

Wildlife Program

Week of April 22-28, 2013

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Marbled Murrelet Survey Assessment Completed – Biologist Steve Desimone, assisted by Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan and Section Manager Bruce Thompson, completed a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Technical Assessment report regarding evaluation of murrelet habitat modeling and site surveys. The report, titled *An Evaluation of Marbled Murrelet Habitat Prediction and Survey Implementation in the Washington Department of Natural Resources Straits Planning Unit*, describes a WDFW assessment of Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) practices that may assist with further preparation of a long-term conservation strategy for murrelets under the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for state trust lands within the range of the Northern Spotted Owl. Arrangements are underway to distribute the report to WDFW staff, WDNR staff, conservation organizations with expressed interest in the assessment outcome, and others who may have need for the information.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wolf Management

District 1: Conflict Specialist Shepherd called a Stevens County resident who would like to start a range riding business. Shepherd met with ranchers in the Smackout wolf territory to discuss range rider contracts and carcass removal thoughts. Conflict Specialist Shepherd worked on a funding schedule that will effectively use the cost sharing of WDFW Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement – Livestock contracts of two grazing permits across two fiscal years in combination with funds from the cattle producers and Conservation Northwest to obtain a sufficient amount of funding for the Smackout range rider program.

Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed recent wolf sightings and issues with U.S. Air Force personnel. Shepherd discussed a compensation claim for a cattle producer in the Wedge with Conflict Section Leader Simek and Game Division Manager Ware concerning losses last grazing season. Conflict Specialist Shepherd participated in a conference call with Conflict Section Leader Simek, Stevens and Okanogan County Conservation District employees, and Conservation Northwest employees concerning various methods of domestic livestock carcass removal regardless of land ownership or season of the year. Shepherd discussed various aspects of depredation issues and carcass removal with Conflict Section Leader Simek. Conflict Specialist Shepherd mapped Smackout wolf locations and discussed them with officers and ranchers throughout the week.

Wildlife Areas

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area (SCWA) Prescribed Burning – SCWA staff joined the WDFW prescribed burning crew all week to carry out prescribed burning on three of the units at SCWA.



Prescribed fire ignition crew worked in the Slash1 (above) and Slash4 (below) units.



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

Private Lands/Access

New Deer Fence Design: Biologist Rasley met with a local commercial strawberry farmer after we tried a couple of different electric fence designs to try and keep deer out of his crop. The new design I had him try “was a lot cheaper to install” and we found that no deer at all were able to enter his fields.



The new three wire electric fence design resulted in zero deer damage.



The five wire electric fence. Several deer were able to penetrate this design and the cost was almost double to install.

REGION 2

None

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Tieton Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz continued to monitor reports of bighorn sheep in the Tieton herd and forwarded the information to Enforcement. Based on the reports, there were at least 10 animals remaining in the herd early in the week. Enforcement was able to remove 3 of the 10 this week. The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe issued 10 permits for tribal members that run April 19 through May 19, and tribal hunters killed one young ram. Reports continue to be received of a few bighorn sheep on Highway 12. WDFW officers will also attempt to remove bighorns opportunistically.

Wildlife Areas

West Valley Fence Replacement: Wenas Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Taylor checked on the West Valley elk fence contractor twice while they were driving the posts. Taylor also hauled out the extra posts and defused a conflict with the cattelman by helping to put back up electric fence that had been taken down while cows were still on-site.



West Valley elk fence rebuild.

Shooting Range Cleanup: Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Confer Morris assisted with the Kittitas County Field and Stream volunteer clean-up of the north end Durr road and Umtanum road shooting areas. Attendance was similar to last year with around 50 volunteers. They were able to get to all the different sites and filled one large dumpster.



Umtanum Road shooting site before (above) and after (below) clean-up.



Winter Range Closures: L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt put together information for the Ellensburg Daily Record regarding the May 1 opening of the Winter Closure areas. Golden eagles are on the Robinson Canyon nest, so the Robinson View Road will remain closed to motorized use for a while longer (up to July 15 if necessary). Staff installed signage for the golden eagle closure on the gates at each end of that stretch of road.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

West Cascades Cougar Project: Scientist Kertson and Project Houndsman White concluded the first winter of intensive capture efforts for the West Cascades Cougar Project. The West Cascades Cougar Project is a long-term study of the relationship between cougar population dynamics, cougar use of residential areas, and cougar-human interaction. Despite less than favorable conditions, 10 cougars were captured and collared this winter (4 adult females, 1 subadult female, 2 adult males and 3 subadult males). Currently nine cougars are being monitored following the death of subadult male M3 in mid-February. Capture efforts in the coming weeks will focus on attempting to capture the mother of subadult female F10 and the subadult offspring of adult females F2 and F6. These capture efforts will be carried out as opportunities arise. Research activities through the summer will focus on documenting the reproduction of adult females observed this past winter without dependent offspring and documenting the activities and behaviors of project cougars as they use residential portions of the study area.



M9 is a 162 pound adult male cougar observed following his capture in March. Note the cataract on the left eye and the extensive scarring present on the head, face and nose of this old male. Adult male cougars are highly territorially and actively defend their home range against other male cougars.

North Cascades Wolf Monitoring: Biologist DeBruyn and a volunteer attempted to retrieve data cards from cameras northeast of Ross Lake. Weather conditions on the lake forced the trip to be aborted after only one camera was visited. No more wolf images were obtained, but numerous cougar and deer were recorded. DeBruyn plans to hike in and service the five unvisited camera sites in two weeks. DeBruyn secured all accessible cameras with cables and lock boxes after the theft of a camera in B.C. this winter.

Oregon Spotted Frog: With the Oregon spotted frog surveys concluding for the year, seasonal Biologists Johnson and Bauman summarized data, prepared an initial draft report, returned field gear, and submitted final timesheets. Biologist Danilson worked with administrative staff to assess the project budget, and checked in field gear, keys, phone, vehicle, and reviewed the draft report prepared by Johnson and Bauman.

Golden Eagle Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra assisted District Biologist Milner with preparation for and completion of an aerial survey for Golden Eagle priority and secondary territories on Lopez Island. Neither nest was located, nor birds observed despite multiple attempts, as the dense tree cover of western Washington and the nature of Golden Eagle tree nests makes aerial surveys problematic. Prior ground visits failed to locate the priority nest and a Great Horned Owl was observed nesting in the secondary nest. In addition, a secondary nest was searched for on James Island since it was on route. No nest or bird was observed. This area has been the target of intense multiple year surveys for other species in the past and no Golden Eagles have ever been observed. Biologist Anderson provided new Golden Eagle nest information and occupancy survey results to Olympia.

San Juan Species of Greatest Conservation Need: Assistant District Biologist Cyra prepared general maps along with detailed maps of Sharp-tail Snake cover board locations for use in revisits of sites placed last fall. Several locations were used in an attempt to confirm the presence of this disjunct population of snakes, and will be visited throughout the year.

Bald Eagles: Inquiries continue to come in regarding the status of bald eagle nests relative to our 2005 data set. Landowners need to know if the nests that show up on their property are still there; at this time we have no answer. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) asked for advice on how to connect landowners with reliable and credentialed consultants who can conduct surveys of individual properties. This week District Biologist Milner worked with landowners on Lopez Island who have property optioned, but are reluctant to commit to the purchase because of three bald eagle nests that were historically located near the lot they are considering. Biologists Milner and Cyra conducted a spot check of this territory while they were conducting aerial surveys for golden eagles and did not find any nests or any eagles in the area. This information was provided to the USFWS.

Breeding Snipe Surveys: Biologist Anderson continued surveys for Wilson's snipe on WDFW owned properties. Many snipe were observed, but because we are in peak shorebird migration season, we don't know yet whether the sightings were migrants or residents. Several other elusive marsh birds were also documented.

Sharp-tailed Snake Surveys: Biologist Milner checked cover boards placed last fall on Turtleback Mountain on Orcas Island. Two devices have apparently been stolen. The rest were located, but no reptiles of any species were found beneath them.

Common Loon Efforts: Biologists Anderson and Smith monitored the Howard Hanson Reservoir loons, stopping in after opening day work. Both pair was there, with female on at least one egg. They put down eggs just in the last few days. The male displayed his individual bands, confirming this is the same male banded there in 2008. Bands on the female were not seen due to her incubation efforts but it is likely she is also the same female seeing as they got right down to it very quickly.

Anderson worked with Contracts and BioDiversity Research Institute to finalize contract needs for 2013 banding efforts on other King County loons this season.

Peregrine Falcon Management Assistance: Biologist Anderson worked with USFWS Migratory Bird Permit Office to provide local assistance in follow-up to management needs regarding nesting peregrines on the Ballard Bridge. The bridge is currently being earthquake retrofitted and birds are nesting right where work was starting up. WDFW and the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) received complaints. USFWS and WDFW provided uniform recommendations to hold off on work that was in direct line of sight to the nesting birds. SDOT has done a great job working with us to respond to public concern and to provide for management considerations.

WDFW Take Authorization Assistance: Biologist Anderson was in touch with Seattle City Light, per their Take Authorization, in regards to a power pole that has black-capped chickadees nesting in it. The pole is slated for removal and a citizen informed WDFW that a pair was nesting in it. Seattle City Light followed-up and rescheduled maintenance work per their WDFW Take Authorization Permit. This will allow for the chickadees to progress with nesting and avoid both state and federal take.

WDFW Amphibian Monitoring and Documentation: Biologist Anderson worked with Tacoma Water employees to collect egg specimens, requested by Habitat Program, to be sent in for DNA analysis and to develop a larger database to refer to regarding native ranids in reference to Oregon Spotted Frog confirmation.

Private Lands/Access

Spring Bear Damage Hunts: Private lands staff toured the North Skagit Unit to evaluate bear activity level, in-progress logging operations, as well as gate lock checks. Confirmed harvest and sightings, as well as photo documentation of bear damage late in the week revealed increased hunter efforts within the units.

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

Wildlife Areas

Cherry Valley Fish Passage Project: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with WDFW Project Manager Jenni Dykstra to coordinate plant delivery for the next round of planting. Due to high water in the Unit, planting has been delayed for two of the last three weeks. Planting is expected to resume April 29 through May 2.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm and Wild Fish Conservancy Project Manager Jamie Glasgow coordinated the placement of Dissolved Oxygen and temperature loggers for the Waterwheel Creek Project. Meters were placed in Lateral A and will record oxygen and temperature readings during the summer season.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with the Lessee to finalize the 2013 fencing plan to protect aquatic resources such as wetlands, and controlling the movement of cattle on the Unit. Additionally, approximately 40 pairs of cattle and calf units arrived on site on April 26.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm attended the monthly Sustainable Land Strategy meeting on April 24. Additionally, a second “walk-n-talk” meeting is planned for April 29 to continue discussions on the agricultural opportunities the Island could provide.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Lessees to discuss the 2013 agricultural plan for the Unit. A number of options are being considered including diversifying the crops being planted, providing better access to the Unit in the fields, and changes to the amount of crop left for wildlife. The Lessees are interested in working collaboratively to provide the best benefit to wildlife and recreational users.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with a representative from the Sky Valley Tractor Club to finalize the lease agreement and establish the lease management plan for the 2013 growing season. Changes to the management of the leased field include providing a defined area for dog training, a loop walking path for visitors, and grain left for wildlife food and cover.

Wildlife Area Noxious Weed Control: Natural Resource Technician Deyo applied herbicides to tansy ragwort, scotch broom and poison hemlock on the Lake Terrell, Intalco, and Nooksack units.

Tennant Lake Wetland Enhancement Project: Manager Kessler worked with the Port of Bellingham biologists to survey plant mortality on the wetland enhancement project site. This wetland enhancement project is mitigation for expansion work at the Bellingham Airport. The entire site was checked for trees and shrubs that did not survive the winter. The greatest mortality was with the red alders and western red cedars. The plants that died will be replaced soon. Manual control of reed canary grass will also be performed throughout the project site.

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

Wildlife Management

Big Game Co-management Meeting: Biologist Danilson attended the co-manager's meeting in Mill Creek. The primary purpose of this meeting was to review and discuss the annual agreement between WDFW and the Point Elliott Tribes. Danilson provided an update regarding the late winter elk surveys conducted in late-March and early-April, and provided an overview of WDFW's 2013-14 elk hunting regulations in Region 4.

Band-tailed Pigeon Project: Biologist DeBruyn set up a trapping station for pre-baiting at a private property bird feeder site in Hamilton. Band-tailed pigeons are frequenting the trap and the plan is to trap the first week of May, and equip two with transmitters for a trial run of the systems.

Fish Opener: Biologists Smith and Anderson participated in the annual Lowland Lake Opening Day Creel Survey manning Lake Walker in south King County. Fishers reported a good experience with most catching their limit of trout. The largest measured was a 17 ¾ inch beauty. Biologist Cyra also provided assistance with opening day of fishing.



Trout caught on Opening Day.

Osprey Nest Removal and Voluntary Platform Negotiation: Biologist Anderson heard back from Puget Sound Energy (PSE) biologists that a platform that was negotiated and fully supported by PSE is now successfully attracting an osprey pair from a conflict cell tower site.

Anderson has received issue from this particular site at least twice; once with an osprey dangling from the tower wrapped in fishing line, another season with an individual down on the ground unable to fly due to being wrapped in fishing line. Coordination with wildlife rehabilitators and collaboration with cell tower folks assisted those birds in each conflict instance. The cell tower owner had an experimental excluder that is being tested locally installed on it for this season; which worked!

However, the birds then moved to local PSE energized poles, creating a need for PSE to respond. Hopefully, these birds can progress without having some of these problems and incurring costs for PSE and other area public utility infrastructure entities.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Technician Otto and Biologist Roozen met with partner landowners to discuss both current farm operations, and begin planning for the fall. Otto and Roozen also discussed potential changes and growth of the program, and visited some of the unit locations in preparations for the hunt season.

Wildlife Areas

Tennant Lake Boardwalk: Natural Resource Technician Deyo hiked in and cleared and adjusted the beaver deceiver pipes and dams on Tennant Lake. The Tennant Lake boardwalk remains open to the public.

Tennant Lake Remote Viewing System: Manager Kessler worked to replace the defective monitor from the remote viewing system at the Tennant Lake viewing tower. A remote controlled pan, tilt and zoom camera allows handicapped visitors to experience the view from the top of the Tennant Lake tower.

Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP): Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw got an update from Whidbey Camano Land Trust (WCLT) on the Livingston Bay project, which is included in the PSNERP project package. There is a public Open House for the project on May 2 in Oak Harbor.

Wets Wetland Restoration Project: The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) completed and submitted the project design and specifications sheet that is stamped and signed by the project engineer. This version of the design can potentially be used to apply for permits.

Skagit Agricultural Enhancement and Lease Program: Manager Belinda Rotton and Private Lands Biologist Brandon Roozen prepared draft lease agreement for two of the WDFW South Padilla Bay properties. This agreement also includes access to some of the growers' land for hunting access.

Duck Stamp review meeting: Manager Rotton attended the biannual State Duck Stamp review meeting in North Bend. Region 4 had a good number of projects submitted this funding cycle.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm initiated site prep at the west portion of the Lake to provide improved access to fishermen for the season opener on April 27. Invasive reed canary grass and Himalayan blackberry were mowed with the new DR Field Mower so visitors could safely find the edge of the lake. Continued maintenance is planned to provide a number of fishing access areas on the Lake.



Invasive reed canary grass and Himalayan blackberry were mowed with the new field mower so visitors to Crescent Lake could safely find the edge of the lake.

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

Wildlife Management

Media Relations: Biologist Danilson spoke with a reporter from Huntin' Fool magazine to provide information regarding an article/update on mountain goat hunting in Washington State.

Respond to Public: Assistant District Biologist responded to several requests from the public dealing with unknown cause die-off of song birds (submitted to Madison), large unknown nesting structures in backyards, and potential new bald eagle nests in urban areas.

Hunting and Wildlife Outreach: Biologist Smith discussed outreach opportunities with a youth group in the Duvall area.

Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant application review: Biologist Milner completed final scores and voted on the proposed budget modifications, which concluded the grant review process for this year.

Navy Pika Project: Reviews of budget items and the list of products due to the Navy continued as we develop the final steps to the Navy awarding a small contract to WDFW to look for pika at the Navy's low elevation Jim Creek ownership. The process has been very collaborative and productive and we are close to getting a contract in place.

Wildlife Enhancements – Alaskan Way Viaduct: Biologist Anderson had phone conference with contractors that will be designing landscaping and wildlife enhancements as part of the Alaskan Way Viaduct project. SDOT asked the contractor to contact WDFW. Anderson will be providing non-jurisdictional management review and suggestions as with the SR 520 project, as designs come together.

Wildlife Areas

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with two members of the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) to discuss plans for the first official Citizen Advisory Group's meeting. Historical issues and goals were shared by Martha Jordan, and Paul Gilmore provided a perspective on dog trials and training.

Stillwater Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated a joint effort to establish a weed control plan for the Stillwater Wildlife Area. Professionals from WDFW Noxious Weed Program, King County Noxious Weeds, Sound Salmon Solutions, and Manager Boehm will meet next week to discuss pooling resources, coordinating scheduled visits and treatments, and identifying target weeds and locations. This activity will help establish the framework for a comprehensive approach to fighting noxious weeds at the Unit.

Tennant Lake Interpretive Activities: Manager Kessler discussed Tennant Lake interpretive activities with a teacher from a Bellingham Christian school. The teacher will be bringing a busload of students to the park to study the environment from the boardwalk.

Wiley Slough Working Group: Manager Rotton and other Working group members to include Habitat Biologist Brian Williams, Environmental Engineer Bob Barnard, and CAMP Engineer Ray Berm met with Dike District #22 Commissioners to review the 60 percent design drawing for the pump station to be installed on Wiley Slough.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Wildlife Management

Annual Regional Meeting: Region 4 Wildlife Program staff attended the annual briefing by Director Anderson and Deputy Director Stohr. Additional breakout session of Wildlife Staff with Deputy Assistant Director Schirato and Administrative Division Manager Henson provided a useful discussion of Program priorities and direction.

Blasting License Testing: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn travelled to Labor and Industries office in Tumwater to submit materials and take the examination for a Washington State blasting license.

Evaluation of Flight Following Software: Assistant District Biologist Cyra evaluated two flight following software packages. The current package in use has several limitations and a search is underway to see if there are more robust systems available.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle Management: Trapping for western pond turtles continued at the Sondino site for the second week. Biologists Anderson, George, Stephens, Bergh, and Holman all participated in various aspects of the work. A total of 12 basking and 12 hoop traps have been deployed in three of the more significant Sondino water bodies. The focus of this year's pond turtle work is to investigate the extent and severity of the shell disease condition in the Columbia River Gorge pond turtle populations. Following eight days of trapping, a total of 57 individual turtles have been encountered with many additional recaptures.

WDFW is pleased to have the assistance of Veterinarian Dr. Storms of the Oregon Zoo. Dr. Storms visited the Sondino site on one of the field days and evaluated WDFW's shell disease investigation and scoring system, participated in evaluating and treating animals, drew blood for further analysis from five individuals, and retained one animal for treatment at the Zoo. Thanks to Dr. Storms and the Oregon Zoo for their ongoing support of WDFW's western pond turtle project and helping WDFW evaluate the health of our local western pond turtle population.

An additional aspect of this year's work is the collection of hatchlings for the head starting program. The initial hatchling of the 2013 season was captured on the fourth day of trapping. Two additional hatchlings have been subsequently captured. The Oregon Zoo will again be participating in the captive rearing phase of head starting these animals.



Columbia River Gorge western pond turtle health evaluation

Resident Dark Goose Nest Survey:

WDFW staff teamed up with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), USFWS, and a few volunteers to survey Miller Sands and Rice Island for geese. The survey was limited this year to provide data for a Resident Dark Goose (RDG) nesting index. This year we focused on islands known to have RDG nesting and several were observed during the survey, both on nests and loafing nearby. These geese are a management challenge for migratory bird hunters and managers as they resemble the



Technician Sample checked RDG eggs.

Dusky subspecies, but do not migrate to the traditional nesting grounds in Alaska. Data from eggs that were floated will help to establish a date to band and neck collar these birds.



Resident Dark Goose (RDG) eggs (left) and a RDG observed on a nest (right).

Sandhill Crane Survey: Biologist Anderson participated in a two-day coordinated sandhill crane nesting survey on the Conboy National Wildlife Refuge. This annual survey is an attempt to document as many breeding pairs of cranes on the Refuge during the early nesting period. As a result of this week's survey, a total of eight nesting pairs were observed on the Refuge.

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, four fawns remain alive.

Wildlife Areas

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

Poison Hemlock Control: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald completed the first round treating poison hemlock in the North and South units of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area with an herbicide spray. The amount of time on this task has been reduced over the years from a few weeks to a few days due to the control efforts in greatly reducing the number of plants on the area. Hauswald will check on all the sites in another month to treat any remaining plants that were missed or that have germinated since the first treatment.

Pasture Replanting: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Technician Sample began disking a 16 acre field in the South Unit of Shillapoo to replant with a grass, clover, and grain mix to improve wintering forage for waterfowl. This field was originally scheduled to be replanted last year, but was too wet due to the wet spring and high river levels in the Region. The field should be replanted by the end of next week.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Master Hunter Volunteers: Master Hunters Ihrig and Roscoe worked with Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven to chip approximately 0.3 road mile of thinning slash along Old Headquarters Road on Friday. Master Hunter Ihrig brought a large capacity chipper that was able to process oak slash, which saved us a lot of time by not having to cut the pieces up before feeding them through the chipper. Oak has a gnarly growth form that often makes it difficult to work with. They worked a total of seven hours on this project and cleaned up a section of road that is traveled frequently by the public as well as agency personnel.



Master Hunter Volunteers

Turkey Hunting: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven met several hunters in the field in the course of her work last week, and all reported that they had observed turkeys. The turkeys seem to be responding to calls later into the season this year. One party of hunters has been hunting turkeys on the Klickitat Wildlife Area for 40 seasons and they considered this to be a good year.

Road Maintenance: The WDFW road maintenance crew arrived last week to grade roads and to add rock to spots that have been prone to damage when wet. The crew brought along a roller, which was used to roll the newly applied rock down. This helps lock the rock in place, making a nicer driving surface and extending the life of the work.

A local landowner offered to donate more boulders to the Wildlife Area, so the road maintenance crew used these boulders to create more barriers to off-road driving along the Sheep Canyon Road.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Snowy Plovers: Biologist Sundstrom conducted a preliminary survey of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineer's Dune Restoration project area at Graveyard Spit. Sundstrom identified one area of high plover activity and observed a lone unbanded female in another area. The survey was incomplete because of unknown tidal timing and safe return access issues. Sundstrom returned later in the week to complete a comprehensive survey and was accompanied by Steve Spencer and Larissa Pfleeger of the Shoalwater Bay Tribe. The three observed and identified one pair of snowy plovers, but no scrape or nest was discovered at that time. Weekly surveys at that location will begin next week.

WDFW wants to remind anyone recreating on the beach that the breeding season for many ground nesting shorebirds has begun and they are highly sensitive to human disturbance.

Although some areas have been closed to human access in an effort to provide areas where these birds can nest undisturbed, they can and will nest in areas where people recreate. So, please be aware of your surroundings and avoid any area you think a bird may be nesting. A sure sign a bird is nesting is if it refuses to leave the area and appears to be agitated.

The following story illustrates the importance of looking for signs of nesting birds in the area you are going to recreate and then moving to a new area if you suspect a bird in the area has a nest. Unfortunately, the nest in this story belongs to a state endangered Western snowy plover and will most likely fail.

After the survey at Graveyard Spit on Friday, Biologist Sundstrom made a quick stop at Midway Beach to check on the two known active nests. Those nests are still active and undisturbed. She observed a truck driving high up on the open dry sand area (not within a posted area) where she

had suspected a nest but had not yet discovered it. The truck parked, two men exited and let two large dogs out of the truck; the dogs ran around, dug holes, and chased sticks. The men and dogs eventually departed. Sundstrom went to investigate where she found an active snowy plover nest and one very agitated female plover. The photos below tell the story. One other additional nest was also discovered, bringing the total of discovered nests to five at Midway.



Midway Beach – can you find the nest?



Snowy Plover nest – a near 'fatality' accident.

Leadbetter Point: Biologist Sundstrom spent a couple days at Leadbetter Point to complete snowy plover surveys with USFWS Biologist Ritchie. They observed 14 adult plovers and were able to locate the first nest of the season (see photo). Sundstrom was also able to identify several areas/territories with scrapes and observed copulation between a pair of plovers. She also observed numerous vehicles driving on the closed portion of beach and people digging clams on a closed beach; calls were made to Enforcement.



Leadbetter Point's first discovered nest of the season.