Wildlife Program

Week of August 5-11, 2013

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Wildlife Management

Section Manager Interviews – Interviews were held for both the Listing and Recovery and the Lands Conservation Section Manager positions. I am very excited to announce that Penny Becker has been selected as the new Natural Resource Scientist 4 Listing and Recovery Section Manager and will be in her new job the week of September 1. Penny has a Doctorate in Wildlife Management and is currently the Research Scientist/Columbia Basin Pygmy Rabbit Recovery Coordinator, located in Region 2.

Prior to her work with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Penny worked as a research associate with the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute where she coordinated reintroductions of endangered African wild dogs in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In addition to having a sound grasp of the state and federal planning and regulatory requirements of the Listing and Recovery Section Manager Position, her experience implementing conservation actions on the ground should allow her to take a results oriented approach to our listing and recovery activities across the state. Please welcome her to her new position. We are not yet in a position to announce the outcome of the interviews for the Lands Conservation position, but it should be announced soon

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1: Wildlife Staff Jay Shepherd, Annemarie Prince, and Dana Base participated on Monday, August 5 in the bi-weekly agency staff teleconferences on coordination of wolf management issues, concerns, initiatives, and activities. These teleconferences are generally facilitated by Wildlife Section Manager Donny Martorello. District Wildlife Biologist Base also fielded two reports of wolf detections and directed the reporting parties to the agency online reporting system.

Specialist Shepherd, Private Lands Technician Bendixen, and contract and volunteer range riders patrolled the McKinley Mountain area of the Wedge and Hanks Butte area of Tiger Hill on various nights and days. Private Lands Technician Bendixen and the federal grazing allotment holder observed wolf howling in the Wedge and Specialist Shepherd and volunteer range riders

observed sign in the Hanks Butte area. Specialist Shepherd discussed range riding, the Ruby Creek wolf, and the Smackout wolf pack with the federal grazing allotment holders.

Specialist Shepherd worked with contract volunteer range riders to direct rides near clustered wolf locations in the Tiger Hill grazing allotment to determine if cattle were present at the locations. Specialist Shepherd and a federal grazing permit holder checked cameras in the McKinley Mountain area of the Wedge. Only cattle, white-tailed deer, coyotes, and humans were photographed. Specialist Shepherd and Officer Anderson visited the Wedge to discuss wolf observations with residents and look for access to deploy remote cameras. Specialist Shepherd participated or attended conference calls pertaining to Wedge wolf issues, a wolf newspaper article, and the conflict section. Specialist Shepherd called a resident of Pend Oreille County concerning an injured horse and attended to a doe wrapped in wire in Colville.

District 2: Biologist McCanna received two landowner calls reporting wolf tracks and howling in the Ewan area. Another landowner stopped by McCanna's office to report a sighting of two wolves in the Ewan area in which one had a collar. We have had a report of a collared wolf less than two miles from this sighting six months ago. McCanna confirmed the tracks reported were from what appears to be two wolves. McCanna will spend more time in the area during evening and dawn hours as all reports were localized.

District 3: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy checked U.S. Forest Service (USFS) roads on the east side of Tucannon for wolf activity; no tracks or likely scat detected.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

<u>Wildlife Management</u>

Pre-season Deer Surveys: District 1 biological staff initiated summer deer classification counts this week on survey transects located within Game Management Units (GMUs) 101, 105, 108, 111, 113, 117, and 121. This week 8 of 20 transects were surveyed.

Deer Preseason Composition Surveys
District 2: Biologist Atamian completed the north Mica Peak deer survey route for August. Atamian counted 111 deer (82 does, 5 fawns, and 24 bucks). Few fawns were seen, but that is fairly normal for August when fawns are still

small and hiding. August surveys are used to estimate buck to doe ratios, the route will be rerun again in September for fawn to doe ratio estimates. Biologist Ferguson completed two Mount Spokane (GMU 124) deer routes. Over 100 deer were observed each night. The first night Ferguson observed a total of 118 total deer (59 does, 37 fawns, 22 bucks) and on the second night a total of 140 total deer (71 does, 47 fawns, 20 bucks).

Blue Mountains Pre-season Deer Surveys: District Biologist Wik completed five deer and elk surveys during the week in GMUs 172, 178, and 181. A total of 330 mule deer and 171 white-tailed deer were classified. Mule deer buck ratios averaged 43:100 while white-tailed deer averaged 38:100.

REGION 2

Wolf Management

Okanogan Wolf Management: Biologist Spence wrapped up the summer's second trapping session in the Lookout Pack wolf territory. Although he was not able to capture and radio-mark any of those wily wolves, he did confirm reproduction with a visual observation of three pups.

U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Biologist Rohrer received two credible reports of multiple wolves in two different locations last week, one from the middle of the Pasayten Wilderness and one in the Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness. Immediate follow-up is unlikely due to the remoteness of the locations. The known members of the Lookout Pack were thought to still be in front country locations when the observations occurred, but we can't be sure without radio-marked animals.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Wolverine Research Project: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen deployed a wolverine run-pole hair-snag/camera station in a remote backcountry site. This is part of a new project initiative to test the efficacy of a non-invasive, summertime population monitoring technique. Sites are being deployed systematically for seven to eight weeks within the known home ranges of radio-monitored study animals. The set-ups are designed to collect hair (DNA samples) and photograph the unique chest blaze markings of individuals. Robert Long, now with the Woodland Park Zoo, is partnering with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Olympia Research Station to head up this field effort.

Left: Wolverine Range, North Cascades. Right: Run-pole survey site. *Photos by Scott Fitkin.*

Northern Leopard Frogs: Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei conducted a recon for the presence of Northern Leopard Frogs in the B pond of the Potholes Wildlife Area. Biologists counted 100 leopard frogs in a short period of time on two ponds. The last time surveys were conducted in 2011, biologists only counted 3 leopard frogs in the same area and a total of 118 leopard frogs in all the ponds of subunits A and B (total of 52 ponds). Early indications suggest we may have had a relatively productive year for leopard frogs. Official surveys are being planned for next week.

Western Grebes: Biologists Finger took Biologists Wiles and Duvuvuei on a tour of the Potholes Reservoir to observe grebe breeding colonies, search for young of the year grebes, and discuss the recent decline in grebe populations. During the tour, biologists found several depredated egg shells near a recently active colony. Although biologists did not expect to see many young of the year grebes, a hundred or more chicks of various ages were observed in the main body of water. The amount of chicks coupled with their varying ages indicated that other grebe nesting colonies around Potholes Reservoir are still to be discovered.

Western grebe family groups with young of various ages. *Photo by G. Wiles.*

Jackrabbit: Biologist Gallie conducted jackrabbit presence/absence surveys in coordination with other districts to validate connectivity models of the species. Results are promising in Douglas County as 10 out of 14 plots documented jackrabbits, along with three rabbits flushed from around the plots, 20 different pellet and tissue (road kill) samples were collected for DNA analysis to evaluate connectivity of these separate habitat patches. Jackrabbits have been detected in dense sagebrush, open scablands, and even mowed Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) stands.

A jackrabbit's view of Moses Coulee, Douglas County

Releases of Pygmy Rabbits: Research Scientist Penny Becker, graduate student Steph DeMay, Scientific Technicians Brooks Kohli and Erin Duvuvuei, and a team of staff and volunteers worked on July 30 to capture and release pygmy rabbit kits from the Dormaier breeding enclosure to the wild at Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area. Twelve kits were caught this week. These kits, along with another four that were kept in the nursery to give them time to grow, were released. In all, 238 have been released this season. From August 13-15 we will attempt to capture all rabbits in each enclosure to apply flea treatments and sample any individuals not yet caught this year.

Private Lands/Access

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): Biologist Dougherty assisted Technician Steele with wildlife habitat plot maintenance. These duties included assessing site conditions, spraying herbicides to kill weeds and mowing. The wildlife plots provide islands of desirable habitat in areas mostly devoid of suitable habitat. These plots allow wildlife species to more easily move across the landscape by using these habitat plots as stopover points, and then moving into larger areas.

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE): Biologist Dougherty has been in contact with the Farm Service Agency (FSA), and will be working to recruit interested landowners into the Conservation Field Buffer program as well as the Ferruginous Hawk SAFE program in Adams County. These programs provide a financial incentive for landowners to preserve and enhance wildlife habitat. In coming weeks, Biologist Dougherty hopes to contact landowners that voiced an interest in the programs and enroll them.

Private Lands Biologist Braaten spent most of the week checking SAFE fields in north Douglas County for weed spraying. Most of the landowners are on schedule. Private Lands Biologist Braaten talked with several landowners about possibility of redoing SAFE fields that have a majority of goat grass or cheatgrass compared to native grasses.

Biologist Cotton provided FSA with herbicide recommendations for fields dominated by jointed goat grass.

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

Wildlife Management

Hunter Access: Biologist Dougherty has continued to renew and update Hunter Access Agreements. Most recently Biologist Dougherty has begun to renew agreements within Grant County. In total there were 20 agreements that needed to be renewed, and Biologist Dougherty has worked through 16 thus far renewing a total of 9,020 acres for hunter access. The remaining four agreements are likely to be renewed and will add an additional 23,112 acres for hunter

access. Private Lands Biologist Braaten continues to work on renewing and cancelling Access/Habitat contracts with private landowners.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

Environmental Education: Biologist Fitkin and USFS Biologist Rohrer taught our annual weekend class on rare carnivores at the North Cascades Institute (NCI) Learning Center on Diablo Lake. Great chance to connect with wildlife enthusiasts, and better yet, NCI uses the proceeds from the class to support their youth programs which are busy inspiring the next generation of wildlife supporters.

Left: Carnivore Habitat, North Cascades. Right: North Cascades Institute – Carnivore Class, 2013. *Photos by Scott Fitkin.*

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Duck Banding: Construction of duck traps began at two locations on the Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area. So far at least 50 ducks have been seen at each site feeding during the pre-baiting period. Trapping will begin next week with a goal of 200 mallards.

Duck trap construction

Mourning Dove Banding: Banding wrapped up this week at the Ringold Hatchery. Over the course of nine trapping sessions a total of 155 birds were banded. Since 2009, a total of 567 doves have been banded at this location. This year's capture rate was similar to previous years at this site. Birds hatched this year accounted for 74% of the total captures as compared to 71% of the four-year total.

Banded mourning dove

Wildlife Areas

Burn in Quilomene Creek drainage

Colockum Tarps Fire: Work continues on the 80,184 acre Colockum Tarps Fire. This human-caused fire is now 98% contained, although interior burning continues with isolated torching, smoldering and creeping. On August 8, Colockum Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky and Assistant District Biologist Moore flew the entire fire area by helicopter. Riparian zones and timber stringers were burned in all drainages from Colockum Creek south to Quilomene Creek, and east to the Brewton Road, bordering the Arthur Coffin Game Reserve. Burn severity was highest in the northern drainages and became less as it moved south. Some south-facing slopes and most lithosols did not burn. Riparian drainages burned very hot.

Roughly 60 miles of riparian zones burned intensely in the Colockum Tarps Fire, with partial burns on uplands.

Burned Quilomene Creek restoration site

Bear Canyon Fire: Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager Huffman responded to a fire on the wildlife area Saturday afternoon. The fire was located in Bear Canyon, north of Highway 12 and was started by a lightning strike. A DNR helitac crew was the first on scene and used bucket drops to stop the spread in the open grass. The following day several hand crews and two contract engines worked on the fire. It was kept to about five acres.

Trees torching on the Bear Canyon fire Saturday afternoon. The fire was removing the fir trees, but did not damage the nearby large pine.

Helicopter brought in a bucket drop on the Bear Canyon Fire on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area.

Post Fire Flooding: Two flood events occurred on the evenings of August 10 and August 11. Strong storm cells moved through the area and paused over the burned area. Strong winds, accompanied by torrential rain and hail resulted in severe flooding. The August 10 event was less severe, but debris flows did block the Tarpiscan Road and Colockum Road until Chelan County crews could blade mud and debris off the roads. The August 11 rain event was more severe, with a flash flood occurring down Colockum Creek and Dry Gulch, damaging homes, vehicles, and roads. Access to the Colockum and Tarpiscan Roads, including the wildlife area headquarters were blocked for two days, while crews cleared roads and assessed damage to roads and bridges.

Debris flows out of Walling Canyon during the August 10 rain event that briefly blocked access on Tarpiscan Road to the Colockum Wildlife Area Headquarters.

Above: The Colockum Creek flash flood on August 11, 2013, damaged homes, vehicles, bridges, roads, and blocked access to the Colockum Wildlife Area Headquarters for two days. Below: Flash flood in Colockum Creek, August 11.

Milepost 10 Fire: A lightning storm on August 9 started a fire just north of the Colockum Wildlife Area, and spread rapidly to the north and west, threatening a power transmission line, a communications site, the communities of Malaga, and homes in the Kingsbury, Stemilt Basin and Wenatchee Heights. This 6,000 acre fire is now 70% contained, and did not burn additional acreage on the Colockum Wildlife Area.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Snoqualmie Bear Project: Biologist Smith assisted Graduate Student Welfelt and Technician Buskirk with checking and removing barbed-wire bear hair corrals used during the second and final session for the year. Bear hair samples were collected at about 75% of the 40 corrals. Again, several corrals produced multiple samples.

Bear hair snag corral used during the second round of the Snoqualmie Bear Project.

State Listed Common Loon Efforts: Biologist Smith checked on the active loon territory at Calligan Lake. No chick was seen, however, the adult pair continues to exhibit behavior indicative of care for chicks. The chick (if present) is estimated to be about 7 weeks old. Attempts to confirm the suspected chick will continue as opportunities arise.

Adult loon patrols Calligan Lake.

Mergansers observed near the shore of Calligan Lake.

Elk-Vehicle Collisions on State Route 20: Biologist DeBruyn gathered information about elk killed on State Route 20 in Skagit County. DeBruyn talked to representatives from Washington State Patrol, Washington State Department of Transportation, and local Native American Tribes and visited the sites of recent collisions (including three incidents in two days this week) to determine how to facilitate the flow of information about these events. DeBruyn continues to work with GIS staff from Olympia to evaluate the potential for developing a smartphone app to streamline the reporting process and insure a central repository for road kill and elk crossing data. Improved data collection will help biologists better understand the frequency of elk crossing and the locations high collision frequency with the goal of developing projects that will address this very serious public safety risk.

Staff is evaluating the potential for developing a smartphone app to streamline the reporting process and insure a central repository for road kill and elk crossing data for State Route 20.

Canada Goose Mortality Event: Biologist DeBruyn communicated with The National Wildlife Health Center and department veterinary staff regarding a necropsy of one of five Canada geese that died at a local refinery. The goose was found to be emaciated and loaded with intestinal parasites. All geese were molting and flightless. It is speculated that they died due to malnutrition from living in an environment (the refinery retention pond) that lacked nutrients and was contaminated with parasites due to lack of flow. Tests for botulism and avian influenza were negative and tests for other contaminants are ongoing. The property owner will be advised of the findings and recommendations made to avoid future events. DeBruyn responded to another report of a sick goose in a field near Conway but found that the goose was wounded and most probably shot with a small caliber weapon.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Aquatic Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Meeting: Biologist Milner attended a meeting in Olympia sponsored by DNR who have asked for WDFW input into their Aquatic Lands HCP. The strategies for development and implementation of the plan were discussed.

Osprey Management: Biologist Anderson received multiple calls regarding “what to do” for removal of osprey nests. Anderson referred multiple inquiries to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for confirmation of nest removal during the breeding season. Anderson explained that

at this time of year the “false nests” that osprey are building are common and tend to be failed or new pairs examining potential nest sites and pair bonding prior to migration.

Anderson also emphasized that removal of nests during the nonbreeding season (October through February) requires a WDFW Osprey Nest Removal Permit and associated review of justification for nest removal.

Anderson also consulted with Seattle City Light regarding osprey conflict issues and ongoing mitigation efforts. Seattle City Light regularly moves nests in consultation with USFWS and WDFW to exclude osprey from energized structures and provide alternate nest platforms.

Lower Snoqualmie Valley Bat Monitoring: Biologist Anderson assisted WFDW volunteers with Bats Northwest in a survey for bats at WDFW properties in August. Anderson and volunteers conducted night acoustic monitoring at Stillwater Wildlife Management Unit. Bats were recorded and data will be compiled and analyzed. The volunteers also conducted a survey at Crescent Lake this week. The third and final survey of August and the pupping season will be at Cherry Valley in the next coming weeks.

American Pika Lowland Survey: Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued surveys for American Pika at a low-elevation naval installation with no new locations detected. Operations at the site precluded a complete survey on one instance. Surveys will continue this week on remaining surveyed habitat patches. While the USFWS declined to list the American Pika under the Endangered Species Act, it was determined that climate change was the leading likely cause of Pika population reductions in other parts of the country. With increasing temperatures, low elevation populations while rare, may be at increased risk in the future.

Mountain Goat: Assistant District Biologist Cyra completed data processing of the survey area and detection locations for the recent aerial surveys for Mountain Goats in the Darrington Survey Block.

Wildlife Areas

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with agricultural lessee Alexander to discuss the vegetation management plan for August and preparation for the fall hunting season. Approximately 60 acres of pasture has been mowed by the lessee. Manager Boehm will mow grass and invasive weeds on approximately 100 additional acres in the coming weeks.

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm collaborated with staff from Wild Fish Conservancy (WFC), Ducks Unlimited and a neighboring landowner for the Stillwater Revetment Project which began this week. All permits are in hand and vegetation has been cleared within the work area. A temporary haul road has been constructed and the contractor has started hauling fill off-site. Project Manager Micah Waite from WFC is pleased with the progress to date and looks forward to a busy week ahead.

Crescent Lake: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued the vegetation management plan at Crescent Lake this week. Access roads, walking trails, and overgrown fallow fields were targeted for treatment of invasive vegetation. Two volunteers joined manager Boehm as they prepare the unit for the fall hunting season. Vegetation management will continue into the next week due to equipment breakdowns and the extensive volume of work that is required.

Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP): Projects Coordinator Brokaw drafted a list of known stakeholders and interests to be included in a future outreach strategy for proposed PSNERP projects in Region 4.

Private Lands/Access

Duck Trapping: Natural Resource Technician Otto and Deyo assisted District 14 staff to prepare a waterfowl trapping location in Whatcom County.

Agriculture assessment: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo inspected barley fields in Whatcom and Skagit counties for the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program.

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

Wildlife Management

Game Management Unit (GMU) 418 Bull Hunt Coordination: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn along with Technicians Otto and Deyo made preparations for and attended a landowner-hunter coordination meeting on Saturday August 10. The meeting, facilitated by WDFW, is a condition of an annual agreement between WDFW and Sierra-Pacific Industries which provides access to elk hunters on Sierra-Pacific property in GMU 418. Preparations over the past week included finalizing the landowner agreement, preparing map packets, developing access agreements, and resolving road closure issues. The majority of the 23 tag holders were present. Topics covered included biological information and harvest management strategies, access rules and requirements, WDFW personnel contact information, key issuance/return logistics, and desired biological information from successful hunters. Individual access agreements were signed by each hunter, who received a map packet and gate keys.

Band-Tailed Pigeon Study: Biologist Sherman Anderson conducted ground-based searches for mineral springs and nest locations. A total of three nests have been located this week while tracking pigeons with telemetry gear. One individual was tracked directly from a potential mineral spring area to a nest. Biologist Anderson and DeBruyn will continue ground-based searches for the remainder of the project. A transmitter and leg band were recovered in Skagit County near the Hamilton area, thus leaving seven active transmitters in the field. It is believed that this pigeon was shot out of season.

Skagit Bay Important Bird Area: Skagit Audubon Society and Biologist Milner received notification that the Skagit Bay Important Bird Area (IBA) has been recognized as a site of

global importance. The nomination application for this site was prepared jointly by Milner and Skagit Audubon member Pam Pritzl. This project highlights the importance of Skagit Bay, in addition Port Susan Bay, which was recognized an IBA many years ago, as an extremely important ecological site for many species of birds.

Waterfowl Trapping and Banding: Biologist DeBruyn worked with volunteers from the Washington Waterfowl Association to build three duck traps for catching and banding mallards to further population studies of resident ducks in the western flyway.

Duck trap in the pre-baiting position.

Whidbey/Camano Land trust Property Evaluation: Biologist Milner met with Land Trust staff to evaluate one of their properties for current wildlife habitat value and recommend ideas for future restoration of the site.

Green River (GMU 485) Special Permit Hunt: Biologist Anderson received some calls from permit holders on the ins and outs of the upcoming fall hunt within the Green Watershed. One permit holder was up in Alaska and concerned about scouting and receiving information. Anderson confirmed address of the permittee and explained that a package of information will be coming to them at the tail end of August from Tacoma Water, the property owners of that area. Tacoma Water sends information out regarding hunting around the Howard Hanson Reservoir and within the Green Watershed due to restricted access to this area. During the week-long permit hunt, hunters are allowed in the watershed and afforded time to be in and out that entire week to scout and take an animal.

Urban Wildlife Presentation to Sandpoint Elementary Summer Camp: Biologist Anderson provided outreach to a group of 40 kindergarten and first grade students at the LASER summer camp at Sandpoint Elementary. Anderson went through use of binoculars to watch wildlife from afar and passed a pair around to the children. The children got to touch and observe various pelts, native birds and skulls. Anderson went through and repeated how wildlife is not pets and appropriate actions if wildlife is not leaving the children alone. Overall, it was very entertaining for the kids and they got a taste of how to watch wildlife appropriately and how to be safe and avoid conflict with their parents while enjoying the outdoors.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Agricultural Enhancement and Lease Program

Island Unit: Natural Resources Specialist (NRS) Greg Meis and Natural Resources Tech (NRT) Curran Cosgrove monitored weed treatment and water conditions on the Island. NRT Cosgrove began mowing field edges and disking in Ole Thompson and Seattle pond fields. Cosgrove also assisted volunteer with ferry and other operation on the Island. Manager Belinda Rotton contacted Skagit County Planning Services office to check on the status of the Island Unit Ditch Maintenance Project application. Chris Gourley, CAMP permit biologist, contacted the Army Corp of Engineers to check on the status of the Corp permit. Wildlife area staff met with volunteer to coordinate activities on the Island over the next few months. NRS Meis met with volunteer Jay Koetje to discuss the details of the proposed beaver dam removal and dredging project.

Bow Hill Road: Natural Resources Specialist Meis met with representatives from Department of Natural Resources and the owner of the Bow Hill Pheasant Release Site to discuss the upcoming logging operation proposed for the site.

Private Lands/Access

Access control: For Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites, Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo performed vegetation control to enhance access for the upcoming season.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

Big Game Hunting Inquiries: Biologist Danilson fielded calls related to the upcoming GMU 418 bull hunt and hunters with general over the counter tags. Most calls pertained to access, information about areas private landowner damage issues, and hunt area boundaries. Danilson also provided assistance to one of the bull hunters who did not receive his tag in the mail and was drawn for an additional cow elk tag he would not be able to use.

North Cascades Elk Management: Biologist Danilson and Conflict Specialist Griffith spent the week coordinating master hunters, responding to landowner contacts, and finishing up a variety of tasks to get Griffith fully operational. Danilson and Griffith met throughout the Skagit Valley. In addition to issuing some landowner permits, good discussions about potential fencing options appear to have created interest in cooperative fencing projects with at least two landowners. Griffith will be working directly with these landowners to develop draft fencing plan proposals and develop an intra-agency request to experiment with new approaches to addressing elk damage to agricultural lands.

Manager Link, Biologist Danilson, and Specialist Griffith attended a meeting with Senator Pearson, Program Manager Link, and Captain Hobbs on Monday. The meeting was informational and an opportunity for Senator Pearson to meet Specialist Griffith and learn about elk conflict management in Skagit and Whatcom counties. Per the senator's request, Danilson followed up with information about elk-vehicle collision on State Route 20 and has made contact with local media to increase community awareness about the steps the department is taking to address elk problems in the area.

2013 Hunting Prospects within District 12, King County: Biologists Anderson and Smith finalized their draft of the 2013 hunt prospects for District 12. Hunting opportunity is quite good for various species in GMU 460 and undeveloped areas of GMU 454. Other GMUs such as 485 and 466 have nice opportunity as well, albeit require permits (GMU 485) or in the case of 466 it is a bit more difficult to access due to it being up in the foothills off the beaten path. For solitude and still having nice opportunity for deer or elk, GMU 466 is a great choice.

Private Lands/Access

Road closure: Natural Resource Technician Otto and Forester Sands for Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) located road closure locations for Private Lands staff to post signage for Nooksack (GMU 418) walk in hunting only.

Natural Resource Technician Deyo posted no parking and closed area signs for a Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program partner having issues with fisherman trespassing on enrolled lands.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program (WQHP) partners: Natural Resource Technician Otto and Deyo contacted and met with Snohomish and Skagit County partners in the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program to confirm their participation in the program and signed CAPS agreements with two new partners.

Washington Waterfowl Association (WWA) Meeting: Natural Resource Technician Otto attended the WWA Whatcom Chapter and discussed the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program's upcoming season and volunteer opportunities. Otto explained enrollment in the CERVIS volunteer program.

Wildlife Areas

Fir Island Farms Final Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and The Nature Conservancy met via phone to review a draft monitoring table for the Adaptive Management Plan and determine next steps to continue drafting the plan.

Leque Island Public Outreach and Alternatives Analysis Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw answered questions from stakeholders and the Stanwood Camano News regarding WDFW's next steps in the public outreach and alternatives analysis project. The WDFW district review team scheduled a meeting to plan next steps, which will likely include holding a public meeting in early fall.

Samish River Unit - Welts Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw posted an announcement in the Skagit Valley Herald calendar to advertise the upcoming Public Open House for the project at http://www.goskagit.com/calendar/public_meetings/samish-river-unit---welts-property-wetland-restoration-project/event_6bea0b72-0042-11e3-9afa-101f742cecfe.html. Projects Coordinator Brokaw also mailed invitations to adjacent property owners. The Open House is scheduled for August 28 from 6:30–8:00 p.m. at the Braezeale Padilla Bay Reserve large meeting room.

Bald Eagle Natural Area: Manager Rotton and Lands Agent Kye Iris met with a representative from a local private timber company that is proposing to log a parcel near our Jackman Creek property. The company is proposing to open a portion of the abandoned roadway to allow for this logging operation. The company is awaiting more information from a geological review to determine if the harvest project will move forward. Iris suggested the determination to harvest should be made before forwarding the proposal to WDFW. Rotton and Iris had an opportunity to tour the site and are prepared to consult with Olympia staff if the request moves forward.

Vegetation Control: Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resource Tech Cosgrove treated weeds on the Fir Island Farms, Jensen Access, Moberg Road, and Leque Island properties.

Manager Rotton and Natural Resource Specialist Meis met with Dave Heimer, WDFW Puget Sound Weed Crew, and Brian Williams, WDFW Habitat biologist, to discuss a proposal for cat-tail control in the Skagit Bay estuary. The group toured a few sites in the estuary and restoration

projects to include some of the project work completed by Greg Hood from the Skagit River Systems Cooperative some years ago.
Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm facilitated a Citizen's Advisory Group (CAG) monthly meeting this week. Area waterfowl hunters were invited to discuss the history of waterfowl hunting in the Snoqualmie Valley, identify what needs to be done now to improve conditions, and discuss ways to move forward. Nine people attended the meeting and provided Manager Boehm with a variety of information and ideas. Manager Boehm requested that those in attendance deliver a "call for volunteers" to folks they know to continue the momentum generated so far.

Leque Island: Natural Resource Tech Cosgrove sprayed and mowed areas of poison hemlock and thistle on Leque Island Unit.

Headquarter Unit: Natural Resource Tech Cosgrove and Natural Resource Specialist Meis extinguished a smoldering log that had been set ablaze in the Skagit estuary adjacent to the Headquarters Unit.

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Wildlife Management

Wetland Ecology and Management Training: Manager Rotton continued coordinating with Waterfowl Program Manager Don Kraege and Dr. Leigh Fredrickson in preparation for the Wetland Ecology and Management training workshop early this fall. Workshop announcement and registration went out this week.

Washington Association of Fish and Wildlife Professionals (WAFWP) Meeting: Biologist Milner attended the annual Washington Association of Fish and Wildlife Professionals meeting.

Radio Training: Assistant District Biologist Cyra assisted Management Analyst Schreiner of the Conflict section in providing instruction to new staff on radio training and use requirements for new hires in the Conflict/Damage program. Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued to provide radio training and information to several other Wildlife Program staff.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Annual Release of western pond turtles at Beacon Rock State Park: Biologists Holman and Hallock facilitated the release of western pond turtles to Beacon Rock State Park. The turtles from this, the seventh year of releases, will join the entirely introduced population of western

pond turtles at the State Park. Thanks to the Woodland Park Zoo for their care and handling of these animals for the past year. This is the final pond turtle release for 2013. A grand total of over 1,400 animals have now been released into four locations in the Columbia River Gorge over the past 23 years. The Beacon Rock site represents a nice example of co-management of natural resources by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Washington State Park, and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). Please see photos below of the wetland habitat at the State Park and WSDOT's newly constructed wetland enhancement/mitigation project also located on the Park.

Left: Wetland habitat at Beacon Rock State Park. Right: Homestead Lake Mitigation.

Black-tailed Deer Research Project: The Region 5 portion of the black-tailed deer research project is ongoing. Study does are still 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). Fawn monitoring is currently being conducted. To date, four 2013 fawns remain alive in the Washougal study cluster and two fawns remain alive in the Coweeman study cluster.

Golden Eagle Survey: Biologist Anderson is currently compiling all information for the 2013 statewide golden eagle survey completed this spring and summer in District 9. A total of 14 golden eagle territories were surveyed for occupancy and productivity. The majority of sites in District 9 are located from the Klickitat River drainage east. Preliminary results indicate a very poor nesting year for golden eagles in District 9 as well in the rest of the state of Washington.

Wildlife Areas

Shillapoo Wildlife Area -- Noxious Weed Control: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Loomis continued with noxious weed control efforts at all Shillapoo Units the past week. All known area of Purple Loosestrife infestations was surveyed and any plants found were treated with

Purple loosestrife in the South Cell Wetland

herbicide. A large Yellow Flag Iris patch with five-foot tall leaves was located and treated with herbicide. Mowing of Reed Canary Grass was extended to the Vancouver Lake Unit and a large patch of Bull Thistle was also mowed to prevent the plants from seeding out. The Vancouver Lake area mowing has also increased public access to the site and the trap shooting range was also mowed in this unit.

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

Wildlife Management

Upcoming Hunting Season: Biologist Anderson was contacted by several hunters this week asking a variety of questions about the upcoming hunting season. Most questions and concerns are about access and the potential for forest lands to be closed because of the current fire danger. Other questions have been about elk hunting opportunities this year, the best places to scout in the south Cascades, and where to hunt on public and private lands for youth permits in GMU 382 (East Klickitat).

Wildlife Areas

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area -- Road Maintenance on the Mudflow Unit: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Technician Sample spent some time this past week adding gravel to the 3100 Road going through the Mudflow Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. They hauled about 20 yards of rock and fine material from a previous gravel operation site on the Wildlife Area and placed it in a rutted and rough section of the roadway. Hauswald also spent some time improving a pathway out to the island area removing large rocks to gain easier access to an area for future work.

Shillapoo Wildlife Area -- Duck Blind Maintenance: Members of the Washington Waterfowl Association Lower Columbia Chapter and Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald spent a day cleaning, fixing, and remodeling seven of the North Unit hunting blinds. Another work party will be scheduled to do maintenance on the remaining blinds and to possibly build one or two new blinds that will be available to hunt out of this fall.

Private Lands/Access

County Line: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes hauled three yards of gravel and spread it on a new parking area to be designated for ADA users.

County Line Access Site

Kress Lake: Access staff Spangler met with WDFW construction shop to repair a drop off at the end of the new boat ramp. The water level is at a yearly low so trailers can go over the edge and bottom out their trailers. A dump truck hauled a couple loads of four to six inch gabion rock and a track hoe set and packed the rock.

Kress Lake Boat Ramp Repair

Mineral Lake Lower: While limbing brush around the reader board, signs, and walkway leading to the lower dock and picking up and hauling 60 pounds of trash from behind and inside the restrooms; access staff Spangler and Rhodes noticed a painted turtle with a fishing hook stuck in its mouth. The animal was lethargic and capturing it with their hands off a log wasn't difficult. The hook was removed from its mouth and the turtle was released.

Painted turtle found with a fishing hook stuck in its mouth was released with the hook removed.

GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

<u>Wildlife Areas</u>

Klickitat Wildlife Area: Rich Davis started his first week with WDFW as the Natural Resource Technician on the Klickitat Wildlife Area. Rich comes to WDFW with a lengthy work history of land stewardship and management of recreation on public lands. His experience in working with

Natural Resource Technician Davis

visitors to conserve natural values of the property while promoting outdoor recreation will be an asset to the Klickitat Wildlife Area as our agency works to achieve an optimum balance of these activities. Rich is enthusiastic to learn new ways of managing key habitats and gain more experience in wildlife field work. Please welcome Rich to the WDFW family!

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle: Biologists Tirhi, Skriletz, Hallock, Kelly, and staff conducted the 2013 juvenile western pond turtle release at the Pierce County recovery site. Thirty-four juveniles were released in Pierce County and approximately 68 were released in Mason County as part of the pond turtle recovery program, now in its 22nd year.

Biologist Kelly released turtles at the Mason County recovery site.

State endangered juvenile Western Pond Turtle being processed for release to the wild after hatching and spending its first 10-months at the Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle as part of a collaborative head-start program with WDFW.

Western Snowy Plovers -- Midway Beach: Biologists Sundstrom and Michaelis conducted weekly monitoring of snowy plover nesting activity at Midway Beach. Two nests remain active and two nests hatched during the week of August 6. Six chicks, representing the two hatched nests, were banded so broods could be monitored more easily to help determine fledging success, post-fledging dispersal, and future survival data (see Photo). Sundstrom and Michaelis also identified an additional two broods at Midway Beach; each brood contained one chick.

Banded chicks at Midway Beach

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

<u>Private Lands Access</u>

Remote Cameras: Last week Bio Harris reported that volunteers deployed remote camera/sensing devices on private timberlands that are open to public recreation. Within two days the devices performed as hoped and a violator has been identified driving behind a "red dot" (closed) gate in a cooperative road closure. The landowners' security team is continuing their investigation and collecting more information. It is likely that there are multiple violators. More to come later!

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

<u>Wildlife Management</u>

Wildlife Conflict -- Wynoochee Valley: Bio Harris fielded multiple calls regarding deer and elk damage issues. The most challenging issue was the report from a very unhappy farmer in the Wynoochee Valley. Bio Harris suggested that we work together to minimize the problem and put together a long-term approach to solving the issue. The landowner agreed. Thus starts what is expected to be a multi-year project in understanding the landowner issues in the Wynoochee Valley and understanding the dynamics of the multiple groups of elk that reside there.

Wildlife Conflict -- Willapa Valley: Master Hunters (MH) with designated permits and valid licenses and tags maintained an almost constant presence on the problem areas in the Willapa Valley. One more adult, non-lactating cow elk was harvested. MH reported that she had a severe

limp. When investigated, it was determined that there was no hoof deformity. The cow elk had apparently had the misfortune of stepping too close to a porcupine. She had a large number of quills as proof. Another hunter has been deployed. Landowner is happy and feels the department is trying to help him. Land owner is also happy at the performance of the Master Hunters. He stated that the hunters assigned to the effort are really trying. This is a drastic improvement from his earlier comments. This shows that a little more involvement in the process by WDFW staff puts the MH in a better position to meet landowner expectations.