

# Wildlife Program

Week of April 1-7, 2013

## **REGION 1**

### **Wolf Activities**

**District 1:** Conflict Specialist Shepherd and Private Lands Access Technician Bendixen attempted to haze wolves from the Smackout pack which were heard with a telemetry receiver while removing a cougar trap. The trap was taken down after several nights of unsuccessful deployment at the sight of a cougar depredation of two calves. Conflict Specialist Shepherd and a Conservation Northwest employee discussed range riding, carcass removal, and additional help hazing wolves in the Smackout/Spirit Junction area. Conflict Specialist Shepherd and Wildlife Conflict Section Lead Simek discussed all aspects of the range rider program, wolf management, carcass removal, and equipment needs in a conference call. Conflict Specialist Shepherd mapped Smackout wolf locations to monitor the distance between radio-collared wolves and cattle.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Golden Eagle Nesting Survey Colville District:** District Wildlife Biologist Dana Base conducted surveys of five Golden Eagle nest territories within District 1 this week and documented nest occupancy at two of these including Moran Meadow (Record #47) and Flat Creek Mouth (Record #407). This week's work represented a small part of a coordinated statewide survey effort being undertaken for nesting Golden Eagles this year. Base had survey assistance from Wildlife Officer Nick Parkert on one day's effort this week.



***Golden Eagle Nest spotted at the Little Vulcan Nest Territory (Record # 488). No evidence of eagle occupancy was found this season.***

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Sage grouse translocation to Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA):** District 2 Assistant Wildlife Biologist Mike Atamian organized and executed a quick trip to southeastern Oregon to trap the last three sage grouse hens allotted to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) by the state of Oregon. This effort included Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Biologist Kerrin Doloughan and District Biologist Sarah Gregory out of the Tri-Cities. Finch and Wildlife Area Manager (WAM) Juli Anderson also traveled down to the trapping area on Monday to bring back a hen to the SLWA on Tuesday, which volunteers released on Wednesday morning. Atamian and Doloughan brought back the last two hens on Wednesday, and Anderson released them on Thursday morning.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Sandhill Crane Festival:** Biologist Ferguson prepared a PowerPoint presentation on jackrabbits in Washington and delivered it to an overflowing crowd in Othello this past weekend for the Sandhill Crane Festival.



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

**Private Lands/Access**

**Wildlife Control District 1:** Conflict Specialist Shepherd and Private Lands Access Technician Bendixen attempted to haze a approximately 200 white-tailed deer from a Tumtum area wheat field at night.



*Winter wheat field where approximately 200 white-tailed have been grazing for weeks.*

**Walla Walla County Deer Conflict Resolution:** Biologists Rasley and Davis coordinated with a private contractor to burn off 30 acres of grass along Mill Creek south of Walla Walla. Our plan is to improve the site for upland game birds by direct seeding legumes into the grass and assist us with giving the 100 plus deer something better to eat than the wheat crops that lay just across the river. “All of the neighboring farmers are very excited with our efforts.”





*Five minutes after the fire went out it started to rain.*

## **REGION 2**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Spring Deer Surveys:** Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen continue to conduct spring deer classification surveys throughout the Okanogan district with about 2,000 deer classified thus far. To date, observed fawn to doe ratios suggest overwinter fawn survivorship is a bit below average. We should have final totals and ratios by the end of next week.

Signs (deer hair loss) of the exotic chewing louse (*Bovicola tibialis*), first documented in District 6 last year, have been observed on mule deer on two classification routes this year in the Okanogan Watershed. At this time it does not appear to be a major concern with less than 1% of all mule deer surveyed to date showing noticeable signs of infestation. No white-tailed deer have been observed exhibiting signs of this louse.



*Mule deer (left) and a buck still with antlers (right) observed during spring deer surveys in the Okanogan district. Photos by Jeff Heinlen.*

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Sandhill Crane Festival:** Biologist Finger manned a booth, presented a lecture, and gave a wildlife tour for the Sandhill Crane Festival. The Sandhill Crane Festival, at Othello, draws 1,200-1,500 visitors annually. The Washington ground squirrel lecture was well attended (nearly a full room) and many great questions were received from the audience. For the tour we visited the Soda Lake translocation site. There were 14 individuals signed up and all received a good show with ground squirrels running all around us while a red-tailed hawk hunted from above.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Hunter Access:** Biologist Dougherty discussed Hunter Access agreements with several landowners and was able to renew one agreement, resulting in approximately 2,000 acres being renewed for hunting access. Other landowners were willing to renew Hunter Access agreements, but were only going to do so if they were able to renew Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts.

In general, landowners that also produce agricultural crops are very concerned with hunters entering planted fields and damaging crops. Despite Biologist Dougherty discussing the possibility of placing additional signs and increasing enforcement, these landowners will not renew Hunter Access Agreements in areas with crops. Private Lands Biologist Braaten continues working on Access/Habitat contracts with landowners.

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

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Grazing Coordinated Reserve Management (CRM) meetings:** On Friday, March 29 Tom McCoy and John Hagan participated in a day-long series of CRM meetings with Methow grazing permittees. Considering the grazing program is working well, with excellent permit compliance across the board, very few changes were made. For the most part, during the discussion of WDFW permits, the conversation focused on ways to make further improvements to distribution, minimizing issues with recreational users, and joint range improvement projects. All in all, it was a very productive day.

**Field Trip with Washington State University (WSU) students:** Area Manager Dan Peterson joined Research Scientist Mike Schroeder to lead a day and half long field trip for Dr. Lisa Shipley's Wildlife Habitat Ecology class. The group had a grand tour of Douglas County that included stops at Moses Coulee, the Sagebrush Flat, Chester Butte, West Foster Creek and Central Ferry Canyon Wildlife Area Units. At Sagebrush Flat, University of Idaho graduate student Steph DeMay discussed work with the pygmy rabbit recovery effort. Other discussion topics included natural history and ecology of sage and sharp-tailed grouse, the challenges and

rewards of shrub-steppe restoration, Federal farm conservation programs and their benefit to shrub-steppe dependent wildlife, and the geologic history of the area.

Sunday morning Mike and Dan took the group to two sage grouse leks. With steady rain, however, the vast majority of male sage grouse had decided to sleep in and thus the group was lucky to see just four males at lek in the Mansfield area. In spite of the weather all remained in good spirits and enjoyed their time away from Pullman.



*Research Scientist Mike Schroeder leads a discussion on lekking behavior on a really wet Sunday morning.*

**Banks Lake Fire Evaluation:** Range Ecologist Jeff Burnham and Vegetation Ecologist Kurt Merg accompanied Wildlife Area Manager Fitzgerald into the area burned last September as a part of the Barker Canyon Complex Fire. A lightning strike started the fire between Pastures 2 and 3, with strong winds pushing it to the north into Pasture 2. Pasture 3, leeward of the strike, burned cooler, but killed the sagebrush in a mosaic, and the grasses are greening up nicely. Pasture 2, windward of the strike, looks a bit like the moon. As an active grazing allotment, cattle management will include resting Pasture 3 through the growing season, and resting Pasture 2 at least until this fall. Another site visit in about a month is planned.

**Dusky Grouse Video:** Dusky grouse breeding display behavior is in full swing right now and can be quite entertaining. Birds can often be viewed at fairly close distance. Any unit of the Methow Wildlife Area with a mix of shrub-steppe and ponderosa pine habitat is a good bet. View the video at: <http://youtu.be/eBeEXi6XRYM>

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Livestock Depredation:** Biologist Moore worked with Officer Scherzinger on a call where three goats were killed at a small farming operation near Peoh Point, south Cle Elum. Two of the three goats had been buried by the owner, but the third was left for us to investigate. We suspected it was a cougar and the only trauma from the attack was in the throat area potentially crushing the trachea (see photo below). The front shoulder was partial consumed as well. Officer Pace returned to set up a camera station. Photos of a cat were captured and Enforcement installed a trap. The cat was later trapped and euthanized by Enforcement.



**Tieton Bighorn Sheep:** Biologist Bernatowicz helped organize and direct culling/sampling efforts in the Tieton bighorn sheep range. Volunteers were used to spot live sheep and mark carcasses of those lethally removed. Ten sheep were taken from the east end of the range (closest to Cleman Mountain). Volunteers also noted a bighorn toward the west end of the range that seemed sick in the morning and had died by early afternoon. A post culling flight found one ewe at the far west end of the designated removal area. A single ram seen by the public a few days prior could not be found via ground or air surveys. A volunteer collected samples from a

domestic ewe shot by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lessee last week. The sample was mailed to the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (WADDL).

**Sage grouse:** Biologist Gregory participated in the second round of sage grouse trapping near Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge. In the first night of trapping, together with Biologist Atamian from Region 1 and Biologist Doloughan from BLM, one hen was captured. Atamian and Doloughan managed to capture the remaining two hens, bringing the total number of birds translocated to 20.

**Deer Survey:** Biologist Moore planned and performed the Population Management Units (PMUs) 33, 35 and 36 deer surveys. All except two units have been completed. Thanks to Bernatowicz and Berry for help on the survey as well as two Muckleshoot tribal biologists.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Wenas Wildlife Area Fence Project:** Manager Confer Morris field reviewed the Kelley Hollow section of the elk fence rebuild and documented the disturbance caused by the contractor's unauthorized multiple tracks and trails. The same problems have been seen in the Hessler area and these issues, along with posts out of alignment and breakaways with improper post sizes, must be addressed prior to the contract being deemed complete.



*Multiple unauthorized trails/tracks made by the contractor accessing Kelley Hollow fence.*

**Coordinated Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP):** Manager Huffman attended two meetings related to the Tapash CFLRP that the USFS is currently working on with its partners. The first meeting was designed to convene the new CFLRP Task Force organized by

the Tapash Executive Team. The day-long meeting focused on the new Tapash strategic plan and the tasks that have been assigned to the Task Force. The group reviewed the CFLRP program of work for the current year and discussed the progress of the monitoring plan. A large portion of time was spent on what other groups/agencies/organizations need to be involved in the process and when. The second meeting focused on reviewing the program of work for each fiscal year through FY19. A lot of time was spent on opportunities to work across ownerships with adjacent landowners. Each agency listed their current and future projects and options for coordination were discussed.

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**



*New Assistant District Biologist Mike Smith (above) and Biologist Chris Anderson launched a loon platform at Calligan Lake. A lone loon was present on Calligan, as well as a lone loon on nearby Lake Hancock.*

**Oregon Spotted Frog Project:** Seasonal Biologists Bauman and Johnson continued surveying for Oregon spotted frogs this week. They found a cluster of 35 egg masses at a new site along the Black Slough, a tributary to the Nooksack River.



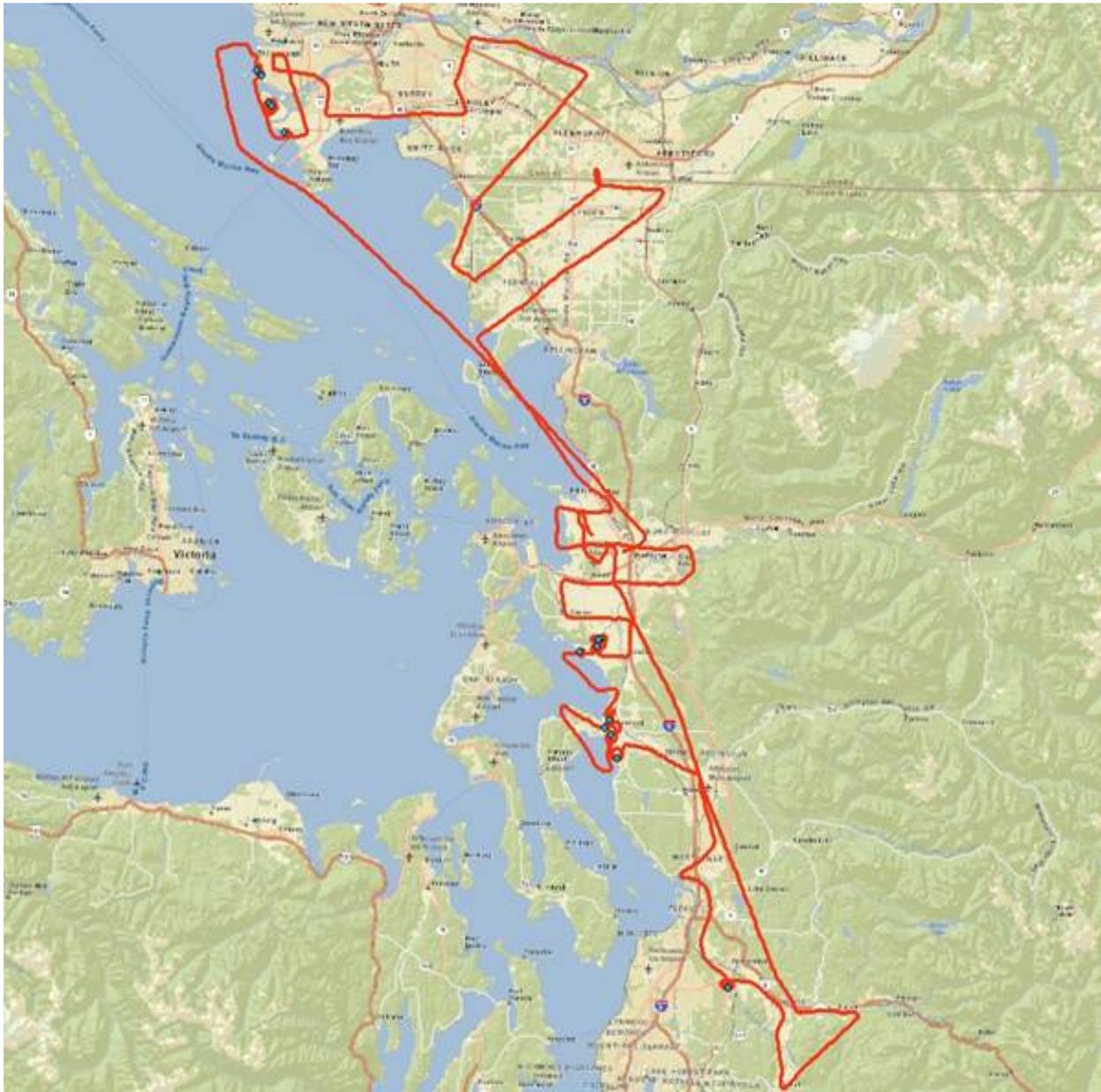
*DeBruyn displays a salamander egg mass in the Whatcom County amphibian habitat.*

**North Cascades Elk Herd Population Surveys:** Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn conducted aerial surveys of the North Cascades Elk Herd with technical representatives of the Point Elliott Treaty Tribes. During the flights conducted over two evenings and one morning, a total of 476 elk were observed (260 cows, 105 calves, 87 bulls and 35 unclassified). This is roughly 150 fewer elk than were observed during the survey conducted two weeks earlier. Divergent results from these two surveys are reflective of the fact that elk within certain habitat types (e.g., young age class conifer stands) have extremely low detection probabilities.

Unseasonably warm weather immediately preceding the second round of surveys may have influenced feeding/bedding schedules resulting in the lower count. Overall sightability of elk was the lowest observed since these comprehensive surveys were conducted (Round 1= 36% Round 2= 26%). While further data analysis will be conducted to arrive at a final population estimate, results from the second round of surveys provide an unofficial bull:cow ratio of 33:100 and a calf:cow ratio of 40:100.

**Northern Puget Sound Lesser Snow Goose Study:** Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn conducted another snow goose aerial survey to take photos and conduct radio telemetry. Snow goose flocks were observed from Richmond, BC, throughout the Skagit River Delta, and in the Stillaguamish and Snohomish River basin as far inland as Monroe. Six different radio collared snow geese were located during the survey flight.

Photos taken during this flight (and others throughout the winter of 2012-13) are being used to estimate the population size of lesser snow geese from Wrangel Island, Russia that overwinter in the North Puget Sound area. The radio telemetry relocations, in conjunction with ground surveys, will be used to describe the distribution and habitat preferences of snow geese in Skagit and Snohomish counties.



*GPS track log of lesser snow goose aerial survey route flown on April 1, 2013.*



*Lesser snow geese observed near Richmond, British Columbia during aerial survey (above). Lesser snow geese observed at new estuary restoration site on Port Susan Bay in Snohomish County (below).*



**Golden Eagle Survey:** Biologist DeBruyn flew occupancy surveys at six historical territories in Skagit and Whatcom counties. No eagles were seen at any of the sites.

**Bald Eagle and Heron Colony Management:** Biologist Anderson provided nest information and directed property owners to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for eagle management needs. Anderson is working with a number of Seattle applicants on site-specific heron management plans.

**Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary:** Biologist Anderson worked with the Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary volunteer to provide for recent requests and material stocking/inventory needs.

**Marsh Bird Survey Start Up:** Biologist Milner and Biologist Sherman Anderson toured the Snoqualmie and Skagit Wildlife Areas with Managers Rotton, Meece and Boehm to look for Wilson's snipe surveys. Anderson and Milner also visited Ebey Island on another day to look for suitable sites. Grazing at Ebey is a question that needs to be figured out and Anderson will work with Boehm to try to locate the least impacted areas of the Island for surveys. Anderson and Milner also worked on supply and equipment needs for the project.

**U.S. Navy Pika Surveys:** Biologist Milner was contacted late last week and asked by Navy staff to proceed with contract planning for the pika surveys at Jim Creek Navy property. Sequester has added a layer of confusion to this potential project, but it appears that the Navy is still interested in trying to undertake surveys at Jim Creek.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Spring Bear Damage Hunts:** Region 4 staff continued with hunt preparations for the North Skagit and Monroe units. North Skagit and Monroe units open April 15 and permit holders gain access Saturday April 13 after attending a mandatory meeting.

**Skagit Wildlife Area Agreements:** Biologist Roozen assisted Skagit Wildlife Area staff with agricultural leases on WDFW lands in the Region. Roozen and Manager Rotton met with local growers regarding agricultural plans as well as public access as they relate to the agreements.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Lake Terrell Goose Signs and Field Clearing:** Natural Resource Technician Deyo installed the Baby Goose Warning Signs at the Lake Terrell Unit. Deyo mowed approximately four acres of reed canary grass and blackberries. He then treated the field with herbicides to start prepping it for barley planting.

**Intalco Water Control Structure:** Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Technician Deyo cleared wood debris from around one of the water control structures on the Intalco Unit. Beavers had completely buried the structure, limiting the water flow.

**Cherry Valley Fish Passage Project:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with WDFW Noxious Weed staff Tom Wampler and Jenni Dykstra to discuss the planting plan at the Fish Passage Project restoration site. Planting is scheduled to begin the week of April 8. Over 7,000 plants will be installed by Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) field crews during the next two weeks.

**Cherry Valley Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continues to work at the barn to improve security at the facility and general cleanup of the area. The new DR field mower was assembled and tested out by clearing the area for the new native plant nursery that will be installed during the week.

Mill Creek's Boy Scout Troop 327 conducted the ground prep, dug irrigation lines, and potted native plants. The plants will be used at Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Units to replace invasive weeds that have been eradicated.

**Ebey Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Ebey Island the Snohomish Conservation District to continue discussions on a fencing plan for the Unit. This includes fencing to protect aquatic resources such as wetlands, and controlling the movement of cattle on the Unit.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Annual Big Game Pamphlet Review:** Biologists provided review for the 2013 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet.

**University of Washington Arboretum Bioblitz:** Biologist Anderson coordinated WDFW volunteers with Arboretum staff to provide for WDFW outreach and provide specific information and survey efforts regarding amphibians in the upcoming Arboretum bioblitz. Anderson will be at another festival that day.

**Band-tailed pigeon study:** Biologist DeBruyn ordered materials, organized equipment and met with landowners in preparation for a study of band-tailed pigeons this spring and summer. The study is intended to further enable us to assess the population of pigeons using mineral spring counts.

**San Juan Islands National Monument Celebration:** Biologist Milner represented WDFW at the dedication of various Bureau of Land Management (BLM) owned parcels in the San Juan Archipelago that were recently given National Monument status. Outgoing U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI) Chief Ken Salazar opened the dedication, followed by comments provided by Senator Maria Cantwell and other elected officials who were instrumental in getting the designation.

## Private Lands/Access

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Technician Otto began refurbishing existing, dilapidated blinds on properties enrolled for next year's hunt season. Although most waterfowl blinds are removed at season's end, some structures remain year-round, as they are positioned in a location that does not interfere with landowner/grower operations. Staff will ensure that these blinds need only to be "brushed up" when fall returns.

## Wildlife Areas

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Native Plant Nursery:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager has been working with Mill Creek Boy Scout Troop 327 to develop community involvement projects. The native plant nursery is one example of a project that will generate various activities for volunteers to participate in. Approximately 40 boy scouts and parents were involved with this project and donated hundreds of labor hours for the project.



*Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager has been working with Mill Creek Boy Scout Troop 327 to develop a native plant nursery/holding area on the Cherry Valley Unit.*

**Samish River - Welts Property Wetland Enhancement Project:** The Capital Asset and Management Program (CAMP) provided design drawings for the parking lot and driveway proposed to be installed as part of the project. The parking lot will improve public access to the property and adjacent fishing opportunity in the Samish River.

**Stillwater Revetment Removal Project:** Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Wildlife Area Manager Boehm, and Watershed Steward Hennick met to review a draft of the Adaptive

Management Plan for the project. After incorporating edits, the plan was forwarded to Wild Fish Conservancy and Ducks Unlimited for their review and comments.

WDFW issued a Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) for the above project. Per the SEPA process, that determination is under review for 15 days and comments will be accepted until April 17. Review the SEPA documents and submit comments at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/sepa\\_comment\\_docs.html](http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/sepa_comment_docs.html).

**Leque Island:** Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw responded to several area residents and stakeholders who would like to participate in the upcoming public process to guide long-term land-use decisions on Leque Island. The first public meeting will probably take place in late May/early June and will be advertised when it is a firm date. To receive updates, email [Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov) to get on the Leque Island email list.

**Island Unit Farming Preparation:** With the recent dry weather conditions, Natural Resources Technician Curran Cosgrove was able to begin disking on the Island Unit. Approximately 30 acres were disked before the rain started again.

**Tennant Lake Boardwalk:** Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Technician Deyo hiked in and adjusted the beaver deceiver pipes and dams on Tennant Lake. The water level at Tennant Lake has finally fallen and the boardwalk is now open to the public.

**Stillwater Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with members from the Washington Waterfowl Association (WWA) and a private landowner to install three wood duck boxes north of the Stillwater Unit. The landowner is interested in expanding the wood duck box project and is excited to join the ongoing project. Three additional boxes were installed at the Cherry Valley Unit as well.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant application review:** Biologist Milner continued reviewing and scoring grant applications for ALEA funds. Milner has 13 more applications to review.

**Scientific Collection Permit (SCP) Review:** Biologist Anderson and other biologists continue to assist Scientific Collection Permit Coordinator Thompson with review and condition development regarding proposed projects within a given assigned District.

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Skagit Wildlife Area:** Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) Greg Meis and Natural Resource Technician (NRT) Curran Cosgrove treated poison hemlock on Padilla Bay, Fir Island Farms, Samish, and Leque Island units.

**Leque Island Unit:** NRS Meis and NRT Cosgrove continued mowing grass and blackberry patches on the west side of the Unit. Large stands of poison hemlock are associated with these areas on the dike top and in fields. Meis and Cosgrove treated hemlock and plan to coordinate with the Snohomish County weed crew for additional treatment efforts.

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with two members of the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) to discuss habitat improvements for pheasant hunting at the Cherry Valley and Crescent Lake units.

### Private Lands/Access

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

Biologist Anderson worked with the new District 12 Assistant District Biologist Mike Smith to bring him on board with orientation during his first few days on the job. We still got Mike out in the field in his first week!

## **REGION 5**

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Cackling Canada Goose Capture:** Biologist Bergh joined biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) for a capture effort of cackling Canada geese on Sauvie Island Wildlife Area. Yellow neck collars were installed for identification during fall-spring surveys in Washington, Oregon, British Columbia, and California. The data from these surveys can be used to estimate survival, abundance, and movement patterns.

**Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Elk Surveys:** Biologist Bergh and Technician Sample conducted the monthly winter count of elk using the valley floor of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. A total of 117 elk were observed along with a fresh mortality. Weather was warm and sunny during the count and snow levels were at approximately 3,500 feet.



***Biologist Bergh at Cackling Canada Goose Capture***

**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 (GMUs). To date, in the Washougal cluster of five remaining

does, three fawns were located and remain alive. One male fawn from the Washougal cluster appears to have left his natal range and was not located.

**2013 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations:** Region 5 staff reviewed and edited the Draft 2013 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet. Various suggestions and edits were passed to Program Manager Jonker for consideration. Big Game hunters should anticipate public availability of the pamphlet in mid-April. The deadline for special permit applications is May 22.

**Golden Eagle Occupancy Surveys:** Biologist Bergh and Gifford Pinchot National Forest Biologist Jakubowski conducted an occupancy survey for a historic golden eagle nest territory in the Catt Creek drainage. After a snowy hike into the site, no eagles or nests were observed. This territory is among those randomly selected from the statewide historical database of golden eagle nest territories as part of an effort to assess current status and distribution of these birds. Another occupancy survey will be conducted next month.

Biologist Anderson worked on private land access for conducting golden eagle surveys in remote eastern Klickitat County. Access at one site allowed for observation of nest site considered to be only accessible by helicopter. A golden eagle nest was located in this territory but no birds were observed in the area. A follow-up survey will be conducted in early May to further search the site for evidence of nesting.

**Oregon Spotted Frog:** Biologist Anderson and Biologist Wainwright from the USFS conducted an Oregon Spotted Frog egg mass survey on USFS land in the Trout Creek drainage. This is a

historic site that has changed over the years due to beaver presence in the drainage. This year renewed beaver activity has increased the size of the wetland dramatically, and thus improved Oregon Spotted Frogs breeding habitat. Only one egg mass was found this week and it is suspected that increased water levels caused lower water temperatures and later egg mass laying. A follow-up survey will be conducted in the next 7-10 days to look for additional egg masses.



*Trout Creek drainage Oregon Spotted Frog egg mass survey*

**Western Pond Turtle Shell Disease:** Biologists George and Holman traveled to the South Puget Sound western pond turtle site in Region 6 to team with Biologists Tirhi, Schmidt, and Murphie on the turtle shell disease issue. Biologist Schmidt and a team of veterinarians have developed a protocol for evaluation of the condition in individual animals. The protocol will be used to evaluate animals in the Columbia River Gorge populations in a manner consistent with methods used in Region 6.

## Wildlife Areas

### **Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area**

**Mudflow Unit:** Natural Resource Technician (NRT) Sample continued to pull tree tubes and replace them with cages as well as plant 220 Alder saplings with help from Scientific Technician Fox along the western side of the island river bank in hopes of stabilizing the ground from further erosion. Natural Resource Technician Sample began construction on six bluebird boxes to be put up on the sediment dike and on surrounding trees where a pair of bluebirds was seen foraging last week.

NRT Sample noticed an increase in the number of people/vehicles on the highway and parked alongside the road between the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Forest Learning Center. Sample met two people on the 3100 road “shed hunting” on Weyerhaeuser property and “getting in shape for hunting season.” Horse tracks/sign were observed all the way down the 3100 road and horse tracks noticed on the mudflow as well. The ‘Winter Closure’ sign had been removed from the board at the top gate, so Sample replaced the signage.

*The public is reminded that the Mudflow Unit of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30 to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.*

## Other

### **District 10 and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions**

**Past Weather:** March temperatures and precipitation were both below average for the month. Snowfall for the month was minimal with light accumulations on the valley floor of the Mudflow Unit. Snow levels have been above 3,500-4,000 feet the past week, and lower elevation snow is quickly melting with the warmer temperatures.

**Short-Term Forecast:** The 6-10 and the 8-14 day forecasts are for below normal temperatures and normal precipitation.

**Long-Term Forecast:** The one month forecast model shows an equal chance for above average, below average, or normal temperature and precipitation. The three month forecast model is for below normal temperatures and precipitation.

**Habitat:** Forage is available at lower elevations, and elk appear to have fed heavily on willows and cottonwoods in the Mudflow Unit, while most areas above 3,000 feet currently have some snow cover, and areas above 3,500 feet have significant snow cover. Most south facing slopes are snow free to higher elevations. Green up has started in the lower elevations and has slowly started on the Mudflow Unit.

**Snow Depths:** See attached table for detailed information.

**Animal Concentrations:** No unusual concentrations of elk noted to date. On April 1, 2013 a total of 117 elk were present on the Mudflow Unit monitoring area.

**Animal Condition:** The majority of animals observed to date appear to be in fair condition, although there were some with rough pelage in poor condition.

**Mortality:** The Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician observed one mortality this past week while conducting other work on the Mudflow Unit.

**Public Contacts:** None to report related to winter conditions.

*The public is reminded that the Mudflow Unit of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30 to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.*

MOUNT SAINT HELENS ELK HERD  
 2012/2013 WINTER CONDITIONS - SNO-PARK SNOW DEPTH,  
 NRCS SNOTEL DATA, AND SNOWPACK

From web page <http://www.fs.usda.gov/activity/giffordpinchot/recreation/wintersports/?recid=31178&actid=91>  
[http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/sno\\_narr3\\_pl](http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/sno_narr3_pl)  
<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snotel/Washington/washington.html>

SNOWPARKS:		12/07/2012	12/14/2012	12/21/2012	12/28/2012	01/04/2013	01/11/2013	01/18/2013	01/25/2013	02/01/2013	02/08/2013	02/15/2013
Name	Elevation											
TRAIL OF TWO FORESTS	2,200'	No report	Trace of new snow	2ft of snow	More than 2ft of snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	No new report	10" new and 2 ft base	No new snow. 2ft total.	No new snow
MARBLE MT	2,700'	No new report	5" new snow	4ft of snow	More than 4ft of snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	No new snow. 72 inch base.	14" new and 80" base	No new snow. 84" base.	No new report
WAKEPISH	2,800'	No snow	5" new snow	42" of snow at the sno-park	More than 42" of snow	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	No new report	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	No new report	No new report

SNOWTEL STATIONS:		Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25	1/26-2/1	2/2-2/8	2/9-2/15
JUNE LAKE	3,340'	Avg Snow											
		Depth (inches)	12.3	26.8	68.8	103.3	101.6	97.3	93.3	88.4	103.1	98.2	98.4
		Min Temp (F)	30.9	27.5	25.7	27.5	18.7	23.7	17.2	28.6	29.3	26.2	24.6
		Max Temp (F)	43.9	37.8	35.2	34.5	35.1	40.3	47.1	63	39	49.6	42.4
		Avg Temp (F)	36.6	32.7	29.9	31.1	27	33	28.8	44.9	33.8	36.4	33.1
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	68	72	82.9	84.6	85.9	86.3	98.6	97.2	106.3	109.3	109.8
SPIRIT LAKE	3,520'	Avg Snow											
		Depth (inches)	1.1	9.6	19.1	27.8	26.1	19.7	20.1	18.1	25.9	24.7	25.3
		Min Temp (F)	31.5	19	19	22.3	20.3	25.3	9.9	27.7	28.6	12.7	23.2
		Max Temp (F)	48.4	41.9	44.4	35.6	41.7	46	54.4	54.3	42.1	48.2	43
		Avg Temp (F)	37.9	32.7	30.2	31.6	29.2	34.5	28.2	39.1	34.4	35.9	33.5

		Year to date precipitation (inches)	34.4	37.6	42.2	45.2	45.6	47.7	47.8	48.4	56.2	57.2	58.1
Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25	1/26-2/1	2/2-2/8	2/9-2/15
PEPPER CREEK	2,140'	Avg Snow											
		Depth (inches)	0	0.17	14.7	24	24.6	23.8	22.8	23	28.9	25.4	23.3
		Min Temp (F)	32.4	30.4	30	30.4	21.6	27	12.9	23.9	33.1	28.4	23.7
		Max Temp (F)	48	43.2	36.9	36.9	39	41.4	43.5	55.2	43.7	53.8	45.9
		Avg Temp (F)	40.2	35.4	33	33.8	28	33.3	26.5	33.4	35.4	36.2	35.5
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	22.2	23.7	29.9	31	31.3	33.8	33.8	34.3	37.3	38	38.2

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25	1/26-2/1	2/2-2/8	2/9-2/15
SHEEP CANYON	3,990'	Avg Snow											
		Depth (inches)	12.6	25.7	61.3	96.3	93.6	88.4	84.7	81.4	102.7	102.5	103.4
		Min Temp (F)	29.1	21.9	23.4	25.5	20.5	23.7	14.5	25.5	28.2	24.1	23.9
		Max Temp (F)	42.6	36.5	33.8	33.6	39.9	39.4	54.4	58.5	37.8	52.5	39.2
		Avg Temp (F)	35	30.7	28.2	30.2	28.4	32.3	29.1	43.6	32.3	35.3	31.7
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	60.4	63.8	69.6	77.3	81.7	86.3	86.3	87	95.9	98.3	98.9

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25	1/26-2/1	2/2-2/8	2/9-2/15
CALAMITY	2500'	Avg Snow											
		Depth (inches)	0	0	13	22	18.7	17.7	15.3	15	15.9	14.2	11.2
		Min Temp (F)	33.8	32.5	29.1	31.3	23.7	28	21.2	32.5	32.4	31.3	30
		Max Temp (F)	47.7	41.2	40.3	36.3	36.1	43.5	56.7	62.1	43.2	48	42.3
		Avg Temp (F)	40.2	35.6	32.8	33.4	29.1	36	32.2	47.2	36.3	39.2	35.8
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	42.1	44.5	52.2	54.6	54.8	59.2	59.4	60.1	66.4	67.5	68

Snowpack % of Avg Snow Water Equivalent	12/07/2012	12/14/2012	12/21/2012	12/28/2012	01/04/2013	01/11/2013	01/18/2013	01/25/2013	02/01/2013	02/08/2013	02/15/2013
JUNE LAKE	no data	no data	180%	134%	no data	no data	147%	139%	149%	no data	140%
SPIRIT LAKE	no data	200%	410%	134%	447%	371%	350%	286%	414%	535%	486%
SHEEP CANYON	86%	91%	151%	165%	170%	184%	169%	145%	164%	173%	160%

02/22/2013	03/01/2013	03/08/2013	03/15/2013	03/22/2013	03/29/2013	04/05/2013
No new report	No new report	No new snow. 3ft total.	No new snow and 2ft base	No new report	No new snow and 2ft base	Snow is melting
No new report	15" new snow and 90" base	9" new and 84" base	No new snow and 6ft base	No new report	No new snow and 6ft base	Snow is melting
Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	No new report	Snow is melting

2/16-2/22	2/23-3/1	3/2-3/8	3/9-3/15	3/16-3/22	3/23-3/29	3/30-4/5
96.1	122.4	116	116.1	114	114.1	104.3
25.7	27.1	27	32	25	24	37
51.4	41.5	43	50	41	50	63
33.3	32.4	34.3	39.3	32.5	38.3	46.7
111.5	119.1	122.5	123.5	129.3	129.7	131.3
2/16-2/22	2/23-3/1	3/2-3/8	3/9-3/15	3/16-3/22	3/23-3/29	3/30-4/5
24.1	32	26	25	22.1	23.8	no data
21.7	20.1	19	12	26	18	
48.9	44.4	44	47	47	53	
33.5	33	33.5	37.3	32.5	36.6	

59.2	62.2	63.9	64	68.6	70.5	
<b>2/16-2/22</b>	<b>2/23-3/1</b>	<b>3/2-3/8</b>	<b>3/9-3/15</b>	<b>3/16-3/22</b>	<b>3/23-3/29</b>	<b>3/30-4/5</b>
21.6	30.7	27	24.1	21.1	19.6	10.7
24.8	31.3	26	27	30	29	33
56.8	41.5	50	56	44	58	71
34.9	35.2	35.3	39.8	35.7	39.1	46
38.9	42.9	44	44.4	46.8	46.9	47.2
<b>2/16-2/22</b>	<b>2/23-3/1</b>	<b>3/2-3/8</b>	<b>3/9-3/15</b>	<b>3/16-3/22</b>	<b>3/23-3/29</b>	<b>3/30-4/5</b>
100.5	123	115.1	114.7	113.8	115.6	103.8
24.4	23.2	21	27	24	22	36
52.3	41.4	41	47	40	48	60
31.5	30.7	32.7	37.8	30.3	35.7	45
100.3	106.5	109.1	109.7	115.4	116	117.1
<b>2/16-2/22</b>	<b>2/23-3/1</b>	<b>3/2-3/8</b>	<b>3/9-3/15</b>	<b>3/16-3/22</b>	<b>3/23-3/29</b>	<b>3/30-4/5</b>
9.4	15.7	11.6	9	2.2	2.4	0
30.6	31.3	31	35	30	29	44
50.5	46	47	53	45	53	63
36.3	35.5	36.8	43.8	35.7	41	51.2
69.2	74	75.2	75.4	79.6	79.8	80.2
<b>02/22/2013</b>	<b>03/01/2013</b>	<b>03/08/2013</b>	<b>03/15/2013</b>	<b>03/22/2013</b>	<b>03/29/2013</b>	<b>04/05/2013</b>
130%	140%	no data	142%	2225%	155%	164%
398%	371%	344%	no data	no data	no data	no data
159%	153%	148%	139%	136%	140%	131%

## **REGION 6**

**Western Pond Turtle:** Biologist Tirhi and staff began trapping state endangered Western pond turtles at the Pierce County recovery site, one of six recovery sites in Washington. Each April, traps (hoop and basking) are set in the three ponds at the recovery site in order to monitor the population. Every turtle is weighed, measured and health checked. Each adult female (those over 500 g) is fitted with a transmitter that enables the staff to track her location during the nesting season and gather her eggs for the head-start program. All remaining turtles are given a colored epoxy-dot for later visual monitoring.



*Staff processing turtles*

During the nesting season, female movements are monitored from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; when a nest is located, either the eggs are collected and transported to the Woodland Park Zoo and/or left in the ground to incubate for approximately 100 days. Staff is employing this alternate incubation approach in a trial study for the 2012-13 nesting season to see which produces higher hatch rates and more viable juveniles. Visual monitoring of a full transmittered, epoxied and non-epoxied individuals during the nesting season provides the best estimation of the total population at the recovery site. Last week, Tirhi and staff processed 109 turtles out of a possible 165 at the ponds including attaching transmitters to 25 females.



Staff also arranged a training day for implementing the new shell rot response protocol. Staff began to notice septicemic cutaneous ulcerative disease (SCUD or shell rot) at the Pierce County site beginning in 2010. Since that time, the disease became either more prevalent and/or observed and also emerged at several Columbia Gorge sites. The Washington Western Pond Turtle Working Group formed a smaller shell rot response team comprised of veterinarians and biologists to compile a shell rot response protocol and treatment plan. The training day was designed to educate biologists from the six recovery locations on identifying and grading the disease and debriding lesions. Dr. Adolph Maa of the Avian & Exotic Animal Hospital (Bothell) was on site during the training to teach shell rot identification, collect blood and other samples, and teach how to debride.



*Septicemic cutaneous ulcerative disease (SCUD or shell rot) in Western Pond Turtles*



*Shell rot training for WDFW staff (left). Buckets for keeping the turtles separated while processing (right).*

Biologist Tiri c completed a nd submitted a g rant t o t he Point D efiance Z oo a nd A quarium ConCom for funds to pay for four-years of water quality testing at the Pierce County Western Pond Turtle recovery site.

**Tick Collection by Department of Health:** Biologist McMillan was contacted by Clallam County Health Officer Tom Locke regarding the 2012 tick that tested positive for *B. burgdoferi*, the pathogen that causes Lyme disease. McMillan submitted the specimen as one of six ticks collected at one of the Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly study sites. Tom Locke encouraged collection of specimens in the area from Lake Crescent to the Elwha River, as well as Jefferson and Mason counties to improve the records about the local tick populations and pathogens.

**Voights Creek:** Biologist Tirhi is partnering with PCC Farmland Trust and Pierce County on a Pierce County Conservation Futures grant for the purchase of 78 acres near Voights Creek, Orting, in Pierce County. The site is situated next to the new WDFW Voights Creek Hatchery Complex, contains wetlands associated with Voights and Coplar Creeks, woodlands, and is a migratory corridor for North Rainer Elk on which elk are consistently seen. Tirhi has discussed with the neighboring hatchery complex manager options for WDFW to hold the title if the purchase is approved; the hatchery is supportive of the acquisition and would maintain the property (considering it is far removed from any existing Lands Program wildlife areas). Tirhi completed the WDFW portion of the application; besides habitat preservation, Tirhi's main interest is promoting this site as a watchable wildlife site for elk.

### Voights Creek property conceptual design

