been a busy week, with the introduction of 38 sage grouse from Oregon, both hens and males, to the Swanson Lakes area. Sunday through Thursday mornings saw sage grouse released near an existing lek, or mating ground. All hens wore radio transmitter collars.



*Mike Atamian and Kourtney Stonehouse collaring a sage grouse in Oregon, 3/24/12*



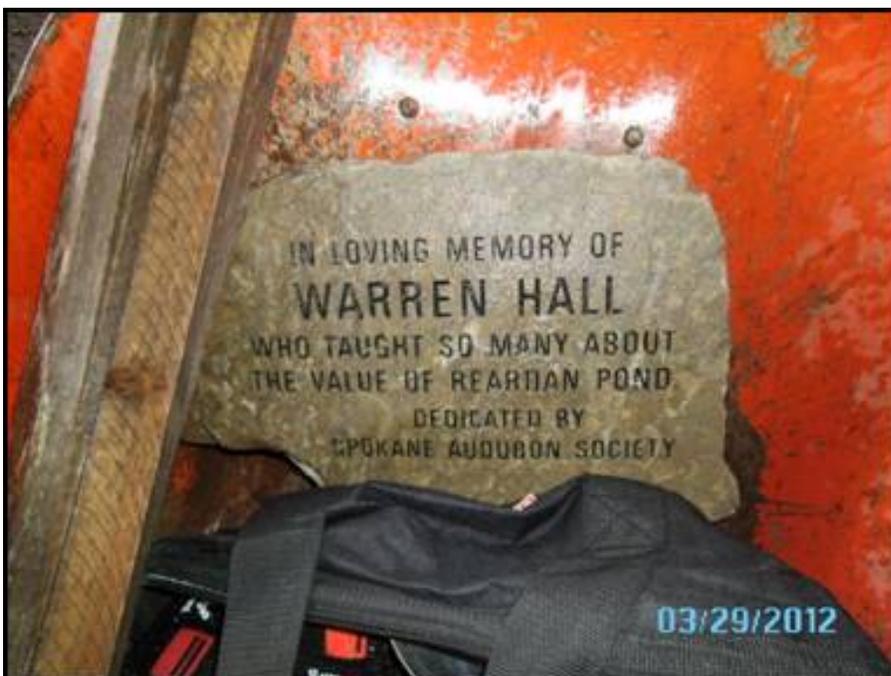
*Mike Finch releasing a grouse, 3/26/12*

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

**Reardan Audubon Pond Wildlife Area Memorial:** Thursday afternoon, March 29, Wildlife Area Assistant Manager (WAAM) Finch and Wildlife Area Manager (WAM) Anderson traveled to the WLA to assist members of the Spokane Audubon Society in setting a memorial stone for a late Audubon member, Warren Hall.



*Setting memorial stone by the south blind at Reardan Wildlife Area, 3/29/12*



*Memorial's text, Reardan Wildlife Area*

## **REGION 2**

No reports this week.

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Sage-grouse:** District Wildlife Biologist Mike Livingston assisted Region 1 staff in capturing sage-grouse at Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge and Bureau of Land Management land in southern Oregon. A total of 20 males and 18 females were captured and translocated to Swanson Lake Wildlife Area in Lincoln County, Washington. Twenty people contributed to the effort from the following organizations WDFW, ODFW, USFWS, BLM, WSU, U.S. Army's Yakima Training Center, North American Grouse Partnership, and WDFW volunteers.



*Radio transmitter being attached to a male greater sage-grouse.*

**Mountain Quail:** Oak Creek Manager Huffman assisted Upland Game Bird Specialist McCanna and a volunteer with moving all mountain quail from the holding facility at Oak Creek into transport crates so the birds could be hauled to release sites along Asotin Creek. Birds were pushed from pens into the buildings, where each bird's leg band number was recorded before being placed in a transport crates.



*Mountain quail in the holding facility at Oak Creek.*



*Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager Ross Huffman checking a band number on a mountain quail that will be released along Asotin Creek.*

### **Wildlife Areas**

Colockum Wildlife Area Manager Pete Lopushinsky and Assistant Manager Karl Schulke traveled to West Bar to check on road damage and stream flows in Tekison Creek and Stray Gulch areas as a result of the rain event at the beginning of the week. Wenatchee Airport broke their single day record for rain on March 26 with 0.64 inches of rainfall.



Two shots of Stray Gulch Road during the last week of March 2012.



**Winter Conditions:** Weather conditions continue to moderate across Region 3 and forage is starting to increase on the winter range. Elk feeding operations have ended at all sites and the elk are continuing to disperse, though their range is still limited by snow in the transition ranges.

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Upper Skagit Wolf Project:** Biologist DeBruyn made arrangements with Seattle City Light personnel to get helicopter transport (in conjunction with a scheduled snow survey) to retrieve images from motion triggered game cameras in Northern Whatcom County. The cameras were deployed in December in the interest of documenting wolf presence in this area. Images had not been downloaded at the time this report was submitted.

**Oregon Spotted Frog Survey:** Biologist Bohannon and U.S. Forest Service personnel continued to conduct Oregon Spotted Frog surveys focusing primarily on conducting follow-up visits to sites already surveyed. At occupied sites, new frog egg masses continue to develop and additional egg masses have been found. Yet another new site was discovered in the Samish River basin.

**Intalco Unit – Target Shooting:** Manager Kessler coordinated with the Custer Sportsmen’s Club on the Archery Course of the Intalco Unit. The first 3D Archery Target Shoot of the year was held on the weekend. There were 35 archers who came out on Saturday despite the pouring rain. A good time was had by all.



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

**North Cascades Elk Surveys:** Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn conducted the first round of late winter elk surveys. These surveys are conducted each year in partnership with local tribes and are used to inform decision making regarding harvest management. A total of 490 elk were observed during the day and half of flights; calf recruitment and post-hunt bull retention continue to meet harvest management thresholds. Having conducted preliminary data analyses, Biologist Danilson provided updated harvest recommendations to policy makers for the upcoming April Fish and Wildlife Commission meeting.



## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Goose Capture:** Region 5 Biologists and Wildlife Area staff assisted Waterfowl Program staff from across the state with the capture of geese in Clark County this week. One hundred sixteen geese were captured with rocket nets on the Ridgefield NWR and leg banded. Four adult female Taverner's geese were implanted with satellite radio transmitters so that their movements can be monitored by Argos satellite; allowing biologists and managers the opportunity to learn more about the birds' movements to breeding areas and wintering grounds. These geese have very little survey information collected on them and this project represents a major move forward in data collection and management. Our thanks to Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hauswald for his work preparing potential capture sites in the Vancouver lowlands.



**Deer Capture:** Biologist Bergh assisted Research Scientist Rice with two deer captures in the Coweeman study cluster. These radio collars came from mortalities on recently captured study deer and we were fortunate enough to be able to re-deploy them and return to our original goal of eight deer per study cluster.



Black-tailed deer waking up after capture.

**Oregon Spotted Frogs:** Biologist Anderson conducted an early season egg mass survey for the Oregon Spotted Frogs at the Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve. Egg laying started in full force early this week with a total of 469 egg masses recorded. The survey was conducted on one of the only sunny days in the last two weeks and adult frogs were visible throughout the survey area (see photos). The 469 egg masses represent an excellent first survey for the 2012 season and follow-up surveys will be conducted next week to document reproduction at other sites in the area. Oregon spotted frog eggs hatch in 18 to 30 days and the tadpoles grow and develop for 13 to 16 weeks prior to metamorphosis in mid-summer. Oregon spotted frogs mature and begin breeding at two or three years of age. This week's warm and wet weather should improve habitat conditions and hopefully set the stage for one of the better reproductive years at Trout Lake. The Oregon Spotted Frog is a state endangered species in Washington.



**Klickitat Spring Deer Survey:** WDFW Biologists Anderson and Stephens, Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven, USFWS Biologist Wilson, and volunteer Anderson teamed up to conduct the annual spring deer survey. The purpose of the survey is to gain an estimate of fawn survivorship through the winter. Survey results varied among the routes. While some surveyors were able to count significant numbers of deer, other routes were marginally productive. Weather may have been a factor. If conditions improve soon, one of the routes may be re-surveyed in hopes of seeing more deer. One noteworthy observation was a cluster of fawn carcasses on the Klickitat Wildlife Area. These appeared to be recent mortalities. Six dead fawns and one dead adult deer were seen from the road on this route. In addition, Manager Van Leuven received a phone call from a local resident who reported several recently deceased deer (mostly fawns) in his neighborhood.

### **Wildlife Areas**

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

**Stabilization Planting:** Wildlife Area Staff and four volunteers installed approximately 2,000 willow and cottonwood cuttings along 1/3 mile of bank line where we are working to establish riparian vegetation to help prevent further large scale erosion of elk winter range. Over most of the area covered, the planting supplemented past planting efforts but in localized areas, where banks had sloughed off, we were replacing previous plantings. For the most part, log structures

that were installed to help stabilize the banks while plantings have had time to mature have done their job quite well and many parts of the area, stretching for well over a mile, have trees and shrubs that are several years old.

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**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. The rest of the month turned to a series of storms with the most severe conditions of the winter.

**Short-Term Forecast:** Another cool wet week ahead with valley temperatures will range from the mid 30's to mid 40's. Snow levels will range from 2,500 to 4,500 feet. The 6-10 and 8-14 day outlooks both suggest below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation.

**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:** Recent rains and more moderate temperatures have cleared much of the snow below 2,500 feet. The more moderate temperatures and longer days should begin to put more new growth on forage plants.

**Snow Depths:** Snow is now mostly gone from the most critical wintering areas. Snowpack is now well above average in the Southwest Cascades.

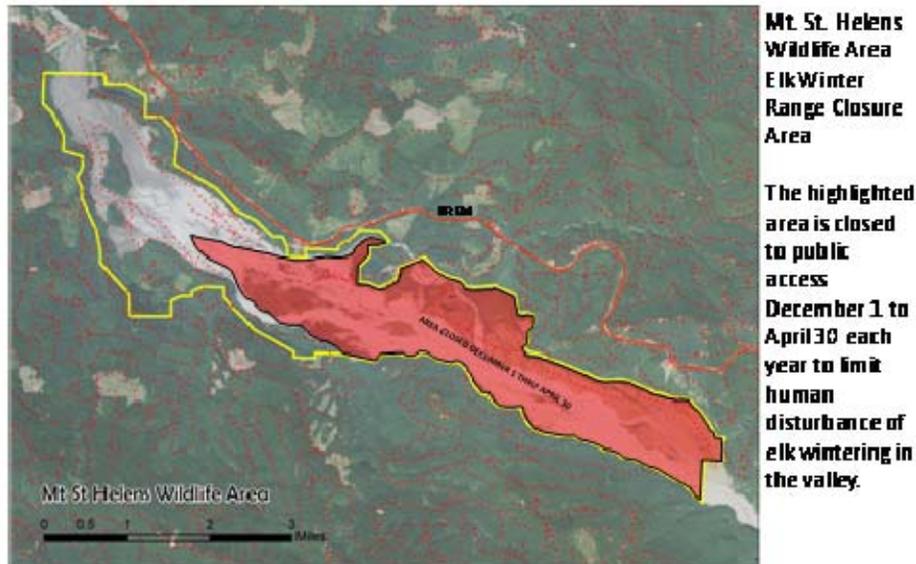
**Animal Concentrations:** 152 elk were observed on the mudflow monitoring area on March 7, 2012. It was apparent that numbers were higher later in the month during the periods of low elevation snow, but formal counts were not done. Previous counts include 120 elk on February 1, 2012; 176 elk January 3, 2012; and 116 elk on December 5, 2011.

**Animal Condition:** Despite observed mortalities, only a very few animals have been seen that appeared to be in an obvious state of decline and these have typically been associated with apparent hoof rot.

**Mortality:** No new observations this week, but several dead animals have been noted either in or near the Wildlife Area over the past few weeks.

**Public Contacts:** None to report related to winter conditions, but several contacts regarding the boundaries of the winter closure area. Some of those callers have indicated seeing winter kills.

*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.*



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

**Weather This Week:** There was significant rain this week in the South Cascades. Temperatures have moderated.

**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. Rivers and streams have risen to near flood conditions in western Klickitat and Skamania County. Snow is rapidly melting below 4000 ft elevation.

**Animal Concentrations:** As spring green-up increases, large numbers of deer are being seen around the Klickitat Wildlife Area. Small groups of deer are also being observed in the White Salmon drainage.

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

**Mortality:** A few deer mortalities were reported this week on the annual Klickitat Wildlife Area spring deer survey.

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

## **REGION 6**

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

**Oregon Spotted Frog:** Biologist Tirhi concluded state endangered Oregon spotted frog surveys for the season. Most oviposition (breeding) locations were below average this season due to prolonged cold temperatures. Many egg masses were laid early in the season but stalled in maturation and only recently are showing signs of maturing. Water level fluctuations were also extreme at some locations. The three oviposition sites Tirhi monitors produced the following number of masses: 96, 8,79. Biologist Tirhi spent additional days searching potential habitat for egg masses but none were found (except for one new location noted in previous weeklies).

**Roosevelt Elk:** Biologists Hoenes and Michaelis along with Enforcement Officers Alexander, Cilk, and James assisted Olympic National Park (ONP) biologists with the capture of 3 female Roosevelt elk in the Quinault Valley. Elk were captured so they could be fitted with radio collars as part of ongoing research that is attempting to develop a sight-biased visibility model to estimate elk population size in ONP.



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

**Private Lands/Access**

**Forest Lands:** Bio Harris attended the Region 6 Captains/ Sergeants meeting. An overview of our current efforts to work with private landowners to maintain reasonable access was given and the importance of working with Enforcement was discussed. The sergeants all agreed that access was important and that we need to work together for reasonable access. The sergeants mentioned that hunters are also losing motorized access to some DNR lands.

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

**Wildlife Areas**



**Turtle Habitat:** Biologist Tirhi hosted Boy Scouts of America Troop 474 (Kent WA) eagle candidate Michael Eckblad and his troop for an all day work party at South Puget Sound Wildlife Area.

*BSA Troop 474 installing walking platforms.*

A portion of the site is used for the recovery of state endangered

Western Pond Turtles. Some 40 scouts and adults worked 6 hours to remove blackberry surrounding the ponds and impeding the turtle's ability to walk to their nesting hill and constructing walking platforms used for monitoring the turtles. The scouts came with the majority of equipment and lunch. Michael Eckblad is commended for doing such a professional job in organizing and executing this project and the agency greatly appreciates Troop 474's assistance during these trying low-budget years.



*BSA Troop 474 (Kent) removing blackberries from Western pond turtle nesting hill.*