

Wildlife Program

Week of September 3-9, 2012

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Western Pond Turtle – Acting Wildlife Diversity Manager Allen attended a workshop on shell rot in Washington’s endangered western pond turtle population. The workshop was held at Woodland Park Zoo and attended by four veterinarians (including WDFW veterinarian Kristin Mansfield, two from Woodland Park Zoo, and one from private practice), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologists from Regions 5 and 6, animal care and conservation biologists from Woodland Park and Oregon zoos. The purpose of the workshop was to initiate a discussion of shell rot in the western pond turtle population, and decide next steps in addressing the topic. This workshop was a prelude to a Western Pond Turtle Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA) Workshop that will be held in November. The workshop will be facilitated and assisted by International Union for Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN) Conservation Breeding Specialist Group. Health of the population (including shell rot) will be a component of the PHVA. Especially important at the PHVA Workshop will be to discuss shell rot’s role or potential role to affect population recovery goals and long-term persistence of the species in Washington State.

The purpose of the workshop was to: 1) Bring together key recovery team veterinarians, wildlife managers, field biologists and zoo biologists, in order to begin crafting an integrated outlook, assessment and response to observed shell rot; 2) review etiology and possible treatment methods for shell rot in captive and free-ranging Western pond turtles; 3) summarize field observations and case histories of shell rot in Puget Sound and the Columbia Gorge; 4) form a consensus of the “level of concern”; and 5) determine next steps in formulating a response, including actions to prepare for a shell rot discussion at the PHVA Workshop.

The source/cause of the shell rot is undetermined. Some of the next steps include an analysis of current data on the detections of shell rot in the population (Allen, Mansfield and Shannon Knapp), develop standardized protocols and training for biologists for detections in the field (veterinarians), protocols for when to treat animals, types of treatment and when to euthanize, and continued analysis of tissues to try to determine causes.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1

Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd and Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker completed a District 1 / Region 1 Wolf Monitoring update for Director Phil Anderson to present to the Fish and Wildlife Commission.

Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd and Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker, along with Wildlife Officers Sergeant Mike Charron and Pam Taylor, Stevens County Sheriff Kendle Allen and Sergeant Andy Harbolt, and Stevens County Commissioner Don Dashiell responded to a report from the Diamond M Ranch on September 5, 2012 of two dead Hereford calves in the Wedge. The two calves were both examined and photographed, and reports were prepared and submitted.

Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker assisted Wolf Biologist Paul Frame with trapping efforts in the Salmo pack area and retrieved equipment from the Region 1 office for non-lethal hazing of wolves.

Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd and Wolf Technician Tiffany Baker sent general Smackout pack information to range rider Leisa Hill.

District 2

Livestock Injury Update: Biologist Ferguson communicated with and received an email summarizing the DNA hair analysis run by Dr. Pollinger at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). It came back as a coydog – 45 percent coyote and 45 percent dog. Ferguson had been awaiting results of this DNA analysis of hair which was present at the sight of an attack on two horses in the Blanchard area from July. We are in the process of finalizing the report.

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

Wildlife Areas

Wildlife watching at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area: Grouse tracker Thorburn's report from September 1 includes these birding comments: "Passerine migration was hopping at the headquarter yard. A quick walk in the morning yielded a Cassin's vireo and Nashville and orange-crowned warblers. I've noticed that migratory swallows like to forage on the tops of the poplars and was surprised to see that the morning's feeding flock was violet greens. It was sparrows in the evening as I packed up to take off. In addition to immature chipping and Brewer's sparrows, I saw my first-of-season immature white-crowned sparrows. At first there seemed to be one, very interested in the resident song sparrow. Then they seemed to come in, as I saw more and more before I departed. Always a treat, a Lincoln's sparrow was among the flock. The dark-eyed juncos were arriving. The resident willow flycatchers were still feeding a fledgling. It appeared that the four healthy barn swallow nestlings were readying to fledge."

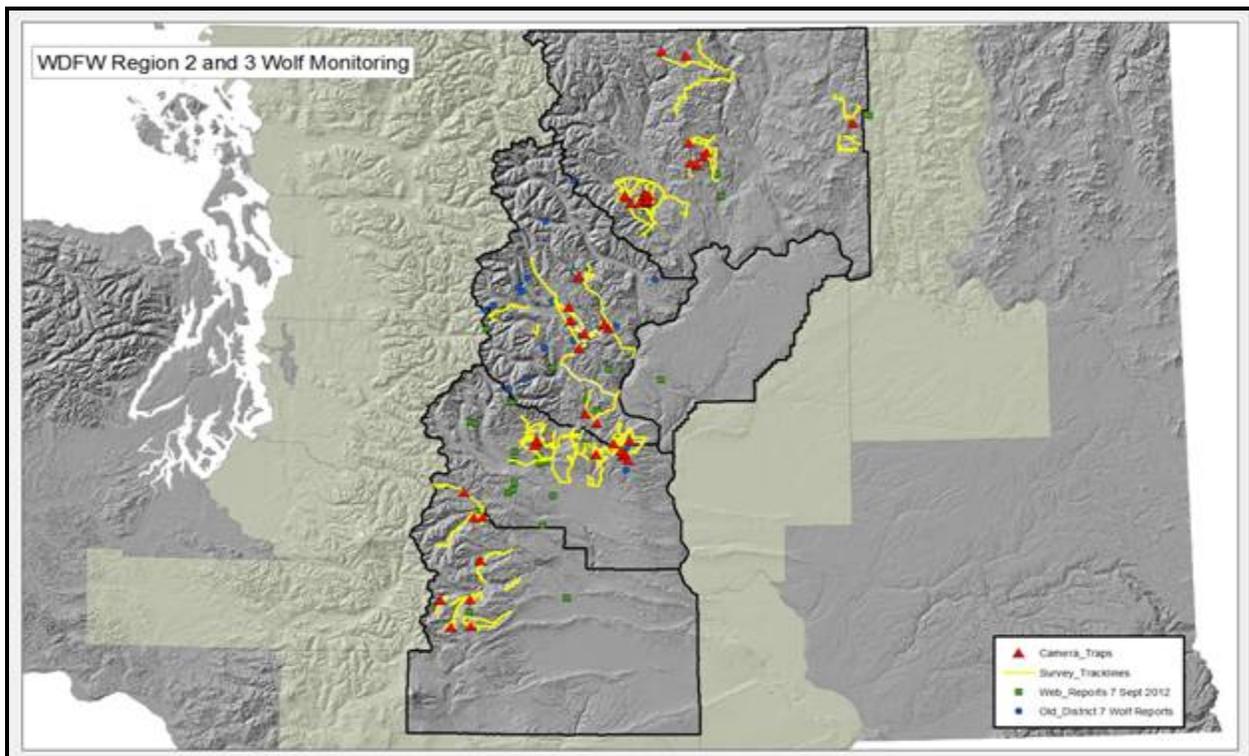
Dr. Thorburn's birding comments from September 4 are as follows: "Migration continued in full swing in the headquarter yard-Nashville and Wilson's warblers, warbling vireo, Pacific-slope flycatcher, red-breasted nuthatch, Lincoln's sparrow, western wood peewee and scads of white-crowned sparrows. Some resident young were also still around-house wren, willow flycatcher, red-tailed hawk, and the barn swallow nestlings so overfilling the nest that they'll be forced to fledge any time."

REGION 2

Wolves

Wolves: Wolf technician Spence focused his activity in Okanogan County last week, following-up reports in the Pasayten Wilderness and documenting activity of the Lookout Pack. Cameras placed within the Lookout Pack's territory resulted in video of two wolves. Technician Spence documented pack activity in several areas during his surveys. He will continue to monitor Lookout pack members over time.

Monitoring in Regions 2 and 3 is being expanded into new areas to follow up on reported sightings. We currently have 17 active camera traps within the Regions. Our newest reporting tool is now online and should be providing more reports as hunter activity increases into the fall season. To date, we have recovered no information that suggests an active pack outside the territories of the Teanaway and Lookout packs.



District Biologists

District 5: Grant / Adams District - Rich Finger / Sara Gregory

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

Columbia Plateau Mule Deer Survey: Biologists Finger and Gregory participated in a conference call to discuss next steps in the Columbia Plateau mule deer survey. The group,

including district biologists from the Spokane, Wenatchee, and Tri-Cities districts, decided to transition into a second phase of the survey by targeting a new migratory mule deer population that migrates along the Crab Creek drainage between Stratford and the Medical Lake/Davenport area. Biologist Gregory will develop survey quads for the Ephrata District and share them with the Spokane district to finalize the survey area boundary. This survey is planned to occur during the first week of December.

Winchester Regulated Access Area: With assistance from Becker, Carpenter, and Harmon, Biologist Finger led the construction of experimental hunting blinds for the Winchester Regulated Access Area. The area provides little cover for hunters and it is hoped that the blinds will increase hunter harvest. The blinds were constructed using materials (t-posts and woven wire) that have been stockpiled for many years. The Washington Waterfowl Association will likely be used to maintain blinds in the future. If successful, the blinds may also be installed at the Frenchmen Regulated Access Area where hiding cover is also limited.

District 6: Okanogan District - Scott Fitkin / Jeff Heinlen

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

North Cascades Wolverine Research Project: Biologist Heinlen and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) staff returned to one of only two verified wolverine natal den sites in Washington to document the remote, high-elevation site in snow-free conditions. The den turned out to be located in a large log pile created by a recent avalanche. We took site measurements, photos, and collected several scats, which through genetic analysis, will hopefully determine if any kits were produced. Cameras placed at the den earlier in the season showed the resident female and male wolverine, plus porcupine and marten. Sub-alpine and alpine habitats that hold late season snow and maintain cold temperatures are critical for wolverine denning and food caching behavior.



The den structure (left) with a close-up view (right).



Wolverine den in avalanche chute.

North Cascade Grizzly Bear Hair-Snag Surveys: Biologist Fitkin and other project staff deployed 10 hair-snag sites with cameras in the northwest portion of the Pasayten Wilderness. This effort accessed some of the most remote and promising bear habitat in the ecosystem. Sites will be revisited and data collected at the end of the month. The objective of this project is to collect data on grizzly status/distribution in the North Cascades Ecosystem. Results could influence distinct population segment status and potential future recovery efforts.

White-tailed Ptarmigan Management: Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Heinlen and Research Scientist Schroeder spent time in the eastern Pasayten Wilderness surveying for and banding white-tailed Ptarmigan. We successfully captured eight Ptarmigan with one being a recaptured bird banded in 2010. Of these eight, two broods were found with a total of three chicks between them showing successful reproduction in the area. Scattered feathers were also collected for future DNA study. The White-tailed Ptarmigan is the smallest grouse species in Washington State and is currently listed as a game bird with a closed season. A petition to list this species in Washington State was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 2012. This banding information will contribute to a better understanding of White-tailed Ptarmigan in the state and assist in the USFWS Petition review. Also, congratulations to Research Scientist Schroeder for banding his 100th White-tailed Ptarmigan on this trip.



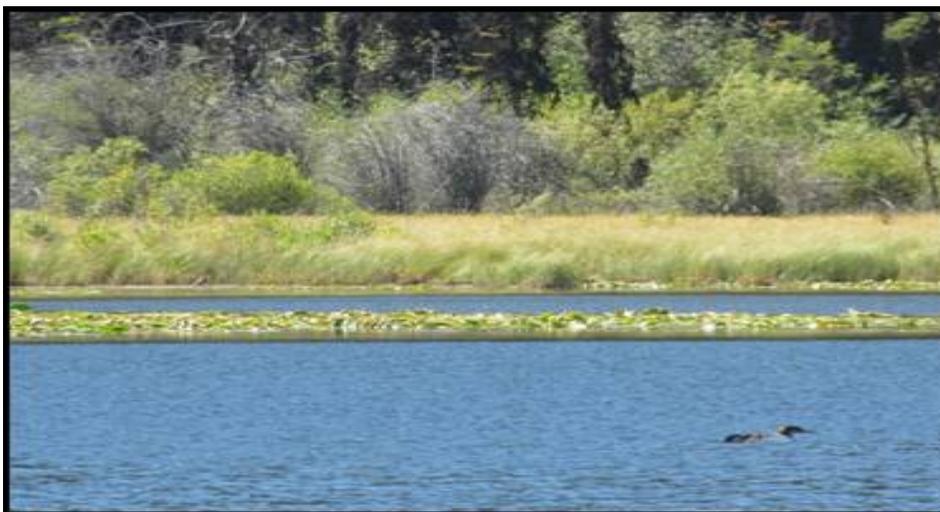
Female white-tailed ptarmigan.

Bighorn Sheep Management: Both Biologist Heinlen and Schroeder were surprised to see pack goats come up to us while capturing White-tailed Ptarmigan high on a mountain in the eastern Pasayten. Seven hikers with two dogs and five pack goats were enjoying the wilderness experience. Biologist Heinlen has since requested from the US Forest Service the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and current policies concerning pack goat and sheep use on trails going through core Bighorn sheep habitat in the Okanogan. Of concern are the many miles of trail going through core Bighorn sheep habitat on Mt. Hull and the potential of disease transmission from pack goats and sheep. The US Forest Service is currently looking into it.



Pack goats in the eastern Pasayten Wilderness.

Common Loon Management: Biologist Heinlen conducted a late season survey of Crawfish Lake finding two adult Common Loons with one chick. This is the first year a Common Loon chick has been documented on this lake. District 6 now has four lakes that have successfully produced loon chicks within the last 10 years. Volunteers also conducted a survey of Common Loons on Lost Lake finding two adults with one chick. Lost Lake is one of the most productive loon nesting lakes in the state.



Lost Lake Common Loon chick.

Species Recovery

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery - Penny Becker / Chad Eidson

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Husbandry of Large Enclosures: Research Scientist Becker and Biologist Eidson spent time on Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area providing supplemental feed to the pygmy rabbits in the large enclosures and nursery area. In the past two to three weeks there has been a pulse of mortality in the large enclosures with five aerial predation/scavenging events and eight individuals dying without predation. The intact carcasses are emaciated, but otherwise untouched. Lab results are pending to determine the cause of these deaths. In efforts to mitigate factors that may be contributing to these mortalities, Becker and Edison added additional irrigation to the larger enclosure.

Coordination for spring 2013 Translocations: Becker spent time corresponding with Wyoming Game and Fish and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) about translocating rabbits from their states in February/March of next year. So far both states are supportive of our request. Becker is working on paperwork for the ODFW permit and the Wyoming Commission will hear our request at their meeting in November.

Wildlife Areas

Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex – Greg Fitzgerald / Brian Cole / Vacant

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

Fall Aerial Herbicide Application: Wildlife Area Manager Greg Fitzgerald and Assistant Brian Cole spent a great deal of this week preparing for the fall aerial herbicide application scheduled for the week of September 10. The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requires signs to be posted at the access sites of waters scheduled to be treated; Greg printed the signs and spent two days posting them. Brian took delivery of the herbicides, got support pickups ready and supplied, made contact with the agencies involved and the contract applicator, and reviewed aerial photos of the application sites.

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

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Weed Control: Clark and Mike continue spot spraying and hand pulling scattered Musk Thistle on the Chesaw unit.

Similkameen Irrigation: Scotch Creek borrowed from the Methow complex a 40 hp centrifugal pump and successfully installed the pump onto the north well on the new Similkameen – Chopaka wildlife area. We are attempting to find a solution to starting irrigation from this well that has had a bad turbine pump in it. Met with Vassar Electric to wire the

installation but it is unclear what voltage the pump is wired, causing a halt until the wiring can be confirmed. Thanks to the staff at the Methow for the help and loan of this pump

Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Complex - Dale Swedberg / Justin Haug

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE



Sinlahekin Weed Control Efforts where cyphocleonus achates diffuse knapweed root boring weevils.

Biocontrol – Assistant manager Haug assisted Integrated Weed Control Project Technician Belinda Paterno of the Washington State University Puyallup Research and Extension Center with five releases of diffuse knapweed root weevil *Cyphocleonus achates* (see picture above). Releases were made throughout the valley in groups of 50 weevils each. Belinda also re-took data along a 20-meter transect near Blue Lake to determine effects of recent bio-control releases on diffuse knapweed.

Experimental Shrub gone native - Assistant manager Haug sprayed approximately 500 bladder senna (*Colutea arborescens*) between Blue Lake and Headquarters. The shrub, one of many planted in a field near Headquarters in an experimental effort to increase browse for deer in the 1950s, has gone native and spread throughout the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Of note: *Colutea arborescens* is going on the state noxious weed monitor list in Klickitat County.

Wildlife Observation – Clark’s nutcracker attacking long-eared myotis flying at mid-day: During crew orientation a bat was observed about 1 p.m. flying through a forested area near where the crew was standing about one mile north of Fish Lake. What appeared to be a long-eared myotis bat was pointed out by Manager Swedberg. The bat continued its flight away from the location of the crew. As the crew watched the bat, they saw a Clark’s nutcracker attack the bat disrupting its flight. The bat appeared to recover and tried to continue flying on, but was again attacked by the nutcracker. After being hit several times the bat tried to retreat to a tree, but was intercepted by the nutcracker and carried to the tree where the nutcracker appeared to repeatedly bite the bat with its bill. Within a minute the nutcracker apparently had the bat either

subdued or dead, folded up into a small bundle in its bill, and flew to a nearby tree where it landed momentarily. The nutcracker then flew on to another tree a distance from the crew making it very difficult to make any further observations. After this observation it is quite apparent bats are extremely vulnerable to avian predation during daylight hours. Perhaps this is why they are seldom seen in the daylight.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

A fire burned approximately 700 acres on the Quilomene Wildlife Area in Parke Creek on September 6. Origin was in the pines area up Little Parke Creek and burned down to the private lands near Parke Creek Road. Technician Brandon Zahn responded early and pulled all but one of the solar chargers on the electric fences, although the solar charger at the Little Parke pond was likely burned in the fire. Wildlife Area Manager Shana Winegart requested an extension of the existing Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) Parke Creek Restoration grant that was about to expire, and called around to find native seed for restoration efforts this fall. The cause of the fire is currently under investigation.



Water drop and engine crew working on the Parke Creek Fire

Wenas Lake Fire: On August 31, at 12:30 p.m., a fire was started behind a house along North Wenas Road, just northeast of Wenas Lake. Manager Confer Morris called it in and was first on scene (fire started just across the road from her residence). Selah Fire responded, since the fire started within their district, as did Department of Natural Resources (DNR), since the fire quickly burned off of the private land through the elk fence and into Hessler Flat on the Wenas Wildlife Area. Manager Confer Morris functioned as the incident commander (IC) for the state for the first hour and a half until DNR was able to get an IC to the scene.

Shifting winds and topography pushed the fire north, west and east from its origin. Thirty homes were threatened, but only one house and six outbuildings were lost. The fire also burned through three to four miles of elk fence. Estimated acreage is 1,800, with over half of those acres on the wildlife area. The fire burned the Hessler Flats area the first day and the Kelley Hollow drainage the second day. The entrance to Hessler Flats burned hot, taking out the gate and a quarter to a half mile of elk fence.

Resources on scene included three rotors, two tankers (which made multiple retardant drops), four dozers, and dozens of DNR and Forest Service engines, as well as all the county fire resources. Wenas staff provided tender support and logistical support for the fire. Cause of the fire is still under investigation.



Kelley Hollow (above) and the Kelley Hollow Area Elk Fence (below).





Hessler Gate remains.

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

Private Lands/Access

Taylor Bridge Fire: District Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz took part in a field tour and meeting as part of a Technical Advisory Group organized by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The majority of the 23,000 acre burn was through grass/shrub-steppe and was light. A large portion of the 6294 acres of timber burned fairly hot. Kittitas County is applying for a \$500,000 grant through NRCS to help stabilize soil/slope in the hot burn areas. The NRCS and county would like to helicopter seed with winter wheat. However, there are many small landowners who must sign off on the plan. The larger landowners (DNR, Swauk Creek Ranch) have indicated they are necessarily in favor of seeding with winter wheat. DNR is concerned with the impact wheat might have on tree regeneration, while The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is writing their own plan for Swauk Creek ranch which won't include winter wheat. There is published literature that casts doubt on the effectiveness of stabilizing soil with post fire seeding. TNC will probably be working with both the landowner and NRCS.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Priority Species Management Assistance, Seattle: Biologist Anderson provided assistance and discussed moving forward with proposals to examine wildlife consideration in the draft

Seattle Forest Plan, under public comment and review currently. The goal is to provide uniform wildlife consideration in review and permitting, where appropriate, whenever habitat and wildlife of concern may be affected by a given proposal – be it development or tree removal – and provide options for management of appropriate situations (Do nothing, mitigation, deny permits, timing restrictions, etc.). It is felt this will help Seattle provide uniformity in wildlife consideration within urban areas; where land activities (e.g. development, tree removal) may be handled under separate local code sections and permitting processes. Currently, wildlife consideration only occurs in a land-use situation. It is hoped this will provide a model for other municipalities to consider in regards to urban wildlife management needs, given situation. WDFW, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Department of Planning and Development, and local partners continue to work together to examine these proposals and hopeful implementation.

USFS Bear Hair Snaring Project: Biologist DeBruyn provided logistical support for USFS and Region 2 biologists setting hare snares and cameras for bear and other carnivore surveillance in the Pasayten Wilderness.

Wildlife Areas

Cherry Valley Unit Waterwheel Creek: Wild Fish Conservancy technicians removed all fish that were in the Laterals B, C and D on the Cherry Valley Unit. The technicians were surprised to find Olympic mudminnows. Olympic mudminnows are classified as a state sensitive species found mostly in the southern and western lowlands of the Olympic Peninsula, the Chehalis, lower Deschutes River drainages, and south Puget Sound west of the Nisqually River. Wild Fish Conservancy documented the find and released the fish into Lateral A.



Newly excavated Waterwheel Creek and newly installed bridge abutments on the Cherry Valley Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area.

Lake Terrell Dam Remodeling Project: The work on the Lake Terrell Dam continues with good progress. The one percent base grade in the creek channel has been completed and gravel is being placed on top of the channel. The concrete slabs for the dam weir have been ordered and will be installed this week. Coho and chum salmon and cutthroat trout should benefit from the project. It will open up approximately 3.3 miles of stream habitat in Butler Creek. WDFW is working with the Whatcom Conservation District and WA State Conservation Districts on the project. The project is being funded from a \$75,000 Salmon Enhancement Grant and \$75,000 from neighboring British Petroleum.



The work on the Lake Terrell Dam continues and the project should benefit Coho and chum salmon, and cutthroat trout.

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

Wildlife Management

Western Mallard Model Work: Biologist DeBruyn submitted banding data to department personnel to record it before hunting begins. DeBruyn trapped and banded 100 mallards and three wood ducks during the course of the trapping. The primary objective of this project is to provide data on survival for long-term population modeling of western mallard populations.

Mount Rainier Elk Survey: Biologist Anderson, along with District Biologist Tirhi and Biologist Schmidt, finalized annual survey of Mount Rainier National Park elk. The group had upwards of 60 elk on the west side of Mt. Rainier. Surveys are conducted in a joint effort with National Park and tribal entities.



District Biologist Tirhi and other WDFW Biologists finalized the annual survey of Mount Rainier National Park elk.

WDFW-Woodland Park Zoo-Point Defiance Zoo-Northwest Trek Citizen Amphibian Monitoring Program: Biologist Anderson met at Point Defiance Zoo to discuss the initial pilot effort of the 2011 citizen amphibian egg mass and species occurrence monitoring efforts managed by Northwest Trek, Woodland Park Zoo, and Point Defiance. Biologist Anderson worked with Woodland Park Zoo, a University of Washington Master's student, Biologist Tirhi, and Research Scientist Hayes, as well as various staff with King County Department of Natural Resources to implement this effort in urban King County. The group is examining a follow-up questionnaire of what went well for volunteers and what needs improvement so that future efforts can incorporate any items that were not caught internally. Overall, the effort has been a huge success, with 60 participants in the King County effort alone. This portion of the project was coordinated with Woodland Park Zoo education staff. Planning for next season is in progress, including updating educational materials, examining data management needs, and providing for equipment/references where appropriate and necessary.

Private Lands/Access

Whidbey Deer Hunting: Biologist Roozen met with Whidbey Island private lands access partners to review and sign access agreements. Additionally, Roozen posted private property

open for the public with signage to direct access. WDFW will work with Whidbey Camano Land Trust to facilitate access for additional acreage, but for now, Trillium Woods on south Whidbey will be open for select days during all three (weapon type) hunting seasons in 2012.

2012 Westside Pheasant Release (New) Location: WDFW private lands and wildlife area staff essentially completed a trail system for both pheasant release access as well as hunter movement throughout the property. Additionally, staff continued preparations for the parking area, as well as posting hunting unit boundaries and safety zones.

Wildlife Areas

Crescent Lake Unit Trail Project: Manager Paulson mowed blackberry and other brush in the big leaf maple forest on the Crescent Lake Unit. Manager Paulson also scraped large areas of blackberries and dense woody debris.

Pheasant Release: Manager Kessler held the Pheasant Release Volunteer coordination meeting. It was well attended with six new volunteers this year. The pheasant release program was explained and the schedule for releases filled out. Manager Kessler mowed hunting paths in fields at the Lake Terrell unit.

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

Wildlife Management

Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary: Biologist Anderson worked on data summaries for various WDFW partners. Anderson also reviewed the past year of joint National Wildlife Sanctuary applicants, at the request of National Wildlife Federation (NWF), and provided information on discrepancies found in the NWF queries. The hope is the new system NWF is using will start to capture these data gaps. Anderson also assisted Woodland Park Zoo staff with Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary data management needs. Anderson also worked with WDFW staff to update the WDFW Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary website with the most current National Wildlife Federation-Northwest Zoo and Aquarium-WDFW joint backyard application for citizens interested in certification with all entities. This joint certification increased in price from \$20 to \$25.

Wildlife Areas

Whatcom Wildlife Area: Manager Kessler attended the monthly Washington Waterfowl Association meeting. The Association scheduled the building of a new handicapped accessible hunting/wildlife viewing blind on the Lake Terrell Unit after the waterfowl season is over.

Wiley Slough: Manager Belinda Rotton and Capital Asset Management Program Environmental Engineer Ray Berg met with a contract engineering firm and Dike District 22 Commissioner John Wolden to discuss the proposed pump station to be built on Wiley Slough. Manager Rotton and Engineer Berg discussed aspects of the dredging and berm project as well.

The contract engineer will prepare the 30 percent design drawings for the pump station needed to initiate the permitting process.

Manager Rotton attended a Puget Sound Partnership Technical Team meeting to provide an update on the Wiley Slough working group process. The Technical team was interested in the adaptive management and aspects of drainage improvement planning.

Leque Island Unit: Manager Rotton monitored the staff gages on Leque Island to provide data for the water quality monitoring project. Peter Schwartzman from the Pacific Groundwater Group was gathering additional data from the monitoring wells that were to be downloaded this week.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtles: Biologist Anderson attended a meeting at the Woodland Park Zoo (WPZ) in Seattle to discuss western pond turtle management in Washington. Included in the discussion was the upcoming Population and Habitat Viability Assessment Workshop sponsored by the WPZ. The goal of this workshop will be to assess ecological parameters, evaluate management alternatives, and to make recommendations for future conservation objectives for this species. Included in this analysis will be discussion and evaluation of current disease issues potentially impacting the western pond turtle population.

Western Pond Turtle Management: Biologist Holman compiled the amount of aquatic and terrestrial habitats available for western pond turtles at each of the four sites in the Columbia River Gorge. This exercise was undertaken as part of the Population Viability Assessment (PVA) process that has been undertaken primarily by the Woodland Park Zoo. The assessment takes many factors into account when considering a species' likelihood of perpetuating into the future. These include a species' fundamental biology (i.e. age of reproduction, lifespan, number of offspring, etc.), the species' habitat needs, genetic factors, current populations and distributions, etc. Thanks to the Woodland Park Zoo for acquiring grant money to pursue this aspect of western pond turtle management.

Mazama pocket gopher surveys: Biologists George and Bergh completed the second wave of Mazama pocket gopher random plot surveys this week. This multi-component study is being conducted with the intention of updating distribution descriptions and illustrating relative occurrence of gophers among broad habitat associations. This round of surveys was conducted on private land and did not result in any detection of Mazama pocket gophers. Biologist Bergh also surveyed a site in the upper Elochoman drainage that had a historic record of pocket gophers. The site was at 2,000ft elevation and had rocky clay soil and steep slopes. An investigation of all early seral stage areas returned no evidence of gophers.

Black-tailed Deer Research Project: Biologists George and Holman checked on the status of all deer in the Washougal cluster of the deer associated with the Black-tailed deer research project. An additional mortality was documented among the remaining fawns. To date, four of 11 captured fawns from the 2012 effort remain alive. Predators have accounted for six of the seven fawn mortalities. Additionally, the on-board GPS data was downloaded from the collars of all adult does remaining in the study and this information has been passed along to Olympia Research Staff.

Black-tailed deer spotlight survey: Biologists Miller and Bergh conducted an evening spotlight survey for black-tailed deer in the Coweeman Game Management Unit (GMU). Very few deer were seen due to the warm weather and wind. Spotlight surveys will be attempted next week after the change in weather that is forecasted for Sunday and Monday. These surveys provide deer herd composition information, which is difficult to collect in densely forested southwest Washington.

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Sondino Unit: Most of the small trees removed to preserve the existing mature oak forest as part of the Oak Habitat Retention project were disposed of by chipping last March. However, some of the slash was too far from Balch Road, where the chipper was placed, to make chipping feasible. That material was piled for burning this winter. This week, Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven joined Biologist George in fencing seven slash piles with poultry wire to prevent Western Pond Turtles from crawling underneath to hibernate. Plastic was secured over the piles to keep them dry enough to burn during winter weather.



Slash piles.

The annual acorn production survey was completed this week by Biologist Flick, of the Columbia Gorge Scenic Area. Also, Manager Van Leuven met with volunteer Hulbert to select sites to place wood duck nest boxes. Up to 10 boxes may be placed at the various ponds on the Sondino Unit. These will be monitored annually to verify that they are being used.

Fisher Hill Unit: On September 2, a fire was ignited near the Fisher Hill Road and burned 128 acres before fire crews brought it under control. Less than one acre of the burned area was on WDFW managed land. This area burned almost exactly two years ago and Department of Natural Resources staff who responded to this fire indicated that fuels were light and that the scattered oak groves within the burned area probably did not suffer significant additional losses. Crews reported that numerous people, mostly from the Portland area, were recreating along the Klickitat River downstream of the fire. Despite the signs and wildfire activity upstream, someone had built a campfire in a cave, which they were directed to put out.

Wheat Harvest on the Soda Springs Unit: The wheat fields at the south end of the Soda Springs Unit were harvested in mid-August (see attached photo, Field 2.JPG). The farmer reported that the yield was good this year. Per the lease agreement, he will be planting half of the wheat fields to alfalfa this fall.



Wheat Harvest occurs on the Soda Springs Unit.

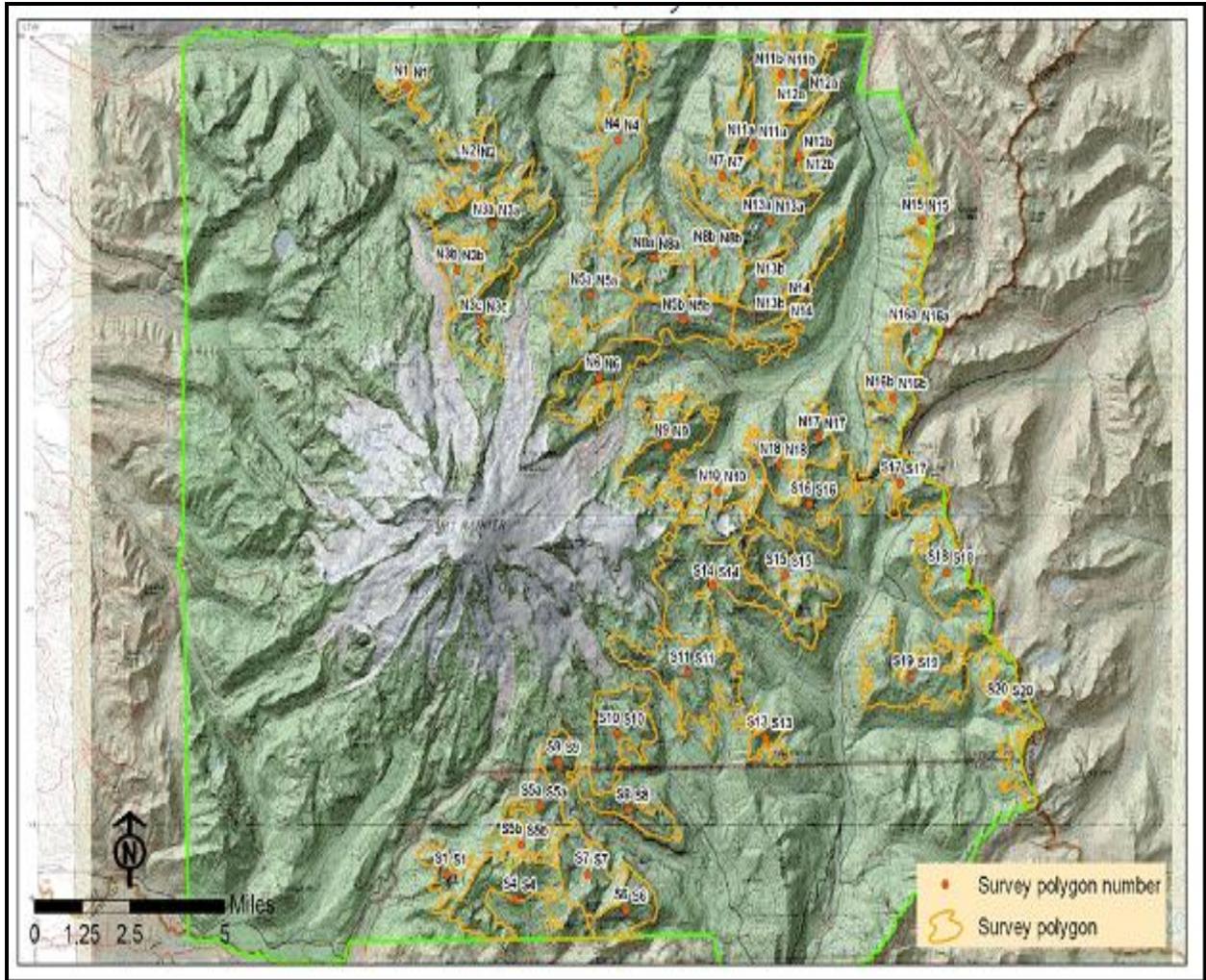
REGION 6

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

Wildlife Management

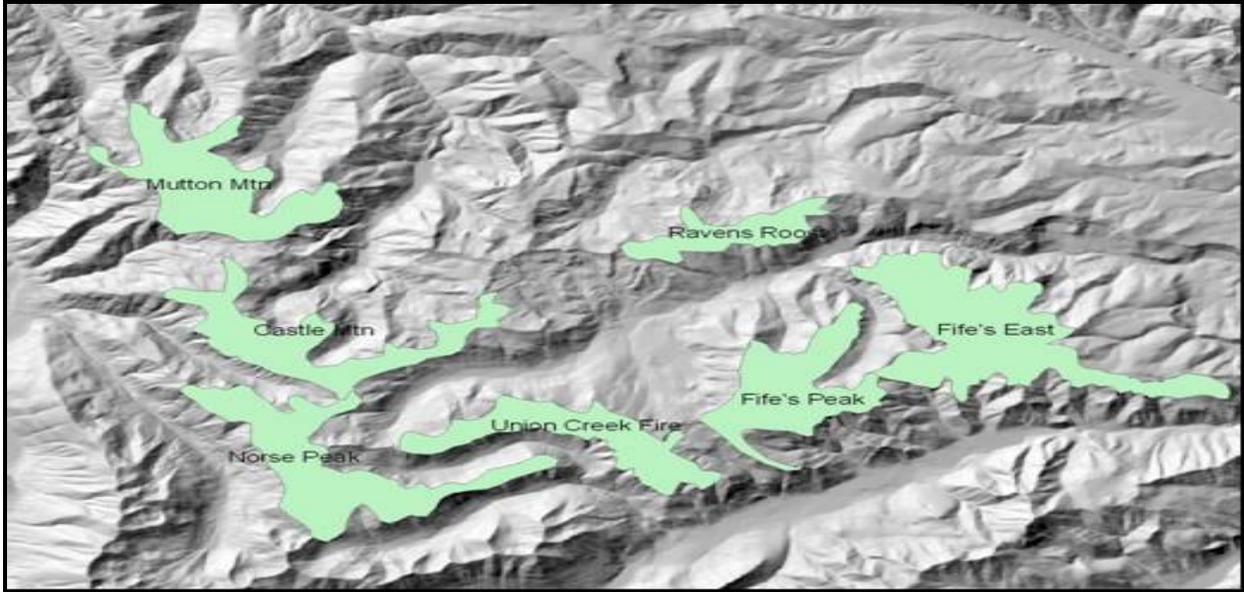
North Rainier Elk Surveys: Biologists Tirhi, Schmidt, and Anderson conducted on half of the North Rainier Elk Survey for 2012 counting only five bulls (two mature, three sub adult) in 2.9

hours of flight time. This annual survey is a coordinated effort of the Mount Rainier National Park, WDFW, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Puyallup Indian Tribe, and Hancock Timber Resources covering survey units in both the northern and southern elk herds. In 2012, Muckleshoot and WDFW collectively conducted one full survey (= one replicate) of North Herd units while WDFW, National Park Service (NPS), and Puyallup Tribe collectively conducted two full surveys (= two replicates) of South Herd units. Survey conditions for the North Herd units were good for the eastern half, but low clouds in the western half of the survey units did not allow for completion of the survey and the need to reschedule until this week.



North Rainier (N) and South Rainier (S) Elk Herd survey units.

Mountain Goat Surveys: Biologist Tirhi and Moore conducted the coordination with Muckleshoot Indian Tribe with WDFW surveying Fife’s East, Fife’s Peak, Union Creek Fire, Norse Peak, Ravens Roost, and Castle Mountain, with Muckleshoot surveying Crystal Mountain, Gold Hill, and Mutton Mountain. The intent of the coordinated flights is to attempt to eliminate double count of goats crossing the Cascade Crest, inventory more area collectively, and maintain cooperation on wildlife management between the state and tribe. WDFW counted 113 total goats while Muckleshoot counted 12 goats for a total of 127 in the combined units. Biologists Moore and Lopushinsky also surveyed Bumping River and Blazed Ridge on subsequent days.



Region 6/3 combined survey units for Mountain Goats (Naches Pass only).

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl hunting: Biologist Skriletz worked with the new Kitsap County chapter of Washington Waterfowl Association and the Bremerton Ducks Unlimited chapter to repair the existing blinds and build two new ones at Lynch Cove on Hood Canal. He also worked on expanding contracts for the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program in District 15. In all, five landowner agreements were reached for waterfowl and pheasant hunting opportunities at 13 sites.



Members of the newly formed Kitsap Chapter of Washington Waterfowl Association build a waterfowl blind at Lynch Cove on Hood Canal.