

Wildlife Program

Week of May 7-11, 2012

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Burrowing Owl: Section Manager Allen and Bio Stinson assisted District Bio Livingston, as well as personnel from USFWS and David Johnson of the Global Owl Project in Region 2, banding burrowing owls, May 9-10. The main objective was to recapture owls that had geolocators attached during capture last year. Geolocators have a light detector that records daylight and time, so that lat/long can be determined, and thus their migratory pathway mapped. Eight of 20 owls with geolocators attached were captured among the 48 owls captured in the Pasco area. The data will be downloaded to plot their movements during the previous year.

Olympic Peninsula Butterfly Data Collection: Biologist Ann Potter completed coordination and field efforts with Forest Service Biologist Holtrop, WDFW R6 Biologists McMillan and Ament to search for Taylor's checkerspot larvae in 2 populations located on the Olympic National Forest. The searches were done to 1) identify the Taylor's checkerspot post-diapause food plants, 2) identify the areas within each site where post-diapause larvae occur to inform ongoing site management, and 3) collect larval samples for use in a project to analyze the genetic diversity and phylogeny of Taylor's checkerspot, a state endangered and federal candidate butterfly.

WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wolves: A first draft of "A Washington Guide for Preventing and Reporting Wolf-Livestock Conflicts" was written by Chuck Gibilisco and designed by Peggy Ushakoff in Public Affairs, then distributed to a core group for initial feedback. Gibilisco responded to the latest version of a DRAFT wolf outreach brochure being developed by the WDFW Wolf Implementation Team to communicate with and assist Washington livestock operators with the various management options and tools available to address wolf livestock conflicts in Washington. The Wolf Working Group will make final comments as we move closer to a product for public dissemination later this spring.

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

WildWatchcams: Chuck Gibilisco, Watchable Wildlife Coordinator, staffed a WDFW shorebird display at the Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival headquarters located at the Hoquiam High School in Hoquiam. Hundreds of shore birders enjoyed numerous exhibits, lectures, workshops and fieldtrips held May 4th through May 6th. WDFW Montesano staff interacted with birders on the finer points of shorebird identification and ecology along the Sandpiper Trail at Bowerman Peninsula on Saturday and Sunday.

Whale Trail: Chuck Gibilisco reviewed the latest Whale Trail (WT) interpretive signs to be installed at Alki Beach in West Seattle. The total number of WT signs and facilities currently participating is 32 sites and a pending WDFW ALEA grant may boost that number even higher. The most recent WT interpretive sign includes the names of marine mammals in Duwamish as well as English. In an attempt to increase citizen participation and record sightings of marine mammals and more specifically whales in the Puget Sound has developed a prototype for a marine mammal app and map that will be highlighted on May 24th at the Seattle NOAA Office. Gibilisco is discussing with WT staff a similar demonstration of the app in the South Sound for WDFW and partners.

Falconry: The WDFW has a contract with the Washington Falconers Association to remove raptors which have become trapped in buildings or who are making a nuisance of themselves. Last week, a call came in that a peregrine was trapped in a Lowes store in Seattle. Tricia Thompson coordinated with the WFA the removal of this bird. The bird turned out to be a banded juvenile accipiter, probably a Cooper's hawk. Watching the capture of a raptor is always an exciting event for the public, building owners, and managers. Photos were taken and everyone was happy. The bird was in perfect condition and released in an urban forest nearby.



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

Wildlife Outreach Volunteers: Volunteer Management coordinator, James Chandler, continued to develop online guidelines for WDFW staff to post project information for volunteers through CERVIS (Community Event Registration Volunteer Information System). James also simplified the current agency volunteer manual, specifically redesigning the volunteer orientation and pertinent policies.

A meeting with Human Resources' Risk Manager was held to determine issues, if any, regarding use of youth under 18 as volunteers. A search of applicable RCWs is underway to determine if there is any legislative guidance on this.

Citizen Science: Citizen Science coordinator Margaret Tudor met with Scatter Creek and John's River Wildlife Area Managers along with Michael Schroeder, Matt Vander Hagen and Dave Hayes to prepare for the Western Washington pilot of the Ecological Integrity Assessment project.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Waterfowl Survey: Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd assisted Joe Evenson, Waterfowl Biologist, with District 1 and 2 waterfowl transects for the statewide waterfowl survey.



Wetland in District 2 on the Turnbull Waterfowl transect

Pheasant Crowing Count Survey: Region 1 Wildlife Biologists are conducting the annual pheasant crowing count surveys. Biologist Ferguson conducted his Union Flat Creek Pheasant survey last Friday. Pheasant crowing counts seemed to be down from last year, but it was a very cold morning and winds were high as well.

Gray Wolf: DB Wik and ADB Vekasy were invited to a private meeting with L. David Mech by the Whitman College. We were able to discuss the ecology of colonizing wolves and appropriate methods to use in the field. Following the meeting, both attended a talk by Dr. Mech hosted by Whitman College. The talk covered the 54 years of field and research experience Dr. Mech has with wolves.

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 / Vacant

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Waterfowl: District Wildlife Biologist Finger conducted duck breeding population (pair count) surveys at Winchester and Frenchmen wasteways in an effort to track changes in waterfowl use relative to wetland management activities. These wasteways have been treated with herbicide for several years in an effort to reduce common reed (*Phragmites*). The photo below shows Frenchmen Wasteway (untreated) and Winchester wasteway (treated).



District Wildlife Biologist Finger also participated in the Eastern Washington breeding waterfowl helicopter survey with Waterfowl Specialist Evenson. Conditions were dry in Grant County but most ponds were full into Lincoln County.



District 6: Okanogan District - Scott Fitkin / Jeff Heinlen

Weather Conditions: Temps warmed into the 80s by the weekend. The Okanogan River is expected to surpass flood stage.

Weekender Opportunities: Harlequin ducks have returned to breeding areas on major stream courses in the Upper Methow Watershed. A pair has been hanging out under the new footbridge in Winthrop. The Chewuch and Twisp Rivers are other good viewing areas.



GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wolverine Research: Biologist Fitkin and volunteer Welfelt deployed remote cameras on a second natal wolverine den (Mallory's). We hope to have the same success documenting reproduction at this site the way we did with Xena's den. This data is demonstrating that wolverines are successfully reproducing in the North Cascades. With additional camera work this summer we hope to gather information on kit survivorship. This would provide valuable insight into the Cascades population status and sustainability.

Grizzly Bear Documentation: Canadian biologists recently verified a grizzly bear in their portion of the North Cascades Ecosystem. They captured photos of the animal below at a run-pole remote camera site deployed as part of our international wolverine research effort. A grizzly was also documented at this site in April of 2010. This is a great start to this season's international grizzly bear detection survey effort in the North Cascades.





BC North Cascades Grizzly Bear with cougar for scale.

North Cascades Lynx Research Project: Assistant District Biologist Heinlen received a report from a private citizen of a dead lynx near Hess Lake (between Omak and Conconully). This area is low elevation shrub step habitat, not the characteristic lynx habitat of high elevation lodge pole pine forest. He located the carcass, which turned out to be one of the study animals (lynx #312) captured in the Methow watershed on March 31, 2011. Project staff lost track of this animal shortly after collaring and no location data had been retrieved to date. Despite the disappointing mortality, we are fortunate to retrieve the collar and the data it contains. Hopefully it will provide clues to the animal's death, since little could be deduced from the old and desiccated remains.



Lynx Carcass.

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

Field Herpetology Seminar: Biologist Fitkin and USFS Biologist Rohrer conducted an adult herpetology field course for the North Cascades Institute. After an evening program, course participants spent the next day reliving their childhood running around the woods chasing snakes, lizards, frogs and salamanders. We captured and handled several species, with up close and personal experiences with rattlesnakes being a class highlight.



Herp enthusiasts with friends

District 7: Chelan / Douglas District – David Volsen / Jon Gallie

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse: Biologist Gallie, Braaten, Area Managers Peterson and Winters, have almost completed monitoring 22 sage and 19 sharp-tailed grouse lek sites in Douglas County. We counted a high of 331 males on the sage grouse leks, representing a 9% decrease from last year (362). 13 leks decreased in attendance with only 4 increased and 5 remained the same. We did three locate new sites, but attendance on those decreased or stopped as the breeding season progressed, suggesting that they are temporary satellite leks.

We are nearly complete with surveys of sharp-tails leks. We counted a total of 120 birds, which represents a 16% increase from last year (103). Five leks decreased in attendance, 8 increased and 3 remained at the same number. Three leks sites, located in old CRP fields enrolled in SAFE, were displaced by conversion as the vegetation underwent mowing or restoration activities. The temporary loss of cover may have caused birds to adopt alternate lek locations, two of which were located by staff during searches.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Volsen received a new born California bighorn lamb that died in a resident's yard in the Swakane Thursday. The female lamb was just a few days old and still had a portion of the umbilicus attached. There were no signs of trauma to the lamb. The resident had watched it lie down in the shade in his yard assuming the mother would return to it. Several

hours later it was in the same position, and when he approached to check on the lamb, he realized it had died. Vegetarian Mansfield was contacted and the lamb retained for future examination.



Newborn California bighorn lamb found dead in the Swakane in Chelan County.

WILDLIFE AREAS

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

Wells Wildlife Area Complex –Dan Peterson / Ann Winters / Fidel Rios

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery: Wednesday, Dan and Natural Resource Technician Angel Hastings spent the day assisting Research Biologist Penny Becker and Biologist Chad Eidson trapping and processing rabbit kits from the ‘nursery’ and 6-acre enclosure. A total of 31 animals were captured and processed. Each kit was weighed, PIT tagged, got a hole punch to an ear for DNA sampling and an overall health assessment. Regional Wildlife Program Manager Matt Monda made a brief cameo appearance and helped with the rabbit roundup. Angel, who is a licensed veterinary technician with 20+ years of experience, worked up all the animals and did great job.

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

Weather Conditions: Generally a nice warm spring week, with highs from high 60's to 80°. Cold nights with ice under the sprinklers first thing Thursday and Friday mornings and occasional short-term winds with gusts to 33 mph.

Weekender Opportunities: Along with rainbow trout fishing, wildlife and wildflower viewing is great in the Quincy Lakes Unit.



Pelicans and cormorants on Stan Coffin Lake



Bitterroot

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

Weather Conditions: Warm spring conditions, however very windy, with gusts hitting 35 mph on Wednesday.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Riparian Restoration: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Dupont led a team to plant 2,383 native trees and shrubs along Scotch Creek. The Scotch Creek Staff was assisted by the Department of Ecology, Washington Conservation Corp., Ellensburg crew. Field preparation and installation of approximately 15,000 linear feet of lumite fabric mulch was completed last fall. We successfully hand augured, fertilized, planted and applied a basal guard to each plant. This was the culmination of the larger project to excavate a meandering Scotch Creek channel, eradicate 40 acres of Reed Canary grass, and restore a native grass/forb upland seed mix and riparian trees on the area below the Scotch Creek Headquarters. The WCC crew also utilized the newly renovated bunkhouse. Even though the furnishings were bare, all other systems worked well, and they appreciated the facility.



Oden Road Fire Ecology Field Day: Wildlife Area Manager Olson participated in the third year of a five year study hosted by the Okanogan Land Council. This year's Oden Road Fire Ecology study was a collaboration of instructors from Wash. Dept. Fish and Wildlife, Wenatchee Valley College, U.S. Forest Service, Dept. Natural Resources, University of Washington, Colville Confederated Tribes, Audubon Society and the Okanogan Conservation District. Olson led a group of Okanogan High School students in the Wildlife survey. This was the third year we have been documenting the presence of bird species over an established transect in the forested habitats along Oden Road. This high severity fire burned just west of Okanogan in the

summer of 2009. A high count of 14 species was observed this year. Students also measured vegetation on established plots and will compare those results to previous years.

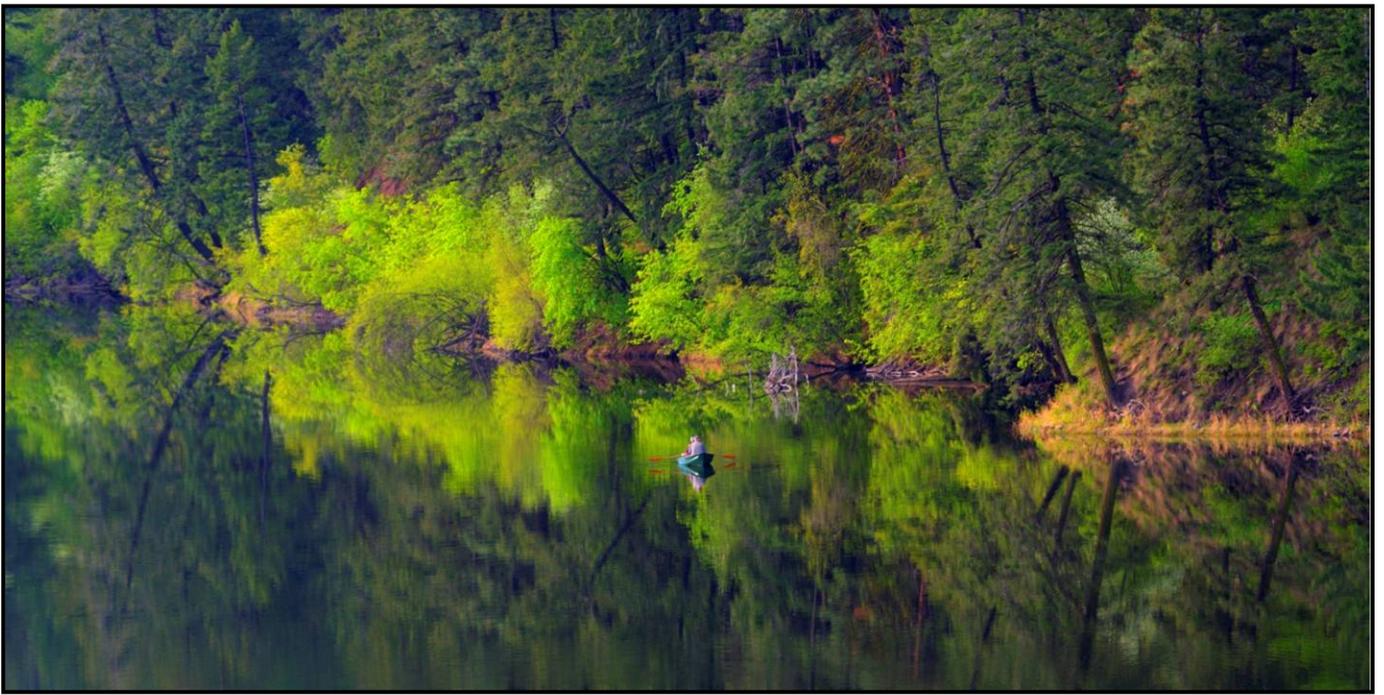


Weed Control: Scientific Technician Topping sprayed all week as weather permitted. In the Honey Lake area of the Scotch Creek unit Clark sprayed Scotch Thistle rosettes, St Johnswort and Russian Knapweed. Topping re-sprayed roundup on shrub planting locations on the Tunk Valley unit in preparation for next week's shrub planting project and re-sprayed last year's grass seeding on Happy Hill due to the persistence of purple mustard.

Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Complex - Dale Swedberg / Justin Haug

Weather Conditions: For the week daytime temperatures ranged from 57 to 78. Nighttime temperatures ranged from 29 to 44. Precipitation - .0 inches. Patches of snow persist at higher elevations on north slopes. Most of the week was clear skies. Average winds ranged from 1.3 to 3.6 mph with gusts ranging from 11 to 22 mph.

Weekender Opportunities: Scenery and Neo-tropic migrant song birds, moose and elk have been sighted in the valley. The number of bird species continues to increase on the wildlife areas. Butterfly species observed recently include Dreamy duskywing (see photo), Sara's orangetip, Satyr comma, green comma, cabbage white, Becker's white and Spring azure also known as Echo blue.





Dreamy Duskywing butterfly photo by D. Swedberg

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

Sinlahekin Dry Forest Restoration: Dry Forest Restoration Specialist Guze continues to get oriented and familiarized with the area and making connections. Additionally he worked on developing a comprehensive fire management plan for the Sinlahekin including fire regime restoration and he spent a day assisting Tonasket Ranger District with a prescribed burn.

Public Outreach: Assistant manager Haug provided assistance with the Oden Road Fire Study hosted by the Okanogan Land Trust and Okanogan High School. This is year three in the 10-year monitoring effort following the Oden Road Fire in the fall of 2009. The event provides Okanogan High School students an opportunity to study the ecosystems response to fire by monitoring vegetation, aquatic invertebrates, soil, fauna and thru photographs. The students will compile the data from this year, compare it to previous years data and present their findings near the end of the school year.

PRIVATE LANDS - John Cotton / Eric Braaten / JoAnn Wisniewski

Weekender Opportunities: The average high for the week was right at the historical average 72F. The average low for the week was about 6 degrees below the historical average of 42F.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE): Private Lands Biologist Braaten spent most of this week checking over 50 SAFE fields in Douglas County for weeds and new grass seedings. Most of the fields seem to be on schedule. Weeds are starting to bolt and landowners are starting to spray. Private Lands Biologist Braaten also found some mistakes FSA made to new contract data and talked with landowner who seeded a field that wasn't in his conservation plan but was suppose to be. Private Lands Biologist Braaten also continues to update SAFE checklists.



Biologists Cotton and Wisniewski checked on the condition of SAFE fields that were seeded to grass and forbs in the fall of 2011. South of Highway 2 grass seedlings are past the 4 leaf stage and in the St. Andrews area south of Mansfield seedlings are primarily 2-3 leaf stage. Seven forb species out of the nine seeded were found in one of the fields checked south west of Mansfield. Fields north of Mansfield were not as advanced and will be checked again.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Burrowing Owls: WDFW Biologists Mike Livingston, Rocky Ross, Harriet Allen and Derek Stinson worked with the Global Owl Project and USFWS Biologists to capture burrowing owls in the Pasco area. They captured 8 of the 20 owls with geolocators that were attached in June 2011. Geolocators were removed and the data will be processed by David Johnson of the Global Owl Project. The geocator data will provide crucial information regarding the migratory pathways and wintering grounds. Very little information is currently known about migratory behavior of burrowing owls. Study sites for the project include Pasco, Hanford ALE, and the Umatilla Chemical Depot. In total, 47 owls were captured, 11 of them were recaptures from 2011, 10 were 2012 chicks, and 26 were adults.



Burrowing owl chicks captured and banded for future monitoring



Burrowing owl adult

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area--Road Renovation Projects: Manager Confer Morris met with Kristen Kuykendall, Engineering, to field review Wenas WA road renovation needs. Since there is more work needed than funding available, Kristen will pull together cost estimates to assist in finalizing the prioritization. The two projects at the top of the list are installation of a bridge at the Durr Road crossing of Umtanum Creek and the mudding issues on the Ridge Road at Oasis Spring (photo below). A family of badgers was seen along the BelTel Road (photo below) and an individual animal was seen on the Ridge Road, making it a good wildlife day.



Portion of Oasis Spring Damage



Badger family near Cottonwood

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Peregrine Falcon Surveys: Biologist DeBruyn visited four of five peregrine falcon sites in District 14 that are being monitored as part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 3-year peregrine falcon de-listing surveys. The nest sites identified earlier in the year were occupied at two sites. One site may have failed while the fourth appears to be unoccupied this year. The fifth site will be surveyed during the week of May 14.

Oregon Spotted Frog Surveys: Biologist Danilson and Bohannon attended a field tour with representatives from WDFW, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Whatcom Land Trust, Whatcom Conservation District, and Natural Resource Conservation Service and several private landowners. Bohannon had organized this tour with the intent of providing perspectives and generating dialogue regarding the results of the two-year project to survey Oregon Spotted Frogs in District 14. This was a very successful project that helped locate and document breeding frogs at several locations. The data is being used by USFWS to inform conservation planning for this sensitive species. Other than finalizing a report for the second year of surveys, the project has now come to a close. It does appear that USFWS may have funding for additional surveys in 2013 and beyond.

Biologist Cyra performed a follow-up survey for Oregon Spotted Frogs on the the Ebey Island unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. Surveys earlier in the season did not find evidence of the frogs, though water levels were high. No Spotted Frogs were observed on this visit and Bullfrog numbers were high. The majority of the northeastern portion of the unit is still very wet with deep standing water.

North Cascades Elk Herd Plan: Biologist Danilson finalized the draft herd plan subsequent to a department-wide internal review process and drafted cover letters to accompany the document when it was sent out to tribes and other agencies for external review.

Bald Eagle Nest Documentation and assistance to USFWS: Biologist Anderson fielded a number of inquiries regarding current eagle management needs due to land use proposals. Most of these were easily referred to our WDFW Bald Eagle management website. This website discussed current bald eagle management needs for a property owner. Bald Eagle management consideration is largely now a federal process. However, WDFW documents nests and appreciates citizen information on eagle nesting activity and new nests. More information at the WDFW Bald Eagle Management Website: http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/bald_eagle/

Common Loon Monitoring: Biologist Anderson and contract biologists with Hancock Timber examined various bodies of water on the Snoqualmie Tree Farm for Common Loon presence. Anderson visited Calligan, Hancock, Black, Klaus and Boyle lakes. No loons were observed. Two days later, one loon was spotted on Calligan.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Agriculture Program: Skagit Wildlife Area Staff with the assistance of Derek Hacker, Access Area Manager and volunteers, transported farming equipment to the Island Unit. Field conditions are still wet but weather conditions are improving and field preparations will begin this week.



Skagit Wildlife Area Staff with assistance of Island Transporter ferried farming equipment to the Island Unit to begin the agricultural enhancement program for 2012.

Skagit Wildlife Area Maintenance and Monitoring: Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) Greg Meis and Habitat Technician (HT) Curran Cosgrove sprayed approximately 15 acres at Samish Unit as a pretreatment to field preparation to suppress grass growth in certain locations.

HT Cosgrove continued to monitor drainage and field conditions on the Island, Leque Island and Samish Units. Screening was installed to culvert between Lorenzen-Ole Thompson fields on the Island Unit to improve drainage and decrease blockage within the culverts.

Waterwheel Creek and Cherry Valley Fish Passage Project: Manager Paulson had the King County Drainage, Dike and Water District #7 representative sign the Waterwheel Creek Land Use Agreement. The Diking District representative thinks this is a good project and is excited to see it completed.

Lake Terrell Unit: Natural Resource Tech Deyo checked wood duck boxes and banded one female duck, finished disking all the barley fields and collected soil samples and dropped them off to Wilbur Ellis for analysis.

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

Wildlife Management

North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt: Due to increased bear activity as well as temporary timber company operations that impacted hunters, Biologist Roozen and technician Otto prioritized work on public access for spring bear hunt permit holders. Hunter harvest continued with multiple permit holders filling their tags in the past week. Peels in young stands are becoming more prolific and hunter activity should continue steadily thru the hunt.

WDFW and Bats Northwest Citizen Bat Acoustic Survey on Local WDFW Lands:

Biologist Anderson met with members of Bats Northwest to discuss expansion of manual acoustic bat surveys during the pupping season on Lower Snoqualmie WDFW properties (Stillwater, Cherry Valley, Crescent Lake). This pilot work is to assist in determination of bat high use areas on these management units, as well as develop a partial species list for reference. Further, examination of species shifts within a season may be indicative of types of use in the area (e.g. maternity use, roaming/migratory use). Plans to develop a community questionnaire for outreach and information gathering regarding bat roosts in the valley was also discussed.

Wildlife Areas

Crescent Lake Trail Work: Manager Paulson and a Snoqualmie Wildlife Area volunteer worked on clearing trail in the forest at the Crescent Lake Unit. Dangerous trees that leaned over the trails needed to be removed as well as clearing some trees that had already fallen.

Tennant Lake Unit: Manager Kessler made final corrections and additions, then submitted the Tennant Lake Boardwalk Project for WWRP funding.

Private Lands/Wildlife Access

Skagit County Pheasant Release Site: Biologist Roozen continued work on a new pheasant release site. Roozen continued site evaluations of new proposed areas and discussing hunt and property details with landowners and/or managers.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Biologist Roozen and technician Otto continued work on waterfowl food plots at Bay View. Roozen spoke with growers and managers and discussed crop selection. Otto continued drainage where necessary in the plots.

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

Wildlife Management

12th Annual Tukwila Backyard Wildlife Festival: Biologist Anderson ran a WDFW Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary – Living with Wildlife – Wildlife Tree outreach booth at the annual Tukwila Backyard Wildlife Festival. Many visitors stopped by to discuss wildlife enhancement techniques, urban wildlife ecology, conflict resolution, or even report the new eagle nest near their house. Anderson had many children interested in pelts, as well as observing the state bird, the American Goldfinch, via a “dummy goldfinch” attached to the display and using his binoculars. Hopefully as some of these young birders mature in their skills, they will forgive Anderson for tricking them into watching the fake bird that doesn’t move – but was easily

observed. WDFW is involved with this festival each year. It is always the second Saturday of May and held on International Migratory Bird Day.

Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary – website update: Biologist Anderson worked with Peggy Ushakoff to update Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary website with a PDF link and explanation of the joint certification program with National Wildlife Federation, NW Zoo and Aquarium Alliance, and WDFW. This certification allows those interested to certify with both the national NWF Certified Wildlife Habitats program, as well as local state Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary, and receive information and benefits from local NWZAA facilities (i.e. Woodland Park Zoo). This partnership certification can be found on the Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/backyard/>

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Wildlife Area: Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Habitat Tec Cosgrove continued treatment and monitoring of poison hemlock on Leque Island Unit, Samish, Fir Island Farm and Headquarters Units.

Samish and Samish River Unit: Manager Belinda Rotton met with Ducks Unlimited Engineer John Axford to discuss the status of the proposed freshwater wetland enhancement projects on these sites. The next steps is to meet with project partners to discuss the new restoration and project framework for projects implemented on WDFW properties. Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Habitat Tec Cosgrove surveyed thistle treatment area on the Samish Unit and identified areas for additional treatment for this season to include mowing and spraying. The site is near organic farms that are impacted by the thistle growth on this site.

DeBay's Slough Unit: Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Habitat Tec Cosgrove cut down blackberries along entry fence line. Additional plans are proposed to improve the entry and viewing site to prepare for the WWRP restoration plantings on the site.

Private Lands/Access

Natural Resource Conservation Service Training: Technician Otto attended an all-day training workshop provided by Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in Olympia. The training provided information on various NRCS programs available for private land wildlife habitat work, and how those programs could be used for upcoming projects within the Region 4 Private Lands programs.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Conservation Initiative and Climate Change Update Workshop: Region 4 staff in attended and participated in an update workshop on the Department's Conservation Initiative. Also on the agenda was a basic primer on climate change and how Department activities and management might change in relation to this change.

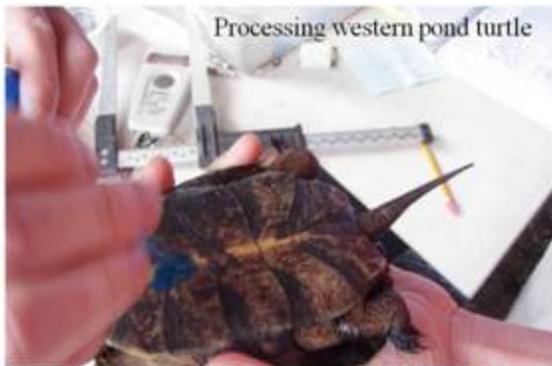
Radio Training: Biologist Cyra provided the required state radio training and assigned call numbers to several new staff. Radio training and a call number is required for all users per our contract with the Department of Natural

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle Management: Mark Re-Capture Population Estimate: Biologists Holman, George, Bergh, and Stephens continued trapping for western pond turtles at the Sondino site. Following 14 days of trapping, a total of 172 captures have been recorded. Additionally, 5 wild western pond turtles approximately 4 years of age have been encountered, marked, and released as they exceed the size where bullfrog predation is expected. Finally, 16 wild hatchling western pond turtles have been captured as well. Trapping is scheduled to continue until May 18th. This effort is being conducted to generate a mark re-capture population estimate for western pond turtles at the State's most significant site and provide animals for the head-start program. Please see the photos below on turtle processing, Priority Habitat and Species/Growth Management Biologist Fornes with a pond turtle, and a western pond turtle hatchling.



Western Pond Turtle Management: Biologists Anderson assisted the USFS with western pond turtle habitat management at the Skamania County site. A local person with a 4-wheel drive tractor was hired to mow select meadows adjacent to pond turtle wetland sites. Mowing is being used to keep meadow habitat suitable for western pond turtle nesting and to reduce the invasion of Scots broom and blackberry.



Mowing select meadows adjacent to pond turtle wetland sites

Golden Eagle Surveys: Biologist Anderson conducted a golden eagle nest survey in the Rock Creek drainage area of eastern Klickitat County. The golden eagle nest site had two juveniles in the nest approximately 21 days old. Additional nest sites will be surveyed in Klickitat County in May and June. In addition, Biologist Stephens conducted a survey near the John Day dam to determine if golden eagles are using this historic territory. No eagles were observed during the survey. This is the second survey conducted at this site in 2012.

Sandhill Crane Survey: Biologist Stephens assisted Conboy Lake NWR staff with a flight over the Refuge and nearby private lands to identify sandhill crane nest locations. A total of nine nests were identified during the flight.



Conboy Lake NWR

Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area:

Forage Enhancements: Technician Pyzik, Volunteer Brattan, and Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hauswald spent the week working on the Intensive Forage Management Areas in the Mudflow Unit. These areas are enhanced to create more forage for elk that use the area. In total there were 35 acres limed, 150 acres fertilized, and 50 acres harrowed during the week using tractors and an ATV to accomplish the work. Past enhancement treatments have produced up to 50% more forage than areas that do not receive treatments on the Wildlife Area.

Klickitat Wildlife Area:

Fuels Reduction Project: The WCC crew finished the thinning and limbing work along Old Headquarters Rd. this week. A second crew arrived with a chipper to chip the slash.

WCC Chipping Crew



Although chipping went well, the volume of slash proved to be more than could be handled in only 2 days. The areas that have been completely done look as expected given the objectives of the project. An added benefit is that sight distances off the road are greater, making the forest along the roads seem more spacious. The Department of Ecology crews that worked on this project deserve a round of applause for the quantity and quality of the work they accomplished.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Private Lands/Access

Training: Biologist Stephens attended the Farm Bill program training presented by NRCS staff in Olympia. The purpose of the training was to familiarize WDFW staff with the different Farm Bill programs that are available to private landowners.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtles: District 15 biologists conducted the annual western pond turtle capture exercise at the Mason County turtle site with the help of staff from other districts, programs and agencies. Forty-eight turtles were captured by snorkelers. All but two previously radio tagged females were captured and refitted with new transmitters. The remains of one breeding age female were recovered with the transmitter still attached. The final adult female with an expired transmitter will be captured later this month. Three new females were fitted with transmitters as they reached breeding age. All turtles appeared healthy and unlike last year, we found no evidence of eagle or otter predation.



Sci Tech Anthony measuring a western pond turtle (lft). Administrative Assistant Baker in a proud moment (right)



Biologists Ament (snorkeling) and Murphie (kayak) capturing western pond turtles.

Snowy Plovers: Biologist Sundstrom has observed a minimum of 15 snowy plovers and discovered two (2) snowy plover nests. Both nests are full clutches (3 eggs each) with females incubating.



Snowy Plover nests.

Biologist Peterson observed numerous snowy plovers at Leadbetter Beach and documented the presence of 7 breeding snowy plover pairs. The pairs have been associated with scrapes in different sections of the beach, including the tip of the beach, the HRA, and the outer foredunes. Biologist Peterson also located a new nest (3 eggs) and highlighted the presence of other snowy plovers at Leadbetter beach that do not appear to be paired.

Ranger Jared Liening and Biologist Sundstrom completed the installation of a snowy plover interpretive sign at the Cranberry Beach Road approach on Friday, May 4.



Ranger Jared Liening with new interpretive sign

Wildlife Areas

Kindred Island Acquisition: Linking and Expanding North Willapa Bay Conservation Initiatives



District Biologist Hoenes and Manager Guzlas completed and submitted a National Coastal Wetlands grant for the regional USFWS scoring review.

The objective of this project is to acquire and conserve 740 acres on and adjacent to Kindred Island that is currently at risk of conversion to residential development. The acquisition of Kindred Island will permanently remove such risks and perpetually protect some of the most pristine and productive fish and wildlife habitat in Washington State. In addition, the acquisition of Kindred Island will expand existing protected and conserved habitat in northern Willapa Bay, including approximately 700 acres of wildlife preserve on the lower North River, approximately 650 acres of preserve on the adjacent Smith Creek estuary, nearly 1,000 acres on the lower Willapa River and approximately 800 acres at the Cedar River Wildlife Area and Preserve west of the project area. See project maps, enclosed. The protection called for in this project will also provide helpful ecological benefit to the 15,500 acre Willapa National Wildlife Refuge as well as numerous Natural Area Preserves and Natural Resource Conservation Areas owned and managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

Furthermore, future restoration efforts WDFW plans to initiate following the acquisition of Kindred Island will ensure the ecological integrity and productive value of these habitats are restored and maintained. These components include dike removal/breaching that will return ca. 330 acres to its original ecological condition as estuarine wetlands and additional Spartina eradication throughout northern Willapa Bay.

Dungeness Basin Coastal Wetlands Project Phase 5



Manager Guzlas, Biologist Ament and North Olympic Salmon Coalition staff completed and submitted a National Coastal Wetlands grant for regional scoring and review.

This project will protect in perpetuity an assemblage of declining coastal wetlands including palustrine emergent, palustrine forested, and marine intertidal. Through the use of fee title acquisition of approximately 20 acres, this project will build upon a protected network of conserved properties totaling 770 acres within the **Dungeness Estuarine Basin (*Project Area*)**. Phase 5 (current phase) builds upon the acquisitions made in Phase 4. This proposal will acquire an additional 20 acres that will support two major restoration actions within the ***Project Area and will result in a restoration design for the Phases 4 and 5 Acquisitions.***

WDFW will acquire in fee approximately 15 acres of Dungeness estuary shoreline and tidelands composed of 13 acres of nationally declining marine intertidal wetlands. This acquisition will support the infrastructure removal that will enable nearshore and estuarine restoration actions to occur along the Three Crabs shoreline on the Dungeness estuary. Clallam County will acquire in fee approximately 5 acres of Dungeness River floodplain composed of 2 acres of freshwater emergent and freshwater forested shrub wetlands.

This key parcel is critical to the proposed US Army Corps of Engineers Lower Dungeness River Levee Setback project that is currently in progress within the ***Project Area***. Buildings and other infrastructure will be removed from both sites along with septic systems. Project engineering and design elements for future completion of the nearshore estuary restoration along the Three Crabs shoreline will also be achieved through this proposal.

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

Wildlife Management

Black-tailed Deer: Biologist McMillan reports all remaining deer in the Pysht Cluster (eastern Clallam County) are all still alive. Bio Murphie continues working on The BTD project in Mason and Satsop areas where no significant changes have occurred. Biologist Michaelis monitored radio-collared black-tail deer in Capitol Forest. All of these efforts are part of an ongoing research project that is determining habitat use patterns and cause-specific mortality rates for female and juvenile black-tailed deer that occupy commercial forests. Biologists heading up this research effort are hoping results will help better understand the causes of recent declines in local black-tailed populations.