Wildlife Program

Week of May 14-20, 2012

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Washington Ground Squirrels: Biologist Gary Wiles spent three days with District Biologist Rich Finger visiting past translocation sites for this species in Grant and Adams Counties. Translocations using soft release techniques have been successful at several locations during the past two years, but have failed at another. They and Gordon Warrick, acting manager of the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, also spent time looking for potential new translocation sites on the refuge for next year's releases. Wiles also spent time resurveying the squirrel population at a former translocation site near Quail Lake on the refuge and visiting known colonies in and around the towns of Warden and Soap Lake. Population declines were noted at several of these sites.

Red Knot Migration Patterns: Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan was contacted by Jeannine Parvin, Database Administrator for bandedbird.org, regarding recapture of a Red Knot that was banded by WDFW on West Sand Island in Grays Harbor on 19 May 2011. This Red Knot was recaptured on 21 April 2012 at South Padre Island, Texas, an unexpected location given the presumed affinity of the roselaari subspecies to the Pacific Flyway. Just prior to this encounter an individually identifiable Red Knot (also roselaari subspecies) banded at Guerrero Negro, Baja California Sur, Mexico, was photographed in coastal Texas. After being observed in Texas on 4 May, this bird was observed on 17 May at Grays Harbor, WA. These observations (and other information) suggest many possibilities, including that a segment of the Western population may migrate through the interior of the continent.

Mazama Pocket Gopher Survey Testing: Section Manager Bruce Thompson worked with Region 6 Wildlife Program Manager Mick Cope to develop and test some approaches to conducting and documenting opportunistic and directed surveys for pocket gophers. Region 6 staff under Mick's direction began implementing the initial processes for survey and data recording. This work was intended to identify further questions to address before finalizing data record procedures and preparing an agenda for field staff training on survey and data procedures.

PHS List Update –Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Meeting: Biologist Azerrad facilitated the first meeting of the PHS List update TAG. Biologist Sato and Section leader Rodrick also attended as well. The group is comprised of biologists from all resource programs and from all 6 DFW regions. The group is charged with guiding all technical aspects of the update to the PHS List. At the meeting, the group provided input on how well changes made to the PHS List in 2008 have been working. They also gave feedback on how to address recent agency initiatives in the update of the PHS List (i.e. Conservation Initiative). They also helped prioritize proposed changes to the list. Several subgroups will be formed to address specific questions related to PHS criteria, habitat definitions, and special taxonomic groups. In the criteria subgroup we hope to resolve differences between the PHS List and the Species of Greatest Conservation Need List for the State Wildlife Action Plan.

WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Scientific Collections Permits (SCP): Development is ongoing for the simplification of the SCP application process. Last week Tricia Thompson sent out to Bruce Baker, Tricia's SCP counterpart in Fish, and Kailey Tschimperle, Commercial Licensing, the latest draft of the new SCP Application. The application will go out this week to those who are interested in review. One of the intents of this new application is to make SCP review easier and faster. Also, much of the concern in issuing Scientific Collection Permits is the cumulative effects of lethal collection by several museums requesting "blanket" permits across the state. The new application makes it clear what species and how many are proposed for lethal collection in that collection year.

In keeping with the desire to assess and moderate cumulative impacts on species proposed for lethal collection, Tricia Thompson compiled several detailed comments on a Scientific Collections Permit Application and constructed a very lengthy list of conditions detailed for many separate species. The set of conditions for this permit may possibly be used as a standard set of conditions for reptiles and amphibians; review of the list will be solicited particularly from Lisa Hallock and Lori Salzer.

Wildlife Rehabilitation: Tricia Thompson graded two General and two Raptor tests and issued Wildlife Rehabilitation permits to the two new wildlife rehabilitators from PAWS, Lynnwood. They were mailed their permits right away because they worked at an already-approved facility. If they leave that facility and open their own, their permit will become invalid until their new facility is inspected.

Tricia Thompson visited the large wildlife rehabilitation facility West Sound Wildlife, Bainbridge Island, with Andy Carlson who was inspecting the facility for the specialized oiled wildlife rehabilitation certification. The day was spent checking compliance with strict facility specification for the intake and treatment of oiled wildlife, particularly birds. Part of this oiled wildlife treatment facility at WSW was funded by a WDFW Grant for Wildlife Rehabilitators.

Falconry: A call came in about another "peregrine" trapped in a building – Stoneway Electric Supply in Seattle. Tricia Thompson talked to the Washington Falconer Association "nuisance raptor" coordinator and sent him the information to go trap and remove the bird. The building manager had been calling around for three days to get someone to remove the bird (such as animal control) but no one would do it. Then he finally reached us and he was **very** happy. The bird is most likely another juvenile Cooper's hawk.

Washington Ground Squirrel: District 5 Wildlife Biologist Rich Finger prepared a slide show for the Sandhill Crane Festival in Othello on the Status and Management of the Washington Ground Squirrel. This show is now on the WDFW Web under Species of Concern - Mammals.

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

WildWatchcams: Watchable Wildlife Manager Chuck Gibilisco responded to numerous organizations and agencies interested in the design and installation of wildlife viewing camera systems. Judging from the number and types of inquiries, it looks like ospreys are the preferred

species or perhaps most common near human structures and habitation. Great blue herons seem to also be another species of great human interest and in need of further observation. This osprey photo was reported as approximately 50 feet from the Seattle NOAA rooftop building. This particular pair had previously nested on a ship's mast and a special nest pole and platform were constructed to address that concern.

Photo: Mary Foote, NOAA Seattle Office

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

Local Parks Grant Reviews: Gibilisco reviewed grants as a member of a grant review team selected by the Recreation Conservation Office. The Local Parks category is not open to state agencies and such grant requests come primarily from communities across the state. RCO staff mentioned Local Parks grants received this year are the lowest number ever and might be an indication of how hard economic times is playing out in communities throughout Washington. A 50% cash match is required as a part of this grant category.

Wildlife Outreach Volunteers: Volunteer Management Coordinator, James Chandler, received the WDFW Innovator's Award recognizing his achievement in achieving efficiency, creating cost savings and improving service through the website based CERVIS Volunteer Management Program, where volunteers register for project opportunities.

James Chandler went to Ephrata to assist Dr. Penny Becker Wildlife Scientist with coordinating volunteer efforts, trapping and installing radio wire transmitter on pygmy rabbits and releasing the rabbits into a soft release site.

James Chandler solicited the local Hunter Education Instructor and the Master Hunter groups to volunteer on the Pigmy reintroduction. The HEI and the MH agreed to provide several volunteers upon Dr. Becker's request. James Chandler contacted the Department of Agriculture to find a local alfalfa hay farmer to provide freshly-cut alfallpha. The contact information was passed on to Dr. Penny Becker for the coordination of the hay delivery. James Chandler will coordinate a high school volunteer opportunity with the Ephrata High school. The students will assist DFW staff will constructing soft release pens, feed and trapping pigmy rabbits.

Citizen Science: Citizen Science coordinator Margaret Tudor initiated recruitment for citizen science volunteers to attend a summer training to implement a Citizen Science project on the 2 Eastern Washington pilot Wildlife Areas to measure Ecological Integrity.

LANDS DIVISION

Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Addition: WDFW has completed the purchase of 155.65 acres located on the Okanogan River in Okanogan County. This acquisition is part of the McLoughlin Falls project which was evaluated and approved through the Lands 20/20 process. This property includes riparian and riverine characteristics beneficial to endangered fish species on the western lands and grassland and shrub steppe habitat beneficial to ungulates on the eastern lands. It is bordered by lands owned by the Bureau of Land Management and the Washington Department of Natural Resources. This purchase was jointly funded by grants from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Section 6 program. The property will be managed within the Wildlife Program by Dale Swedberg as part of the Driscoll Island Unit, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area.

Methow Wildlife Area Addition: WDFW has completed the purchase of 49.14 acres on the Methow River in Okanogan County. This acquisition is part of the Methow Watershed project which was evaluated and approved through the Lands 20/20 process. The purpose of the project is to protect riparian habitat, big game habitat, cross-valley migration corridor, and enhance management opportunities with adjacent WDFW-owned lands. The property's riverfront provides significant riparian and in-stream habitats that benefit listed salmonids including, bull trout, Upper Columbia spring Chinook, and summer steelhead. The property contributes to critical, seasonal, cross-valley migration habitat for mule deer and other wide ranging wildlife. Acquisition of this property will facilitate east-west connectivity of existing public lands. The property will be managed within the Wildlife Program by Tom McCoy as part of the Methow Wildlife Area. This purchase was funded by a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 Program.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Flammulated Owl Survey: District Wildlife Biological Staff Jay Shepherd and Dana Base continued work on the Flammulated Owl Survey Project. District Wildlife Biologist Dana Base also set up the third survey transect as planned for District One for this season. GPS locations and vegetation assessments were obtained for individual stations. The three transects begin at randomly pre-selected points on or near forest secondary roads. The first transect, named "Haller Creek", is located within the Huckleberry Range on state land managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources. The second transect, named "Little Boulder", is on U.S. Forest Service land in the Kettle Range. The third transect, named "LPO", is on the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge in the Calispell Range. Each transect will be surveyed three times between mid-May and the end of June 2012 to optimize the likelihood of detecting Flammulated Owls. This week Base and Shepherd carried out the first of nine scheduled owl surveys, this first survey on the Haller Creek Transect. Only a Barred Owl was detected.

Photo of ponderosa pine woodland on the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge that is within a Flammulated Owl survey transect developed this week in cooperation with the USFWS.

Bighorn Sheep Aerial Survey at Lincoln Cliffs: Biologist Ferguson along with temporary biologist Luke Lillquist conducted the May Bighorn Sheep aerial survey at Lincoln Cliffs and counted 60 sheep – a number a little above the average of 58 for this time of year. Biologist Atamian prepared the flight plan for the survey and was primary flight follower throughout.

Lincoln Cliffs Bighorn Sheep Aerial Survey 14May2012.

Wildlife Areas

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Big Game Forage Plots: Debby Flynn spent all week preparing three fields for seeding to oats at Smoothing Iron ridge. Bob Dice spent Friday harrowing and seeding one of the three fields. Elk are using winter wheat strips heavily and don't seem to be too concerned about our fieldwork chores. Debby Flynn discovered some damage to our D4 cat from elk. The elk chewed on cab insulation, hydraulic lines, and licked pretty much the entire tractor. Something about a Cat D4 must taste good to elk!

Elk in winter wheat at Smoothing Iron Ridge.

Tongue marks from elk on D4 Farmcat.

WT Wooten Wildlife Area – Photo Point Pictures: Kari Dingman spent some time this week re-visiting photo points established by Shana Winegeart after the 2005 School Fire. Things are definitely changing.


Photo point pictures from the Wooten Wildlife Area. 2006 photo on left and 2012 photo on right. This particular site is in Cummings Creek.

Private Lands/Access

Lincoln County SAFE Update: Baarstad contacted several producers with SAFE (State Acres For wildlife Enhancement) contracts and provided additional herbicide application information to control broadleaf weeds in native grass stands. Baarstad and vegetation ecologist Merg toured SAFE project sites in Lincoln County to establish locations for bird point counts that Merg will be conducting soon. Conducting these point count surveys is a requirement under the technical service agreement between WDFW and NRCS for SAFE contracts.

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

Wildlife Management

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge Spring Festival: Biologist Ferguson co-led a nature walk with Eastern Washington University (EWU) Professor Margaret O'Connell at the 2nd Annual Spring Festival – Feathers, Flowers and Floods, at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. Ferguson discussed the EWU elk project to attendees and demonstrated radio tracking techniques as well. Some of the birds observed were: Western wood-pewee, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Western Bluebirds, Great-blue herons, Trumpeter Swans, Blue-winged teal, Green-winged teal, Cinnamon Teal, gadwall, shovelers, Sora rail, and spotted sandpiper.

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge's Spring Nature Festival.

Biologist Ferguson and Professor Margaret O'Connell Nature Walk.

Wildlife Areas

Discovery Week at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area: Wildlife Area Staff had over 30 schoolchildren out at the Wildlife Area this week. This included a 3rd grade class from Wilbur, and a 2nd grade class from Odessa. The students took a hike into the shrub-steppe, learned about Fish and Wildlife Officer duties from Fish and Wildlife Officer Curt Wood, and got to examine skins and skulls of native wildlife species (the items came from the educational trunks that Region One has available for educational use).


05/17/2012

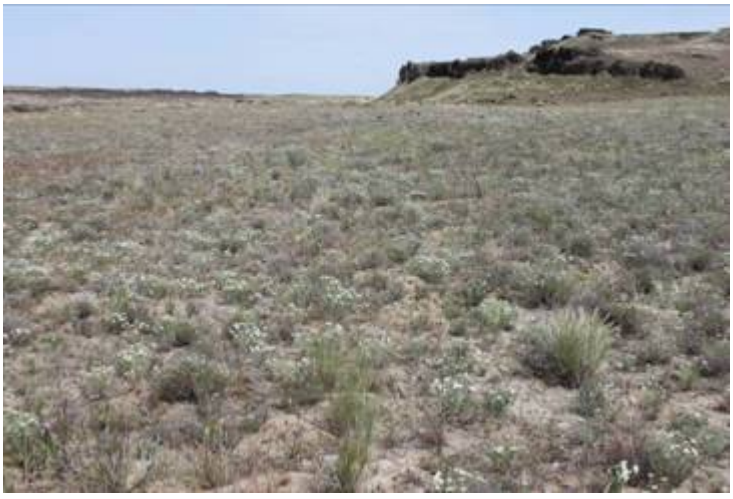
REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Water Birds: Biologist Finger attended a meeting with Mick Hansen of Moses Lake Construction, Inc. and Woody Trihey of Cardo Entrix who are working for the Moses Lake Irrigation and Rehabilitation District to remove Parker Horn sediments. Dredging of the sites has not been successful and thus efforts are shifting towards gaining permitting for removal of sediments during low water (winter) with excavation equipment. Finger provided comments with regards to best management practices for preserving and enhancing nesting habitat for Aechmophorus grebes and Western Canada geese while maintaining loafing sites for wintering waterfowl. This could be accomplished by creating five linear, half-acre islands of cattail/bulrush which would be flooded to the cattail edge during high water (breeding season). The winter drawdown of 5' would create exposed sand bar/mud flats adjacent to the cattail/bulrush islands. Islands would be arranged such to shelter grebe nesting habitats from the prevailing winds.

Washington ground squirrels: Biologist Finger spent a couple days with endangered species biologist Gary Wiles looking over Washington ground squirrel releases sites to assess apparent success of recent translocations. Evidence indicates the Steamboat Rock and Soda Lake sites continue to do exceptionally well. We also visited the failed reintroduction site and discussed possible reasons for the failure. Though purely speculative, we feel it likely that raptors used the canyon walls to forage very effectively on the newly released squirrels.

Finger and Wiles also spent a day with Columbia National Wildlife Refuge biologist and acting manager Gordon Warrick visiting potential reintroduction sites on the refuge. A total of six potential sites were visited and a general timeline, strategy, and interim habitat management actions were developed to support a long-term reintroduction plan. One of the potential sites is shown in the photo below.



Finger conducted more long-term monitoring quads in Douglas County. Finger summarized and reported incidental findings including, a potential small sage grouse lek site with a pair of grouse located about 150m away, a sage thrasher nest, a pygmy short-horned lizard and 8 observations of least chipmunks.

Finger conducted vegetation sampling at the Lind Coulee habitat enhancement plot to assess relative seedling abundance for each of the treatments. Results are shown in the figures below. Unfortunately, it appears that grasses and forbs were drilled too deep and the previous year's

efforts to control Russian thistle were largely ineffective (likely sprayed a little too late or seed bank was too vigorous) and competition from this aggressive weed is limiting success. Additional mowing of Russian thistle to reduce seed production will be needed this summer; results are difficult to interpret at this time but it is likely that the entire trial has failed to produce a quality stand of vegetation. However, the trial has provided insights into the effects of various herbicide treatments and will produce some useful information, particularly of what not to do...

SPECIES RECOVERY
Pygmy Rabbit Recovery - Penny Becker

Weather Conditions: Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area had rain again this week that was followed sunny days. The vegetation remains green and flowering.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Releases of Kits: This week on 5/18 we released the first round of 2012 kits into the wild. Nineteen kits total were released. Ten kits were released after 7 days in soft release enclosures, while nine were hard released into prepared burrow sites. All released kits have glue-on transmitters to monitor their dispersal and survival post-release. A number of WDFW staff and volunteers helped with the preparations, trapping and release efforts including Dave Volsen, Jon Gallie, Dan Peterson, Ann Winters, Angel Hastings, Leslie Rob, and James Chandler.

A pygmy rabbit kit ready for genetic sampling (left) and Biologist Gallie (right) catching a kit in a pillowcase out of an artificial burrow

Monitoring of Released Kits: Becker, Eidson and DeMay performed radio telemetry to track the status of the kits on post-release day 1. Half of the kits stayed near their release site, while the other half left the area immediately. One individual traveled more than 2 miles in 18 hours while others traveled intermediate distances. Tracking the very small transmitters with limited range proved a very difficult task and therefore five kits could not yet be located. The kits will be tracked again on day 3 post-release.

WILDLIFE AREAS

Methow Wildlife Area Complex - Tom McCoy / Rob Wottlin / John Haegan
Weather Conditions: Beautiful, sunny weather with highs in the 70's lows in the 30's and 40's. Strong, winds from the north have been developing in the afternoons.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Riparian Property Goals Tour: On Thursday the 17th, Tom McCoy, Ken Bevis, Lynda Hofmann and Gina McCoy toured the Habermill and Big Valley properties to develop a basic management and restoration outline. It was a great day in the field with sunny weather, abundant flowers and wildlife, and…….relatively high water. The water levels allowed us to start seeing flood paths and potential fish habitat that would be difficult to detect at base flows. The Habermill property in particular has a number of small channels and old beaver ponds that were not readily apparent during base flow.

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

Gate Installation: James Varner of Rainshadow Running is sponsoring a marathon in the Methow Valley on May 20 that includes a segment of the course on the Big Buck Unit. As an in-lieu service James has agreed to hang panel gates along the course (road) where there are currently wire gates. This cooperative agreement will be incredibly helpful with livestock management in the area as most of our problems are associated with gates being left open by recreational users that either don't know how to close a wire gate, or are physically unable to close one.

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

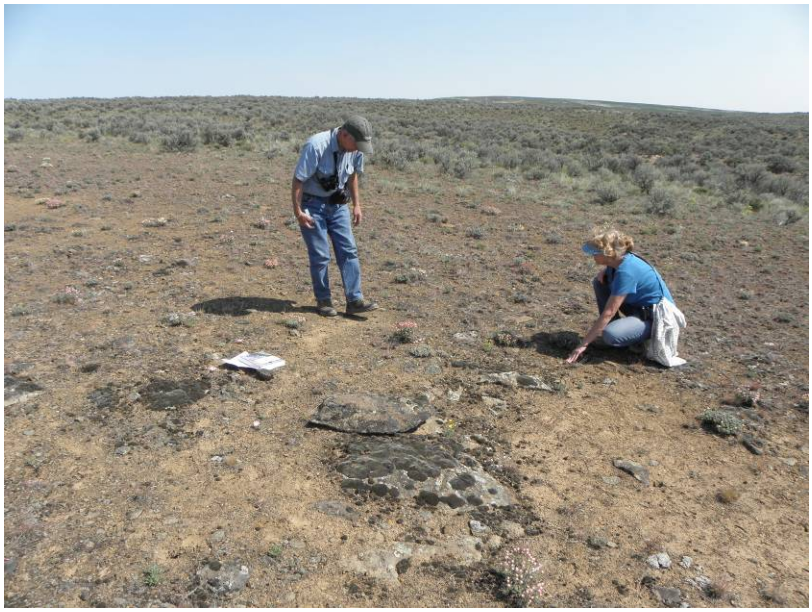
Weather Conditions: Lows in the 50's, high temperature of 92 Tuesday but cooling to low/mid 70's by Saturday.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery: Thursday and Friday area staff joined Research Biologist Penny Becker and the crew she assembled to trap and process rabbit kits from the two fenced enclosures and move approximately 16 animals to hard release sites. Area staff included Biologists Dan Peterson, Ann Winters and Natural Resource Technician Angel Hastings. Joining Dan and Angel for the Friday event was Independent Researcher Leslie Robb from Bridgeport.

Penny Becker, Angel Hastings and University of Idaho graduate student Stephanie Demay attaching a radio transmitter to pygmy rabbit.

Rare Care Plant Survey: Thursday, Dan met Rare Care volunteers Robert and Judy Kent at the Sagebrush Flat Unit and checked the location of the rare plant puzzling rockcress (Halimolobos perplexa var. perplexa). Together they found a total of 22 plants clustered in an area about 15 feet square. Listed as "State Threatened", the Sagebrush Flat Unit is the only known location in Washington for this small nondescript species. Afterwards, Dan took Robert (former Wildlife Area Manager for this unit) and Judy to the pygmy rabbit enclosures where they were got to discuss current rabbit recovery efforts with Penny Becker and Biologists Dave Volsen, Ann Winters and Jon Gallie.



Robert and Judy Kent counting all the puzzling rockcress in Washington.

Two small non-flowering H. perplexa. Bitterroot shown for scale and contrast.

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

Weather Conditions: Warmer than average with highs hitting upper 80's. Last year's grass seeding has really taken off this week. This warm and dry weather should also be good for STG chicks coming out this time of year.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Riparian Restoration: Scotch Creek staff welcomed the Washington Conservation Corp. crew from Ellensburg back to Scotch Creek this week for another round of native tree and shrub planting. This week we concentrated on the wet draw along the east boundary of the Tunk Valley unit. Even though this stream is seasonal, for the most part it stays green throughout the summer. Remnants of water birch and wild rose are all that's left after decades of heavy grazing. We installed approximately 1,000 plants with terra mats, basal guards, and bud caps to prevent browsing damage from deer.

Chelan Wildlife Area Complex - Ron Fox

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Chelan Butte Field Restoration: Brad, Maintenance Mechanic, continued disking fallowed fields on Chelan Butte. Disking will be put on hold next week to start mowing fields seeded last fall to control annual weeds, mostly cereal rye, prior to seed formation.

Ron spent a day with Von Pope, Chelan PUD, looking at the progress of restoration efforts on Chelan Butte and Swakane Canyon. Von was pleased overall with fields seeded last fall, somewhat concerned about the amount of cereal rye in the fields, and very pleased to see bighorn sheep feeding the fields.

Chelan Butte field seeded fall 2011 (foreground) and Brad disking fields (background).

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area (W.A.) Target Shooting Public Meetings: Wenas W.A. staff, RPM Clausing and Enforcement staff presented and participated in two public meetings to discuss target shooting issues on the Wenas W.A. Two staff members from DNR SE Region and the Selah Fire Chief also attended and presented information. Approximately 75 public attended the meetings and provided lots of good ideas and input to the process. The ideas that consistently surfaced in the break-out groups were: increased education and signage; restrict locations where target shooting can occur and focus signage and safety at those sites; increased enforcement; limit target shooting during fire season.

Plane Crash at Sheep Company: A single engine, 1929 plane crash-landed on the wildlife area Saturday afternoon after having engine problems. Assistant Manager Taylor responded late that evening after receiving complaints about fuel leaking and public near plane. He had owner turn off the fuel and cut the power, which stopped the fuel leak. Ecology's spill response team was notified, and they responded that night to clear the site. Minor damage to plane and owner was very good to work with. His crew was on-site Sunday morning to begin dismantling the plane for removal. They anticipated removal by Sunday evening or Monday morning.

Crash-landed plane at Sheep Company.

Land Acquisition: District Wildlife Biologist Mike Livingston participated in a field tour of the Rattlesnake Mountain acquisition project site with Region 3 Director Jeff Tayer, Adam Fyall with Benton County, former County Commissioner Max Benitz and reporters and photographers from the Associated Press and Tri-City Herald. Max Benitz, as caretaker of the Ranch, spoke about the family and ranching history of the property. Livingston and RD Tayer explained the ecological and biological importance of the site and the acquisition details. Adam Fyall explained the County's support and interest in preserving the property for future generations. The press coverage should provide the project good local and national exposure and that may help with fund raising by our partners.

Regional Director Jeff Tayer discussing the Rattlesnake Mountain acquisition project to Annette Cary with the Tri-City Herald and Shannon Dininny with the Associated Press.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

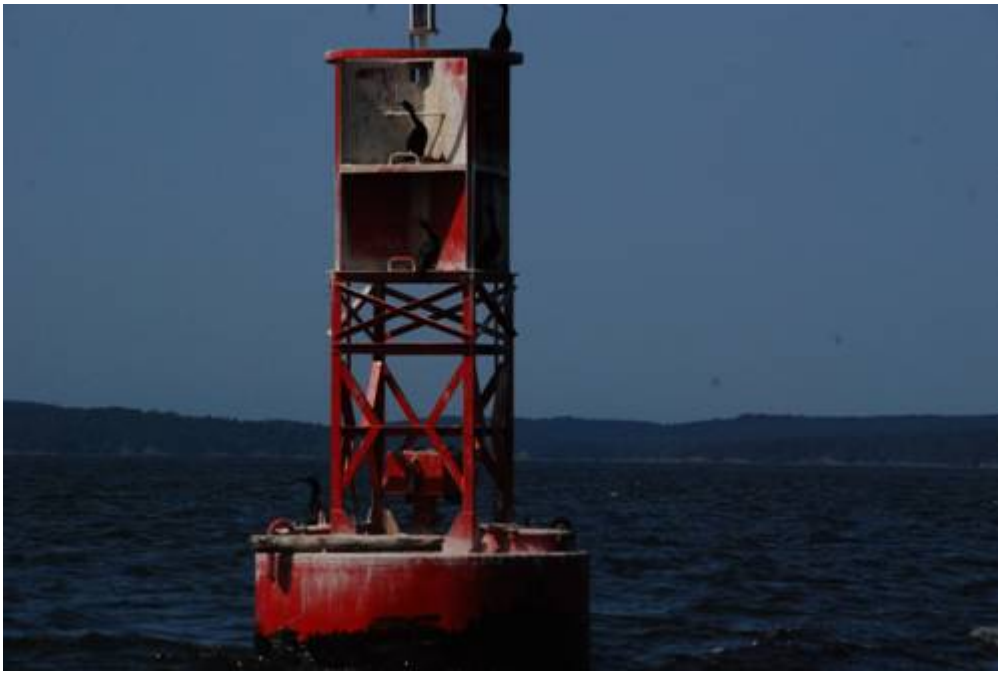
Peregrine Falcon Federal Delisting Surveys: Biologist DeBruyn completed the second round of visits to peregrine territories included in the fourth nationwide post-delisting monitoring survey. It now is clear that four of the five pairs have eggs or young chicks while the fifth may be occupied by a single sub-adult falcon. Two other sites adjacent to surveyed sites have viable nesting attempts in progress. DeBruyn also met with citizen scientists and staff of Anacortes City Parks to determine the nesting status of peregrines at Mount Erie, which is a popular rock climbing area in Skagit County. In past years, falcon nesting efforts have lead to partial closures at this site. However, this year it appears that the nesting effort has, so at this point Parks personnel have not instated a closure.

District Biologist Milner and Assistant District Biologist Cyra visited one of the three federal survey sites in the district. A pair was observed on an earlier visit, and on this visit an incubation switch was observed thus confirming the location of the nesting ledge. No young were seen or heard.

An adult peregrine attending one of several active nest sites along the coast of Skagit County.

Pelagic Cormorant Breeding Location Surveys: District Biologist Milner and Assistant District Biologist Cyra performed an early season breeding location survey for Pelagic Cormorants. These cliff nesting cormorants have not been regularly noted at traditional breeding locations while performing other surveys. This survey is a start at updating known breeding locations, documenting abandonment of historical sites, and locating new colonies. One new location was found, one historic site had no birds while birds were present at another site. One suspected new colony was not found to be occupied. In addition to cliffs, Pelagic Cormorants are known to use navigational buoys and appropriate markers were checked. A survey of northern locations will be performed in the near future.

Pelagic Cormorants



Pelagic Cormorants using navigational buoys.

Bald Eagle Nest Documentation and management assistance to USFWS: Biologist Anderson was contacted about a Kent area eagle nest, its activity and status, along the Green River. City of Kent is to be removing the sand bags and other items that are there to shore-up the river in event of flooding. This work is directly below the active nest. USFWS is working with Kent regarding permits and relying on WDFW for nest status. While there, Anderson observed both the male and female eagles. Female on nest, feeding two chicks. Anderson met the mayor of Kent, Suzette Cook, while observing the nest. She was out there for another purpose and saw Anderson and citizens observing the nest. She stopped by and looked through Anderson's optics at the nest, her first observation of eagles on nest with chicks. Everyone was excited for the eagles.

Biologist DeBruyn assisted USFWS staff in accessing and assessing the impact of a proposed timber harvest on a bald eagle roost in northern Whatcom County. Biologist DeBruyn documented a new eagle nest in Skagit County.

More information at the WDFW Bald Eagle Management Website:

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

Common Loon Monitoring: Biologist Anderson met Seattle Public Utilities Wildlife Biologist for Cedar River Watershed to examine loon activity status and potential daytime trapping areas on the Chester Morse and Tolt Reservoirs. Two pairs were observed on the Chester/Masonry Pool. A pair was observed on the Tolt. Anderson, SPU Bio for Cedar/Tolt, and loon research biologists with Biodiversity Research Institute will be making efforts to capture, band and take biological samples of area loons at all King County sites this week. Anderson also discussed voluntary restriction of float plane training and touch-downs at Calligan Lake, during the loon breeding season, with Kenmore Air staff. More information on WDFW Common Loon management can be found here: http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/loons/

One of the Common Loons that Biologist Anderson hopes to capture and band this coming week.

An occupied mountain beaver den in Seattle's Kiwanis Ravine.

Great Blue Heron Monitoring: Anderson met with city of Auburn Environmental Planning staff to document a new heron colony (at least 8 active nests) at the new Auburn Environmental Park. The birds are nesting on an island out in the pond in this park.

More information on WDFW Priority Habitats and Species (such as Great Blue Heron Colonies, Pileated Woodpecker Nests, and many other occurrences) can be found here:

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

Wildlife Areas

Nooksack Unit: Manager Kessler coordinated with Dept of Ecology workers installing a temporary PH Monitor in the Nooksack River on our Nooksack unit. There was a recent fish kill in the Nooksack river, and when checked the PH was measured at a very low level. The PH will be monitored for a month to see if the low readings repeat.

Skagit Agriculture Program: Manager Rotton met with Contract Farmer Chris Boling to discuss progress on Samish Unit field preparations and to coordinate the next steps for planting the site in the next few weeks. Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) Greg Meis and Habitat Technician (HT) Curran Cosgrove sprayed additional 25 acres at the 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 and Samish Units. HT Cosgrove and NRS Meis continued disking priority areas on the Island Unit, field conditions have been drying with the warm windy weather in the area. Weather conditions predicted for the early next week are not ideal for the Island farming program

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

Wildlife Management

North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt: Biologist Roozen and Technician Otto drove around on logging roads to document bear damage, clear roadways, and interact with hunters, enforcement, and timber company personnel.

WDFW Biologists continue to observe trees that have been peeled by black bear on state and privately owned lands managed within the North Skagit spring bear hunt unit.

2012 Mountain Goat Survey Funding: The National Park Service has pledged funding support for the 2012 Mount Baker area mountain goat surveys in District 14. Biologist Danilson worked with personnel from North Cascades National Park and the WDFW Finance Department to develop an agreement for this funding.

WDFW Outreach and Bird Presentation at University of Washington Experimental Education Unit: Biologist Anderson conducted two presentation/classes with preschool age children that attend the Experimental Education Unit Haring School blended program at University of Washington. The special needs children are in a combined class (about 20 children per class) that has both children with various disabilities (Autism, Down's syndrome, etc.) as well as children without special needs.

The program involves teaching units that work to develop cognitive, motor, communication, and social interaction skills by means of educational and therapeutic interventions most appropriate for each child. The children have been working on a nature/bird unit for the past week.

Anderson was invited to bring wildlife specimens in and discuss both birds and other flying animals (i.e. bats). The children then went outside and collected "nest material" (downed leaves, sticks, etc.) from the enclosed courtyard at the facility and took this inside, in teams, to then "build a bird nest". Both classes went great and the collaboration between UW research teams, EEU instructors, and WDFW was very well accepted and beneficial to the children in their current nature study unit.

More information regarding the UW Experimental Education Unit Haring Center for Applied Research and Training in Education can be found here:

http://www.haringcenter.washington.edu/eeu/about

Wildlife Areas

Whatcom Wildlife Area: A biology class from Central Washington University visited the Tennant Lake and Nooksack Units to check out the wetlands and salmon restoration projects. Other students visited to survey insects.

Crescent Lake Trail Project: Manager Paulson mowed most of the trails in the maple forest on this unit. Trails were overgrown with blackberry, stinging nettle, and reed canary grass. Mowing and clearing the trails is the first step of the project. The next steps would be sign and map the trails.

Private Lands/Wildlife Access

Quality Hunt Sites Reservation System Planning Committee: Biologist Roozen travelled to Olympia to attend a planning meeting for a new online system dedicated to private lands access online reservation system, and various methods to manage that access and make it available to the public.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Biologist Roozen and technician Otto spoke to several partner landowners about their continued enrollment in the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program, and introduced them to the idea of multiple year contracts. Many landowners were well receiving of the idea, while others valued the year to year commitment to the program. Roozen and Otto

introduced the Program to several new landowners throughout the Region. The information was well-received, and interest remained high. Biologist Roozen also continued to work. Roozen spoke with growers to arrange for ground preparation, and contract planters to schedule planting time for waterfowl food plots ON WDFW owned lands in Skagit County. These food plots will be on sites managed in the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program.

A tractor preparing a food plot on WDFW lands managed in the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program in Skagit County.

Skagit County Pheasant Release Site: Biologist Roozen and Technician Otto toured two potential pheasant release sites. These sites were crossed off the short list of potential sites because of poor habitat quality and the long distances from Interstate 5.

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

Wildlife Areas

Headquarter Unit – Manager Rotton met with Skagit Watershed Council Chair, Shirley Solomon to discuss design and text for new signs to highlight the Wiley Slough Restoration project and inform about Salmon Recovery efforts throughout the region. This sign is a part of a larger project being funded by the Puget Sound Partnership to provide information and locations of salmon recovery projects that have been implemented around the area for people to learn more

about this process and to see completed projects. Manager Rotton edited and forwarded proposal to Regional Wildlife Program Manager, Russell Link for review and consideration.

Fir Island Farms/Hayton Snow Goose Reserve – Manager Rotton talked with Allen Rozema, director of Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland regarding the potential to place a Talking Fields sign on the Reserve. The purpose of the sign would be to talk about the role of agriculture in conservation and the more complex issues related to salmon recovery and habitat restoration projects on existing agricultural land. Manager Rotton will be coordinating with Regional and Olympia Staff to determine if this project is a good match for WDFW.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Several Region 4 Biologists attended recurrent aircraft safety training presented by Scott McCorquadale. This training is required every three years for staff performing operations utilizing fixed-wing or helicopter aircraft.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Streaked Horn Lark Surveys: Biologists Miller and Stephens assisted the Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) (formerly TNC) and USFWS in conducting surveys for larks on dredge material islands in the lower Columbia River. Larks were observed on most islands in the survey and two new locations were verified on Sand Island near St Helens, OR and Kalama, WA. CNLM biologist Anderson also met with the Corps of Engineers and Port of Portland staff in the field to discuss disposal sites on Rice, Pillar Rock, and Miller Sands Islands. The sites selected to benefit larks will create a negative impact on nesting geese by depositing material on good goose nesting habitat.

Dark Geese Study: While conducting lark surveys in the vicinity of Miller Sands Island, Biologist Miller was able to hear all six of the radio collared geese that we are following to aid in banding operations of the special group of geese. Unfortunately, one of the female's radio collars was transmitting a mortality pulse on the main island. Biologists will be out on the islands next week to monitor brood age and will attempt to recover the collar then.

Black-tailed Deer Research: Biologists Bergh, Holman, and George, along with Research Scientist Rice followed up on e-mails indicating the trigger of VITs (vaginal implant transmitters) in 3 study deer, which normally signals the birth of a fawn. These does are part of a sample of deer that were captured, satellite collared, and are being monitored as part of a project to determine class specific mortality of black tailed deer. One of the deer was found dead; the cause of death was predation by a mountain lion, and discovered cached in a large slash pile left over from a recent timber harvest. Two of the deer were followed by the biologists only to discover that the VITs had not been expelled, which meant that the deer had not given birth to their fawns just yet. Despite being able to remotely download temperature and activity data from the VITs, the false triggering remains a bit of a mystery. 12 other does are included in the study and will continue to be monitored in District 9 and 10 for upcoming births.

Western Pond Turtles: Biologists Holman, Bergh, and George continued trapping western pond turtles at the Sondino site in Lyle Washington last week. Trapping concluded on Friday, May 18th and 56 traps were removed from 6 ponds with the collaboration of Region 5 Biologists and volunteers. During the trapping period, a total of 378 total captures comprised of 183 individual pond turtles were captured and released. This capture information will be included with other data sets to continue to establish a viable population estimate for the Sondino site. 31 hatchlings were also captured and successfully transported to the Oregon Zoo in Portland, OR and the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle, WA where they will be part of the Head Start program. This program is designed to raise turtles at the zoo until they reach a size where they will have a reduced risk of being predated by certain species, including non native bull frogs, when they are released back into the wild. Thanks to Fish and Wildlife Officer Chamberlin and Woodland Park Zoo Biologist Novak for their assistance with concluding the trapping effort.

In addition, Biologist Anderson assisted USFS biologists with habitat improvement work for nesting western pond turtles at their Skamania County site. Nesting habitat was improved by using brush cutters to remove tall grass on the south facing slope adjacent to one of the primary western pond turtle ponds on USFS lands. Additional habitat work will take place in the early fall after the turtle nesting season.

Peregrine Falcon Survey: Biologist Anderson conducted a follow-up peregrine falcon nesting survey at Beacon Rock State Park as part of the federal population monitoring protocol. The site continues to be active and it appears that the pair is either in the late stages of incubation or early stages of feeding young. Additional surveys will be conducted to determine the outcome of the site as the nesting season progresses.

Wildlife Areas

Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area:

Shillapoo Wildlife Area Pasture Plantings: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hauswald spent much of his time the past two weeks doing pasture replanting work in the South and Vancouver Lake Units. About 30 acres total was sprayed and disked at three sites, and then replanted with a grass/clover and grain mix. The pastures were rehabilitated to enhance the forage for wintering waterfowl and to control unwanted vegetation in the pastures.

Scotch Broom Pulling at St. Helens: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hauswald and volunteers from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation spent Saturday pulling Scotch broom by hand on the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area. The scotch broom was removed to create access trails so that the remaining stand could then be sprayed from trucks and ATVs. In total, about 1,000 feet of access trials were cleared to a width averaging about 6 feet. This created an area of about 3 acres that can now be sprayed and replanted later this year, creating additional elk forage on the Wildlife Area.

Scotch Broom removal with RMEF volunteers.

In addition, Technician Pyzik spent the week working on a test area of removing scotch broom in the Mudflow Unit where scotch broom has taken over about three acres of potential forage area. With the use of a new tool, Pyzik was able to remove about ½ acre of scotch broom while at the same time harrowing the area: a two for one tool.

Klickitat Wildlife Area:

Grazing Permit: Grazing permittee Davenport brought cattle onto the Wildlife Area this week. Manager Van Leuven counted animals as they were unloaded from trucks; the number of animals is less than the permit allows. Manager Van Leuven was able to repair fences around three ponds, the research exclosures, one guzzler, as well as many problem areas in property boundary fences before the cattle arrived. In addition, Manager Van Leuven finished construction of a special gate for hunters to pass through, but not cattle, and installed signs advising visitors to close gates on roads after they drive through.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Snowy Plovers: Biologists Sundstrom and Peterson continued to monitor snowy plover nesting activities at Midway and Leadbetter Beaches. Biologist Sundstrom discovered three new snowy plover nests at Midway Beach (photos below), bringing the total number of active nests to five. Surprisingly, one nest is tentatively dated to hatch on Monday, May 21. The last time a nest at Midway Beach hatched in the month of May was in 2006. Biologist Peterson also continued to observe breeding activity at Leadbetter Beach, but noted 2 snowy plover nests had been abandoned and one was depredated by a Raven.

Taylor's Checkerspot Reintroduction: Biologists Linders, Randolph, Walker and Johnson conducted several more distance sampling surveys at each site this week. Numbers at R50 peaked on the 11th (486), dropping to 246 on the 14th and 211 on the 19th. Numbers at R76 peaked on the 14th at 1558, up from 1045 on the 11th, declining to 447 on the 19th. Counts for the week at Scatter Creek were 6 (13th) and 16 (15th), and 0 (18th). Counts at Glacial Heritage on those same dates were 0, 2, and 0, respectively. Counts at Pacemaker, again for the same dates were 20, 12, and 9, respectively. The very short flight season this year can be attributed to two weeks of hot dry conditions, bounded by a week of cooler than normal rain on either end. What is more difficult to understand is the reversal in the relative plant phenology between JBLM and south Sound sites (Scatter Creek and Glacial Heritage). Sites on JBLM have not dried as quickly on those to the south.

An ill-timed checkerspot emergence was foreshadowed in the photo at left, taken 6 May 2012 on R76, which shows one of the first checkerspots nectaring on Balsamroot that is already half way through its bloom time based on the number of disk flowers already open. The solid dark centers

of Balsamroot flowers at R50 on 19 May 2012 (right) indicate their flowering period is finished; they will wilt in a few days.

Conditions at Scatter Creek, a moist site where plant phenology is often slightly later than on JBLM has completely dried in the past week, with Plantago (larval host) wilting and drying (left) and 85 percent of nectar flowers totally desiccated (right). Leafy green patches are Balsamroot, a key nectar plant which often holds flowers for 3-4 weeks or more.

Dungeness Basin Taylors Checkerspot Survey effort: Bio Ament completed two TCB surveys last week. On May 14th she completed a survey at a designated Clallam County site. The weather was excellent for the survey and a total of 44 TCB's were observed. The numbers have started to decline significantly at the site. Bio Ament did document a new plant that is being used for nectaring at the site (see photos). Dave Hays has determined the plant to be a Valerian spp. Apparently the plant has been used for ovipositioning in B.C. Dave will be coming to Sequim today to collect some specimens. Bio Ament also conducted a TCB survey at another Clallam County historic site on May 17th. She had suitable weather for the survey but no TCB's were observed.

Mazama Pocket Gopher: Biologists Hoenes, Skriletz, Tirhi, and McMillan attended a meeting coordinated by Regional Program Manager Cope to discuss Mazama pocket gopher survey protocols. Surveys are being initiated in an attempt to better understand the overall distribution and habitat characteristics of this species.

Biologist Tirhi and Schmidt have begun District 11 pocket gopher surveys for 2012; Tirhi will cover the east and Schmidt the west District with Biologists Hoenes and Michaelis covering Capitol Forest. Biologist Tirhi began assigned surveys of "atypical" habitat for gopher, including open canopy forest with rich understory of forbs and grass (picture). Surveys consist of walking the area in transect fashion spaced approximately 6 m apart and scanning for presence of mounds either side of transect No gophers were located in surveys of two sites this week.

Open canopy forest in Thurston County on which Mazama pocket gopher surveys are conducted.

Bio Schmidt surveyed Wolf Haven Int. for continued presence of Mazama pocket gophers. The new survey design reduces survey effort by 4 hours. A one-day survey takes place each spring and fall in order to monitor persistence of gopher occupation at this translocation site. Mounding was less evident this spring compared to previous years; however this seems to be the case at other locations, too.

Wildlife Areas

Chinook Unit

Manager Gerchak and assistant manager Gallegos sprayed migratory bird stamp fields at the Chinook Unit. The current phase for management at this unit includes 17 acres. The ground will be tilled to encourage smartweed production. Crew may also plant a portion of this duck stamp project into barley. Recent years of discing activity has resulted in decreasing smart weed production.

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

Wildlife Management

Black-tailed Deer: Biologist Michaelis monitored radio-collared black-tail deer in Capitol Forest that 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.

Wildlife Areas

Lower Dungeness Unit: Manager Guzlas met with Dungeness Beach Association (DBA) board members to discuss access issues associated with the Lower Dungeness Unit. Some additional fencing and signage will be added to the perimeter to discourage trespassing. Manager Guzlas also requested that the DBA follow similar hunting pressure days as is conducted on the wildlife area and the adjacent duck club. Currently DBA members hunt all week long throughout the duration of the waterfowl season. The wildlife area and the duck club only hunt on Wed, Sat, Sun, and holidays. The DBA acknowledged that rest days were important and that they would consider this as an option for the 2012-2013 waterfowl season. WDFW will also include additional signage at the parking area that will discourage "skybusting" and possibly place a limit on shotshells at the site. Imposing shotshell limits was discussed at the Olympic-Willapa Hills Wildlife Area CAG meeting and the Washington Waterfowl Association representative present was very supportive of this action. DBA members also asked if WDFW would consider opening a brant season in the near future at the Dungeness.

Photo showing portions of the Lower Dungeness Lease Agreement Area

GMU 648 Access: Bios Hoenes and Harris looked at the cooperative road closure on Rayonier lands in the Wynoochee GMU. A large amount of area is closed to motor vehicle access thus making it difficult to disperse hunters across the landscape and limiting access for those that have difficulty traveling long distance. It appears that opening a main line to motor vehicle access would have no adverse impacts and create a better hunting experience. This will be discussed in future meetings with landowner staff.


One of the groups of elk seen on trip.

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

Wildlife Management

Volunteer Opportunity: Biologist Sundstrom was contacted by a local college student looking to assist with snowy plover conservation efforts. The volunteer will assist Biologist Sundstrom during survey efforts next week.

Pocket Gopher Training: Bio Schmidt training 6 private consultants on WDFW's Mazama pocket gopher survey protocol for development permit requirements in Pierce and Thurston counties. All 6 were very appreciative and seemed to enjoy themselves.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Wildlife Management

Aircraft Safety Training: Region 6 Biologists Michaelis, Hoenes, Schmidt, McMillan, and Ament attended the Aircraft Safety Training workshop that was directed by Deer and Elk Specialist McCorquodale. The training is mandatory for any WDFW employee that is required to fly in fixed-wing aircraft or helicopters while completing work-related tasks. Specialist McCorquodale did an excellent job and the course offered practical information that will help ensure the safety of WDFW employees who utilize aircraft on a regular basis.