

# Wildlife Program

Week of November 19-25, 2012

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

**Prairie Conservation and Mitigation Planning** – Section Manager Bruce Thompson met with representatives of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Thurston County, and Center for Natural Lands Management to participate in a webinar by Willamette Partnership about mitigation credit methodology. Experiences by Willamette Partnership are being examined for applicability to prairie conservation practices in South Puget Sound.

**Conservation Report Completion** – The Final Performance Report for State Wildlife Grant 2010 Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Study (CWCS) Implementation was completed and submitted to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This report culminates work during September 2010-July 2012 that involved Wildlife Program staff statewide in more than 40 activities regarding species conservation, management, and survey as well as a variety of habitat management and technical consultation actions. These actions involved \$900,000 from the federal State Wildlife Grant program (65%) and Washington Personalized License Plate revenues (35%).

## **REGION 1**

### **Wolf Management**

**District 1:** Biologist Shepherd, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Officer Don Weatherman, Sheriff Kendall Allen and a deputy investigated a potential depredation event near Northport, Washington. The cow was determined to have died from unknown causes by all parties although ravens may have scavenged the carcass. Biologist Shepherd discussed the LeClerc and Lost Creek U.S. Forest Service grazing allotments in the Diamond wolf pack territory with U.S. Forest Service Biologist Mike Borysewicz and Range Technician Chase Bolyard. Biologist Shepherd gave a predator presentation to a wildlife class at Kettle Falls High School and discussed wolves, cougars and grizzly bears. Biologist Shepherd discussed wolf issues with Deep Creek cattlemen Dale Butler and Jerry Francis.



***Fladry was placed around a cow carcass with a remote camera in the territory of the Smackout wolf pack.***

Biologist Shepherd and volunteer Janey Robson placed a camera around a dead cow investigated one to two weeks ago. Biologist Shepherd and volunteer Janey Robson picked up a Remotely Activated Guard (RAG) box deployed on property leased by the Dawson Ranch.



*Rancher Macy Sell points out details to a Stevens County deputy while Stevens County Sheriff Kendal Allen looks on as WDFW Officer Weatherman and Biologist Shepherd look for predator tracks (left). WDFW Officer Weatherman and a Stevens County deputy look for evidence of predator tooth marks on a dead cow (right).*

**District 3:** Private Lands Supervisor McCanna contacted Walla Walla cattleman Tyler Cox and discussed a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) contract for this fiscal year. Tyler agreed to sign the contract if McCanna would present it at the December 12 Walla Walla Cattleman Association meeting. McCanna accepted the invitation and will work with biologist Rasley to have several contracts ready in case others would like to sign at that time.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Deer Hunter Check Stations:** Region 1 biologists and a cadre of volunteers conducted check stations this year at both Washington State Patrol truck scale facilities on Highways 2 and 395 simultaneously during the five check station dates operated in October and November. In total we interviewed 704 hunters who had harvested 128 white-tailed deer and 12 mule deer. We also checked one black bear, one cougar, one bobcat, and a number of forest grouse, ducks and geese.

The table on the next page gives season check station totals on white-tailed deer for 2012 using only the one operational check station per date as correlates with previous years back to 2001. For the most part since 2006, which was the year before two severe winters, the following variables did not decrease in 2012. These include the number of deer hunters, total white-tails inspected, and total white-tail bucks inspected.

*Colville District Deer Hunter Check Stations - White-tailed Deer Harvest Data Only*

<b>YEAR:</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009*</b>	<b>2010**</b>	<b>2011**</b>	<b>2012**</b>	
Number of Check Station Dates Operated:	3	3	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	
Number of Deer Hunters Interviewed at Check Stations	722	727	756	884	913	996	848	784	702	723	408	443	
Total White-tailed Deer Checked at Check Stations	118	116	131	156	167	211	186	88	76	77	66	78	
Total White-tail Bucks from Check Stations	83	76	99	124	129	146	125	65	57	52	47	52	
Yearling Only White-tail Bucks Checked	40	20	45	55	58	64	30	24	12	25	16	8	
Percent Total Yearling White-tail Bucks Checked	48%	26%	45%	44%	45%	44%	24%	37%	21%	48%	34%	15%	
Total Antlerless White-tails Checked (does & fawns)	35	40	32	32	38	65	61	23	19	25	19	26	
White-tail Harvest Success for all Check Stations by Year	16%	16%	17%	18%	18%	21%	22%	11%	11%	11%	16%	18%	
White-tail Bucks Only Check Station Success by Year	11%	10%	13%	14%	14%	15%	15%	8%	8%	7%	12%	12%	
													<i>mean</i>
Mean Number of Hunters per Check Station Date Run	241	242	189	177	152	166	141	131	117	145	82	89	156
Mean Number of all White-tails Checked per Station Date	39	39	33	31	28	35	31	15	13	15	13	16	26
Mean Number White-tail Bucks Checked per Station Date	28	25	25	25	22	24	21	11	10	10	9	10	18
Mean Antlerless White-tails Checked per Station Date	12	13	8	6	6	11	10	4	3	5	4	5	7

\* Youth/Senior/Disabled bag limit of "any" White-tailed Deer (includes antlerless) changed from the entire Modern Firearm Season to October only as of 2009.

\*\* Youth/Senior/Disabled bag limit of "any" White-tailed Deer (includes antlerless) changed from the October only Modern Firearm Season to 4 days only as of 2010.

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

**Private Lands/Access**

**Pheasant Release:** Private Lands Biologist Dawn Davis completed pheasant releases for Walla Walla and Columbia counties with assistance from Natural Resource Worker Jensen, volunteer Duane Wilson, and Pheasants Forever. A total of 1,340 rooster pheasants were released this fall.



*Natural Resource Worker Ian Jensen assists with pheasant releases in Columbia County.*

## **REGION 2**

None

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Taylor Bridge Fire:** Biologist William Moore preformed a half day deer survey on lands associated with the Taylor Bridge Fire. Deer numbers were low with only 45 being observed (28 doe, eight fawns, nine bucks). Deer were observed in the burned areas browsing on grasses while deer in the unburned areas were consuming mostly bitterbrush. All deer observed were in small dispersed groups and appeared in healthy condition, which was expected at this early stage of pre-winter.



*Mule deer feeding near the Taylor Bridge fire perimeter.*

### Wildlife Areas

**Wenas Wildlife Area--  
Durr Road Bridge  
Construction:** WDFW's Engineering construction crew completed the installation of the bridge at the Durr Road crossing of Umtanum Creek (road was reopened November 16). The bridge replaces a ford crossing that received significant public use.



*New bridge installed on Durr Road at former ford crossing of Umtanum Creek.*

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Swan Mortality and Morbidity Project:** Swan Tech Anderson was busy responding to calls regarding sick and dead swans. Anderson collected and processed nine more swans, mostly power line strikes. Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn assisted with responses over the holiday and provided technical support for Anderson.

#### *Summary of Swan Mortalities to Date*

	Skagit	Snohomish	Whatcom	Sumas	TOTAL
Powerline	6		6		12
Pb	3		1		4
Other Trauma*			1		1
Feather					0
TOTAL	9	0	8	0	17

Other Trauma\* - wing fracture

Not included - King County - Two powerline strikes

**DeBay's Slough Waterfowl Survey Protocol:** Biologist Danilson began work on a proposal to evaluate waterfowl use in and around WDFW's DeBay's Slough property near Sedro Woolley. Much of the DeBay's Slough property (and surrounding ownerships) is managed as a swan reserve.

**Heron Management Meeting with city of Kenmore:** Biologist met with planners and council members regarding management of the "Kenmore Park and Ride" heron colony. Topics discussed included habitat enhancements to the local Swamp Creek area, interpretation efforts, general status of colony and general status of heron colonies throughout King County, area municipal development projects, and WDFW assistance in management of all of these ventures.

**Osprey Conflict Reduction permits:** Biologist Anderson has consulted with a number of cell tower management entities regarding cell tower maintenance needs that require WDFW to issue a nest removal permit. Biologist Milner issued four permits to T-Mobile so that they can remove osprey nests outside of the breeding season for repairs to their cell phone towers. These permits are issued when the nest is inactive, during the non-breeding season. Osprey nests cannot be removed or destroyed without a permit from WDFW during this time. When ospreys are active in the nest (bird or eggs in nest), the nest, birds and eggs are protected both under state and federal laws. During the winter season when ospreys are south, e.g. Mexico, WDFW requires a permit under the state Wildlife Interaction Rules to remove the inactive nest. However, these must be a damage or safety situation. Information on the Wildlife Interaction Rules is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/rules/>

**Work on future surveys:** Biologist Milner worked with Everett Navy Base staff to determine the feasibility of having WDFW conduct pika surveys on their lands in Snohomish County. Biologist Milner shared field observations and survey methodology with staff from Alaska Fish and Game, who may be conducting Black Oystercatcher breeding surveys this coming season.

### Wildlife Areas

**Lake Terrell Dam Fish Passage:** The new Lake Terrell dam has had its first success. This week the first coho salmon were seen coming up the Terrell Creek channel, over the new Lake Terrell dam and entering the lake. More than a dozen fish were seen. This is the first time since the 1950s that fish have been able to get into the Lake Terrell system.

**Tennant Lake Wetland Enhancement Project:** Manager Kessler coordinated with Port of Bellingham managers on the Port's wetland enhancement project. Phase 1 is almost complete. The protective wire fence has been installed. One more willow planting project will occur in December, then Phase 1 will be complete. Monitoring will occur starting next year.

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

### Wildlife Management

**North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt:** Biologists Danilson and Roozen met with a Longview Timber Company representative to discuss modifications to the North Skagit spring bear hunt unit. Region 4 personnel are working with private timber company owners to address boundary issues that are confusing for hunters and confounding for WDFW enforcement officers.

**2013 Hunt Recommendations:** Region 4 Biologists Anderson, Milner, Danilson, and Manager Link worked to provide Regional recommendations to Washington Administrative Code (WAC) rules outlining hunts for 2013. Staff discussed appropriate proposed changes with the Enforcement Division and Olympia staff; as well as collaborating management entities such as landowners (e.g. Tacoma Power) and co-management entities (e.g. Muckleshoot Indian Tribe).

**Beaver Conflict Reduction:** Biologist Anderson discussed beaver conflict reduction techniques and recommendations with King County staff. This was largely in response to the recent storm water "blow out" due to beaver damming, near Duvall. WDFW Habitat Staff will be meeting with King County to discuss similar needs in relation to integrating into Hydraulic Project Approval needs. WDFW recommends, whenever possible, beaver management via conflict reduction – this is essentially water and flood management rather than beaver removal. See the Living with Wildlife – Beavers website for more information, available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/beavers.html>

**GMU 485, Green Quality Hunt Follow-Up:** Biologist Anderson visited with Tacoma Power staff regarding the recent quality hunt in the Green River watershed. The hunt went well. Anderson picked up teeth collected from animals that were taken during the hunt. Anderson

discussed the hunt outcome with Muckleshoot Wildlife Biologist Vales, as well as the outcome of the Muckleshoot hunt directly after the Quality Hunt. Both hunts went well and had similar harvest.

**Municipal Backyard Wildlife Effort Assistance:** Biologist Anderson has been involved with assisting city of Mukilteo in their efforts to promote citizen efforts in wildlife habitat enhancements via the “Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary” in collaboration with National Wildlife Federation. Anderson received note that Mukilteo has installed signage recognizing these efforts and outlining partnerships of all involved, including WDFW.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Island, Samish and Leque Island Units:** Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis and Natural Resources Tech Curran Cosgrove checked water and food resource conditions on the sites. Food conditions on the Samish are 80 percent utilized. Sites for new blinds are being identified for development to disburse hunting pressure.

**Pheasant Release:** Final releases were completed on the Skagit sites. There were reports of a closed area sign on the site on Thanksgiving Day that was removed by Wildlife Officer Dave Jones. The Saturday night release on the Bow Hill property was blocked by an extra chain and lock. The review process of the season will begin with compiling all the comments and letter received. A survey for pheasant hunters will be developed to gather feedback from hunters that have used the site. Manager Kessler and volunteers released 540 pheasants for the regular pheasant hunting season on Lake Terrell, Intalco and BP Units. He responded to many requests for information on this last week of the season's pheasant releases.

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

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

**GMU 418 Elk Hunting Access:** Region 4 private lands staff surveyed the GMU for hunter activity, logging operations and unwanted activity. Biologist Roozen arranged access key return for permit holders and met with the last permit holder, granting him access to the GMU. Late muzzleloader season runs for the remainder of the month, with late archery season running all of December.

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Region 4 private land staff continued scheduled surveys of hunt units and attended to unit repairs as needed. Technicians Deyo and Otto made ready and opened the last remaining hunt units in the program.

**Snow Goose Quality Program:** Region 4 private lands staff monitored and noted hunter use in units. Hunter harvest and unit use were low due to both unseasonably warm weather and low snow goose numbers in and around units.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Avian Euthanasia Training:** Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn and Swan Tech Anderson received training from Fish and Wildlife Health Specialist Varney in the use of chemicals to euthanize sick or injured swans. Danilson followed up with Wildlife Veterinarian Mansfield to order drugs and other supplies.



***Biologists DeBruyn and Anderson watch Fish and Wildlife Health Specialist Varney expose a vein in the neck of a Trumpeter Swan.***

**Gateway Pacific Terminal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Scoping:** Biologist Danilson met with Habitat Biologist Williams to discuss the process and timeline for WDFW developing and providing scoping comments for the Gateway Pacific Terminal project proposal as part of the joint National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Headquarters' Unit:** Manager Rotton began final edits on the Skagit Plan update to be completed in the next week.

## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Western Pond Turtle, Beacon Rock Site:** Biologist Anderson conducted a site visit to Beacon Rock State Park to monitor progress of the western pond turtle wetland habitat enhancement project. This project is being funded by the Washington State Department of Transportation as mitigation for Highway 14 realignment work conducted over the past two years. Emergent wetland habitat is being created and native plants are being restored to select uplands as part of the overall project. This work will increase the capacity of this site to provide critical habitat for this state endangered species. This site represents the fourth population of western pond turtles in the Columbia River Gorge.



**Western Pond Turtle Management, Pierce Refuge Site:** Biologists Anderson and Holman collaborated to write a draft proposal for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding study of western pond turtles at Pierce National Wildlife Refuge. USFWS intends to conduct field activities at the Refuge in 2013 that would attempt to ascertain the presence of adult-aged pond turtles and demonstrate reproduction (if any). Pierce Refuge was the site of the first pond turtle re-introduction in the Gorge in 2000. Since that date, 343 western pond turtles associated with the Head-Start program have been released on the Refuge. The oldest animals among these releases are expected to be reproductive as reproduction was documented on the Refuge in 2011 by the identification of a single dead hatchling pond turtle.

**Western Pond Turtle Management, North Bonneville:** Biologist Holman reviewed a Scientific Collection Permit, Memorandum of Understanding, and supporting documents prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The documents represent the initiation of a plan to conduct an inventory of wetland mitigation lands on USACE lands near Bonneville Dam. The mitigation wetlands are adjacent to Pierce Refuge and contain suitable habitat for western pond turtles. USACE proposes to search for pond turtles, enhance habitats to WDFW recommendations, remove invasive turtle species, and generally cooperate with the management of this State Endangered species. In the future, the opportunity to use USACE mitigation lands as a fifth pond turtle site in the Columbia River Gorge is a possibility.

**Western Gray Squirrel:** Biologist Anderson and Van Leuven completed the first series of western gray squirrel hair snag trap surveys on the Klickitat Wildlife Area. Trap condition was checked, hair samples were collected, and data recorded for the remainder of the trap set. This evaluation is being done to test the effectiveness of using three inch versus four inch traps for collecting hair samples in the Klickitat County western gray squirrel population. Hair samples are being used to determine presence/absence and as genetic markers for individual animals in various study areas.



**Black-tailed Deer Research Project:** A fawn mortality search associated with the Region 5 portion of the black-tailed deer research project was conducted. Study does and their associated young are being monitored by a combination of remote (satellite) and field (VHF) methods. The does are located in two study clusters concentrated within the Washougal (568) and Coweeman (550) Game Management Units (GMU). To date, in the Washougal cluster of five remaining does, four fawns remain alive.

The black-tailed deer research project has received recent media coverage. Northwest Sportsman Magazine had a feature article in their November issue, highlighted by an interview with Dr. Cliff Rice who directs the study. Additionally, The Columbian Newspaper included an article highlighting the project in the Outdoors section of the November 14 issue of the paper. Biologist Holman was interviewed for the Columbian article.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt:** The goose hunting season in Management area 2A again resulted in lower than normal numbers of geese checked in at all check stations this week. Technicians have currently identified a total of 416 geese since opening day. Harvest rates were approximately 2.3 geese per hunter. An additional dusky was harvested this week, however all zones remain open for hunting at this time.

As a reminder to all hunters participating in Management area 2A and 2B goose hunts, there is a break in the season from November 27 through December 2. Hunting will resume on Wednesday, December 5. Hunters interested in participating in this season can refer to pages 16, 20 and 21 of the [Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons pamphlet](#) for further details regarding requirements for participation.

**REGION 6**

None