

Wildlife Program

Week of December 2-8, 2013

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

South Puget Sound Prairie Species Conservation: Biologists Hays, Potter, Linders, Olson, and Diversity Section Managers Thompson and Becker attended all or part of a two day Department of Defense, Army Compatible Use Buffer Program (ACUB) meeting for partners in south Puget Sound. The south sound ACUB program is for conservation of the streaked horned lark, Mazama pocket gopher, and Taylor's checkerspot butterfly. The focus of the first day was presentations on the various ongoing ACUB projects. The focus of the second day was revising annual goals and milestones for the south Puget Sound program. Approximately 1.6 million dollars are available for conservation projects for these species in 2014. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) receives a portion of these funds annually for habitat enhancement, species translocations and reintroductions, research, and monitoring.

Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool: Lands Conservation and Restoration Section Manager Wilkerson and Diversity Division Manager Gardner participated in a cross-program WDFW discussion about the forthcoming launch of the Washington Governors Association (WGA) Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT). The tool utilizes a one square mile pixel scale and integrates a ranked model evaluation of the quality of habitat based on several data layers including Priority Species and Habitats, habitat connectivity, species of economic and recreational importance, and landscape integrity. The tool reports the habitat quality on a scale from 1-6, with 1 being the highest quality and linked with confirmed existence of listed/imperiled species or ecosystems. Results are reported for terrestrial, aquatic, and a combined terrestrial and aquatic value. This is the first time that the terrestrial and aquatic components have been merged in this way. The tool covers 16 western states and will be launched in a website platform with the data available for download and use as of the WGA meeting in Las Vegas on December 12. WDFW is exploring the uses of the tool and its associated platform of data layers for setting conservation acquisition and restoration priorities, direction for local land-use planning, and for evaluation of energy development proposals.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1 – Public Contact: Specialist Shepherd met with a family missing two dogs and explained coyote, cougar, bear, and wolf issues concerning pet and child safety. The residence is an area south of Northport east of the Wedge where all of these species have occurred. Pictures from the computer were shown as a slide show. Remote cameras were placed near the residence.

Wolf howling: Specialist Shepherd met with a landowner north of Williams Lake that has heard a howl unlike the normal coyote vocalizations heard regularly. Preventive measures were discussed related to pet safety, namely dog, and the landowners desire to run 100+ sheep this spring. Remote cameras were placed on the property and on an adjacent property where the owner, who has previously lived in Alaska, has seen a wolf.

Wolf – Dog Interaction: Specialist Shepherd met with a landowner on Aladdin Road, well within the Smackout wolf territory, who intervened when a wolf chased one of the black labs back into the yard. Preventive and other legal lethal measures were discussed and a rechargeable air horn was left with the landowner.

Wedge: Specialist Shepherd, Specialist Bennett from District 2, and a contract range rider checked cameras and looked for tracks in the recent snow in the Wedge. No photos or tracks of wolves were observed.

District 2 – Wolf near Ewan, Washington: Conflict Specialist Bennett discussed a wolf sighting near Ewan, Washington while he was out hunting on a Damage Permit for deer.

Discussed wolf issues with landowner: Conflict Specialist Bennett, Conflict Specialist Shepherd, and a range rider discussed a wolf issue involving a landowner within the Smackout Pack range. The landowner reported a wolf chasing her dog and requested some advice. Shepherd let the landowner borrow a hazing device and gave her his card for further contact. The landowner is also working with Officer Weatherman.

Wolf camera near Ewan, Washington: Conflict Specialist Bennett and Private Lands Biologist Lewis set a camera to get pictures of wolves that have been reported in the area.



Trail cam set up for predators in Whitman County.

Monthly Wolf Management Conference Call: Supervisor McCanna and Conflict Specialist Bennett participated in the now monthly wolf conference call.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Meeting: District Wildlife Biologist (DWB) Dana Base attended this meeting along with Regional Director Steve Pozzanghera and Regional Wildlife Program Manager (RWPM) Kevin Robinette at Trout Creek,

Montana. One of the highlights was a presentation on the results from a large-scale genetic population survey (using DNA collected from hair sampling) of grizzly bears in the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem by Dr. Kate Kendall, one of the foremost authorities for using this methodology to estimate bear populations.

Columbia Plateau Mule Deer Project: Biologists Ferguson and Atamian conducted aerial surveys for mule deer in eastern Lincoln County as part of Phase II Columbia Plateau Mule Deer Project. Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei surveyed the first part of the week. Ferguson and Atamian were not able to finish all survey units. They will try to fly Monday if weather permits. Ferguson and Atamian, as part of the project, also conducted ground surveys in the Phase I area.



Wildlife Areas

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Cameras – Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer checked the remote cameras deployed for wildlife photo monitoring throughout the winter on Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. Cameras are used to track relative use by deer, elk and moose of this winter range area both inside and outside of habitat improvement treatment units (thinning and prescribed burning).



These four white-tailed deer feed along the edge of a habitat improvement unit that has been thinned, but has yet to be burned.

REGION 2

Wolf Management

No activity this week.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery: Biologist Wisniewski and Technicians Duvuvuei and Hastings, along with a four person work crew from Department of Corrections in Connell completed the last phase (rolling the top) of the new enclosure at Beezley Hills. Unfortunately, during this process, yet another poorly made large section of fence was discovered. Biologist Wisniewski went and spoke with Del's, the supplier of the fencing material. Although not completely resolving the issue, they did supply a new 100-foot section of fence to patch the immediate problem. This was completed by Technician Duvuvuei with the assistance of Private Lands Technician Steele.

Wildlife Areas



Post-logging slash pile burns on the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area, Pogue Mountain Unit – Photo by Ray Guse.

North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team:

After light rain Sunday night, Fuels Manager Leuschen and Restoration Specialist Guse worked with Scotch Creek Manager Olson and Assistant Manager Dupont and resumed post-logging slash pile burning on the Pogue Mountain Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area. Later in the week, fuels had again dried to the point that extra work and precautions were necessary to keep the piles contained so burning was ceased until we receive more precipitation. The burned piles are being checked and control lines improved to ensure fires are confined and do not spread.

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

Wildlife Management

Deer Surveys: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen spent most of the week conducting annual aerial deer surveys in District 6. This year we experimented with a new quadrat survey technique to assess the feasibility of using this methodology to produce a mule deer population estimate for Population Management Unit (PMU) 21 (Methow and Okanogan Watersheds west of the Okanogan River) in addition to traditional sex and age class ratio data. All told, we counted over 5,300 deer and classified about 5,000 of those. In PMU 21, we classified over 4,100 mule deer and this effort yielded ratios of 25 bucks per 100 does and 81 fawns per 100 does. This represents a slightly above average fawn ratio. The buck ratio fell significantly compared to last year's tally of 34:100. However, it is still well above the management minimum of 15:100.



Mule deer buck – Photo by Jeff Heinlen.

Columbia Plateau Cooperative Mule Deer Survey – Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei conducted an aerial survey of Mule Deer in northern Grant and parts of western Lincoln County using Inland Helicopters R44. A total of 2,626 mule deer were observed in Game Management Unit (GMU) 272 with a herd composition of 21B:100D:64F. Of the bucks observed, 45% were yearling, 19% were 2-points, and 36% were mature 3-point or better bucks. Finger and Duvuvuei began ground counts within the aerial survey area as part of an effort to determine whether ground collected herd composition differs significantly from aerially collected herd composition. Since aerial surveys cannot be conducted annually, we must understand the potential biases associated with aerial and ground surveys. Ground routes will be conducted within GMU's 272 and 284. Thus far, over 800 deer have been observed during ground efforts.



Post-harvest deer surveys – Photo by R. Finger.

Wildlife Areas

Weekender Opportunities: Bighorn sheep have been viewed around Blue Lake and just north of the wildlife area near Loomis. Bald eagles, magpies, and Clark's nutcrackers are common birds in the Sinlahekin Valley this time of year. Trumpeter Swans are still present on Palmer Lake (see photo below). Numerous raptor species such as Red-tailed hawks and American kestrels are abundant on the Similkameen-Chopaka Wildlife Area (see photos below).



Top left: Trumpeter Swans on Palmer Lake. Above: Red-tailed Hawk near the Similkameen-Chopaka Wildlife Area. Left: American Kestrel on Similkameen-Chopaka Wildlife Area. Photos by Justin Haug.

Private Lands/Access

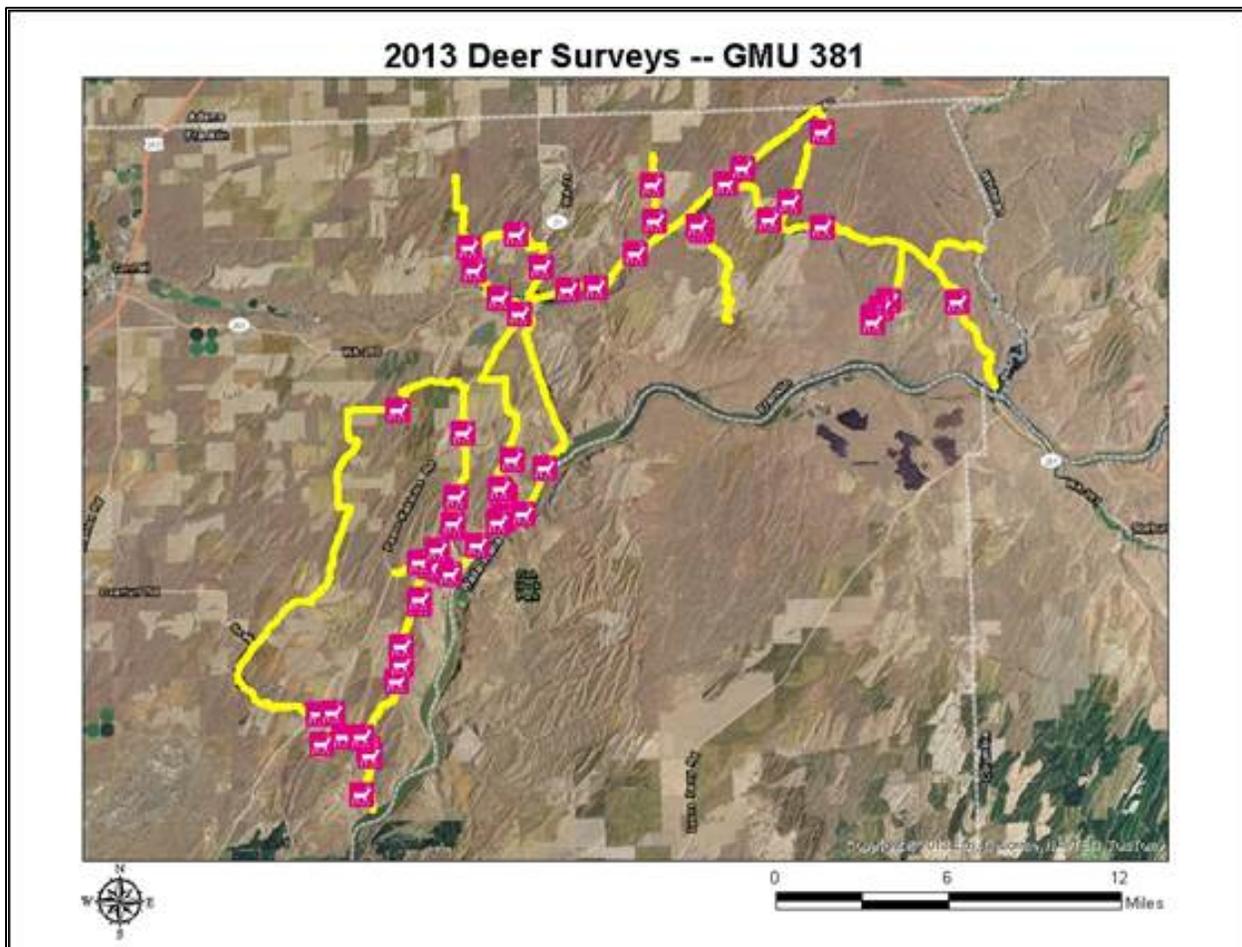
Columbia Basin Cropland Hunting Access Initiative (CHAI; Corn Stubble Program): Biologist Dougherty has continued working on the Columbia Basin Cropland Hunting Access Initiative (CHAI; Corn Stubble Program). Currently all sites are up and running on the online reservation system, and all have received some use from the hunting public. As waterfowl move through the area we expect that use will increase. Additionally, Biologist Dougherty has assisted hunters with questions regarding the changes to the program, with all changes being well received and even receiving praise.

REGION 3

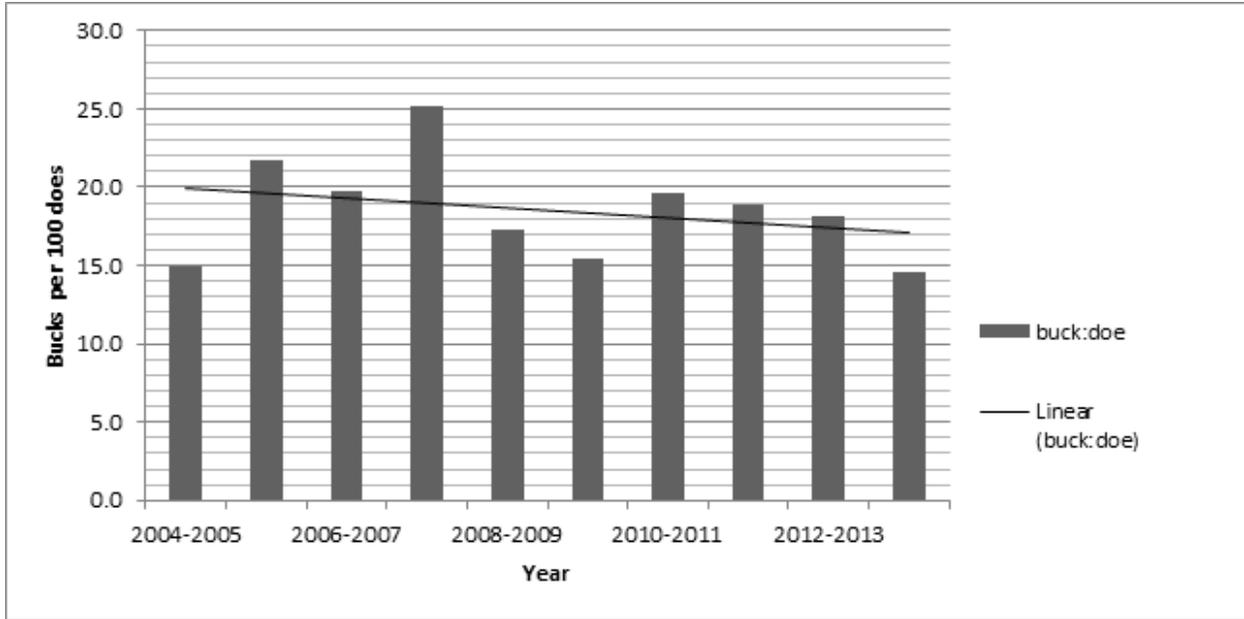
GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Deer Surveys: Biologists Gregory, Hand, Stutzman and Technician Kaelber completed the annual ground survey for deer in Game Management Unit (GMU) 381. There are two survey routes and each is traveled twice during the survey period. Numbers of deer in each sex and age class are averaged and then ratios are calculated for reporting. The survey resulted in a buck ratio of 15 per 100 does and a fawn ratio of 64 per 100 does. Of the bucks observed, 18% were classified with ≥ 3 antler points (i.e., “legal bucks”). Compared to totals from the last 10 years, buck ratios are below average (avg. = 18.6). However, this year’s observations are consistent with the WDFW management objective of 15 bucks per 100 does.



Ground survey routes for deer in Game Management Unit 381 (yellow) and approximate locations of deer observed during survey (pink squares).



Ratio of bucks per 100 does for Game Management Unit 381, from 2004 through 2013.

Golden Eagle Camera Station: Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Moore picked up his trail camera which had been placed on the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area to monitor eagle presence on a deer carcass. Numerous photos of eagles were obtained as well as a truck that was at least 300 meters off the nearest green dot road.



Bushnell

01-02-2012 00:33:22

Bald eagles observed on the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area.



Bushnell

01-02-2012 00:14:34

Above: Golden eagle observed on the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area. Below: Off-road driving documented on the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area.



Bushnell

01-10-2012 20:42:57



A group of elk, including a large branch bull, near Central Hanford.

Hanford Elk Monitoring: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored elk distribution and movements in Elk Areas 3721 and 3722. Large groups of 100+ have been observed along Highway 240 on ALE lands. Conflict Specialist Hand also received a report of 80 elk near the F Reactor and another 20 near the H Reactor on Central Hanford.

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area Hiking Trail: Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Tayler met with Jeff Hashimoto to field review a steep section of the Westberg Trail, on Manastash Ridge. The section has multiple trails and is in poor condition. Mr. Hashimoto would like to use volunteers to relocate approximately 400 yards of the trail to a more gently sloped area. Manager Confer Morris will work with Department of Natural Resources (checkerboard ownership) to determine if funding is available for conducting a cultural resource survey of the trail area.



Steep section of the Westberg Trail features multiple routes and impacts.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Elk Fence Maintenance: Oak Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Berry and Natural Resource Worker 2 Douville spent three days checking and repairing elk fence from West Valley to French's Canyon. The two repaired numerous holes both wildlife and man-made. In the Hatton Road area, Berry and Douville found holes cut in the fence in an area where this routinely happens.



Holes cut in the elk fence adjacent to Elk Area 3912 (Master Hunter Unit).



Section of elk fence cut on private property, allowing elk access below the fence into a Master Hunter Unit.

Winter Conditions: Weather was cold this past week with lows in the teens to single digits and highs in the 20's. There was a light snowfall on Friday. Temperatures this coming week are expected to warm up a little with the chance of precipitation later in the week. There are minimal elk on the feed sites and access to vegetation is good. Elk are in good condition.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Snow Goose Flight: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn flew an aerial photo survey of the north Puget Sound snow goose population from Vancouver, B.C. to Snohomish County. The geese were localized in dense flocks in the Fraser, Skagit, Stillaguamish and Snohomish river valleys. Numbers will be determined by photo analysis but appeared to be lower than last year.



Track log of December 4 Snow Goose Flight, yellow dots indicate flock locations.



Above: Snow goose flock observed on a farm in Fir Island, Skagit County. Below: Snow geese on a soccer field in urban Richmond, B.C. (note the lone goalie).



Winter Marine Waterfowl Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra together with Waterfowl Survey and Sea Duck Specialist Evenson and Assistant District Biologist Murphie initiated the 2013-2014 Marine Waterfowl Surveys. Time was spent reviewing safety and aircraft procedures, renewal of aerial species identification skills, and renewal of pilot skills for survey techniques along with several days of aerial surveys. We are fortunate again to retain the services of

Kenmore Air and their chief pilot for these technically challenging surveys (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/psamp/>).

Urban Wildlife Young Adult Continuing Education – Seattle Goodwill Green Corps:

Biologist Anderson provided urban wildlife management, urban wildlife life history and general naturalist training at the annual Seattle Goodwill Green Corp training course. Young adults between ages 18-24, unemployed, and without a high school degree are eligible for this program. They take classes gaining education in natural areas management, restoration and habitat enhancement. They then provide on the ground services to Seattle Parks and Recreation Department in local parks by maintaining trail systems, managing invasive plant species, replanting native habitat enhancements, providing outreach in the field on these efforts and area wildlife, including conflict reduction. Anderson handles the wildlife portion of the program for the group.

<http://www.seattlegoodwill.org/job-training-and-education/programs-and-classes/green-corps-program>
<http://realchangenews.org/index.php/site/archives/6580>

Swan Carcass Management: This week, the team collected 12 carcasses. The call-line for citizens to report sick, injured or dead swans is (360) 466-4345 ext. 266.

	Skagit	Snohomish	Whatcom	TOTAL
Powerline suspect	5	1	2	8
Pb suspect	2	1	2	5
Trauma	1			1
Unknown	3			3
Feather Pile	2	1		3
TOTAL	13	3	4	20

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: WDFW and Ducks Unlimited staff met to review results from the first public survey and to begin planning details for the first meeting of the Stakeholder Committee. Projects Coordinator Brokaw sent invite emails to all people who volunteered for the Stakeholder Committee in the survey. The first meeting is scheduled for January 8, and 26 people volunteered to participate, including duck hunters, pheasant hunters, wildlife viewers/photographers, dog trainers, estuary restoration proponents, and local jurisdictions and residents.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw attended a project Steering Committee meeting. Topics discussed at the meeting include initial groundwater and surface water site monitoring results, interior drainage study results, and how these results may impact the project design. The Steering Committee will request that grant funds be used to design a pump station to be added to the project.

Samish River Unit (Welts Property) Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Manager Rotton met with Natural Resource Conservation Service staff to continue to coordinate next steps for the project. Topics discussed include responses to comments received through the Skagit County Special Use permit process, post project monitoring and adaptive management, a compatible use agreement for the site, noxious weed control strategies, and modifying the parking lot design before submitting permit applications to the Army Corps of Engineers.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to compile year-end reporting and grazing fees for the 2013 grazing season. Additionally, Manager Boehm collaborated with DFW staff from the Ebey Island Team to address access issues, discuss grazing and agricultural lease options, and contact potential farmers who may be interested in a lease agreement for Ebey Island agricultural fields.

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with Wild Fish Conservancy to begin planting the construction area for the revetment project that took place earlier this summer. Planting crews from Sound Salmon Solutions installed approximately 400 additional plants last week.

Lake Terrell Coho Salmon: Manager Kessler monitored beaver activity and the water level at the Lake Terrell dam on Terrell Creek. We now have coho salmon entering Lake Terrell from Terrell Creek.

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

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Elk Work Group Meetings: Biologist DeBruyn chaired a meeting of the public safety committee of the work group that was also attended by Biologist Danilson. Members of the committee include landowners and representatives of Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Washington State Patrol (WSP), Skagit County Sheriff, Western Washington University and the Stillaguamish Tribe.



North Cascades Elk Work Group met in Sedro Woolley.

The group worked on refining objectives in the draft of The Herd Plan. Later that evening a meeting of the entire work group was chaired by Regional Program Manager Link and facilitated by private consultant Hillary Wilkinson. At this larger meeting, all four work group committees presented accounts of progress made to date on work related to completing the herd plan. Conflict Specialists Griffith and Pinjuv represented the damage committee while Danilson presented for the population estimation and research subgroup.

Wildlife Area

Tennant Lake: Manager Kessler coordinated with the Whatcom County Parks manager on the water levels of the lake. The lake is at a very high level, coming close to the base of the viewing tower. Manager Kessler hiked in, cleared the beaver deceiver pipes, and attempted to lower the lake water level. The Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association led a school group to a tour of the Lake Terrell dam site to see the coho salmon coming up Terrell creek.



Due to the frigid temperatures and high winds, Lake Terrell and Tennant Lake are both almost completely frozen. While quite lovely, this has made getting out to the hunting blinds extremely difficult and has limited the hunting opportunity on these units.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt

Management: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo monitored quality hunt sites for use, identifying any maintenance needed or issues to address. Tech Otto prepped parking sites for Waterfowl Quality Hunt units in Whatcom County and arranged delivery of 30 yards of wood chips.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt site over barley field in Bayview.



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

Wildlife Management

Great Blue Heron Nesting Area – Authorized Wildlife Nest Take: Biologist Anderson provided take authorization to a development applicant in Maple Valley for three unoccupied heron nests in two trees needing removal. The small heron nesting site is within a suburban matrix with similar habitat and nesting opportunity within sight of the known location currently used. WDFW recommended that the trees be taken down as soon as possible, prior to the nesting season, to eliminate direct effect to individual birds and allow for readjustment in nest site location, mimicking winter loss of nest trees. The nests were active in 2013.



Technician Brad Otto sighted this rehabilitated trumpeter swan from 2012 on a roost site near Lynden.

Elk Management: Conflict Specialist Griffith and Conflict Technician Kyle Pinjuv met with several landowners along the Skagit River this week in response to elk complaints. Griffith issued out a number of damage permits and damage prevention cooperative agreements. Conflict Technician Kyle Pinjuv completed the exclusionary elk fencing specifications, finalized the material list, and found a local vendor in which the materials can be purchased from. Biologist Smith used a trail camera to monitor intermittent nocturnal elk/deer activity on agricultural properties in King County. Elk activity has been reduced over the last week. Biologist Smith gathered harvest data and edited a letter of support requested by the Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group to aid in their research activities.

Skagit County Cougar Response: Conflict Specialist Griffith responded to a report of a cow found dead on a property near Sedro Woolley. The landowner suspected the cause of death to be either coyote or cougar predation. Griffith investigated the incident and found the cow lying dead in a ditch of frozen water. It was apparent that the cow had been in the water for at least a week. No signs of a predatory attack and only minimal avian scavenging were evident and Griffith explained to the landowner that the cow most likely died from drowning or illness and provided predator versus livestock education.

Private Lands/Access

GMU 418 Unit Hunt Management: Biologist Caldwell accompanied Tech Otto to survey GMU 418 checking for any issues, which none were identified. They also met with Sierra Pacific Forester Sand and discussed management issues related to private lands access. Technicians Otto and Deyo coordinated and met with GMU 418 elk hunters to return their keys.

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

Wildlife Management

Radio Training: Assistant District Biologist Cyra assisted staff with obtaining radio training, answering questions, and assigning radio call numbers.

Volunteer Work Force: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm attended a follow up meeting with the Monroe Rod and Gun Club last week. The Club reported progress they made on obtaining gravel and equipment they would like to donate. Manager Boehm provided a task list as requested by the club. They will continue to plan and organize a work party to show their support for the wildlife areas.

Skills Training and Orientation: Newly hired Biologist Caldwell accomplished contract and management tool training, coordinated weekly, monthly and seasonal agendas with technician staff pertinent to program goals and objectives, and organized and updated program criteria, landowner enrollment information, survey protocols and design, and program materials from 2009 to present.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Shorebird Survey: District 10 Biologists Miller and Bergh participated in a multi-agency survey of shorebirds on the lower Columbia River Islands near Astoria. The survey is in a pilot phase of development with Point Blue Bird Observatory coordinating the efforts of agencies and

volunteers along the Oregon and Washington coast and lower Columbia River (LCR). WDFW was assigned a survey route that took them into some very shallow areas of the LCR, which required timing to be incoming water conditions. Unfortunately, the tides were very high and much of the shoreline was inundated. We observed 30 shorebirds on Miller Sands Spit and 68 on Rice Island. They all were western sandpipers. Future surveys will focus on incoming water with lower high tides that will allow the ability to boat in the area and still have more shoreline exposed to detect the shorebirds.



Shorebird survey

Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area Elk Survey: Biologists Miller and Bergh conducted the first monthly winter elk survey on the valley floor of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area. The purpose of these winter surveys is to keep track of the number of elk using the valley floor, spot elk carcasses, and assess winter conditions. There were approximately 100 elk distributed in small groups mainly on the eastern half of the wildlife area. The majority were bulls and all appeared to have normal pelage and condition. There was no snow on the valley floor and snow level in the surrounding hills was at about 2,000 feet. Temperatures were cold, but the wind was calm during the survey.



Monthly elk count

Western Gray Squirrel (WGS): Biologists Anderson organized a field trip with the Columbia Land Trust (CLT) and WDFW staff from Vancouver and Olympia to learn about the Trust's management of their Bowman Creek parcel adjacent to the Klickitat Wildlife Area. The primary focus of the field trip was to look at the results of their forest management efforts in relation to western gray squirrel habitat. Their property represents some of the best western gray squirrel habitat surrounding the Klickitat Wildlife Area. Staff attending is all involved with various aspects of western gray squirrel conservation and discussed WGS habitat needs and how this

forest practice benefitted the squirrels. It was an opportunity for people who have specialized knowledge of gray squirrel life history, habitat needs, forest practices impacts on squirrel populations, and squirrel population distribution to share information and consider what activities might be helpful in guiding habitat management for this species. We thank Lindsay Cornelius from the CLT for guiding us through their property and explaining their forestry and wildlife conservation program.



Western Gray Squirrel site visit

Western Pond Turtle Management: Biologist Holman initiated work on a summary of this year's work on western Pond turtles in the Columbia River Gorge. The report details activities including monitoring of populations, disease investigations, habitat maintenance and improvement, the Head-Start program, environmental education, etc. This year represents the 23rd year of efforts on this State Endangered species in the Columbia River Gorge.

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 (GMU). During 2013, six fawns have been captured in the Washougal cluster and fawn monitoring is currently being conducted. To date, three 2013 fawns remain alive in the Washougal study cluster. The one remaining fawn in the Coweeman study area is still alive as are the five remaining does. Data from four of the five doe collars were downloaded in the field this week to help ensure that all data is not lost in the event of a collar failure or loss.

Wildlife Areas

St. Helens Wildlife Area – Winter Closure: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald posted signage on the Mudflow Unit of the St. Helens Wildlife Area this week, restricting public access to the area from December 1 through April 30. This closure is in place every year during this time period to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering on the wildlife area.

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Experimental Weed Control: Biologist Merg came to the Soda Springs Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area to apply an experimental selective grass pathogen

that is undergoing testing for control of cheat grass. This agent may also suppress Medusa head, a noxious grass species found on the Klickitat Wildlife Area. The application on the Klickitat Wildlife Area specifically targeted Medusa head and will be monitored for effectiveness. About half an acre of Medusa head was treated with the experimental pathogen, and the plan is to apply a selective herbicide on a plot nearby and sow seeds of desirable perennial grasses over both treatment plots.

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

Wildlife Management

Hunting-Related Public Inquiries: Regional wildlife biologists continue to field a number of calls and other contacts from members of the hunting public looking for late-season big-game hunting opportunities. Specifically, late permit holders, late archers, and late muzzleloaders are all trying to find locations for these late hunting opportunities. Additionally, many contacts have come recently via the various avenues of public contacts including telephone, in person, email, Team Vancouver, Team Yakima, Wildthing, as well as the Fish and Wildlife Commission contacts. The majority of these contacts relate to questions and comments regarding various aspects of the hunting season.

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt: The 2013-2014 Southwest Washington goose hunting season was closed the week of December 2. However, hunting will resume this Wednesday, December 11. All zones remain open for management area 2A. For information regarding up-to-date zone closures, hunters can call the Region 5 office at (360) 696-6211 and follow the menu options for hunting and waterfowl. Hunters interested in participating in this season can refer to pages 16, 19 and 20 of the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season Pamphlet or check online at <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01535/wdfw01535.pdf> for further details regarding requirements for participation.

St. Helens Land Access Program: The recent cold weather event has cancelled the past five days of volunteer effort on Weyerhaeuser's St. Helens Tree Farm. Temperatures remaining below freezing for the past week have meant that roads leading to gates are iced over in places and could be potentially hazardous. Early morning start times for this project, while temperatures hover in the teens, are conducive to dead truck batteries as well as volunteer fatigue. As temperatures rise in the coming days, the volunteer effort is expected to continue.

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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Conflict: Conflict Specialist Conklin met with two landowners in the Randle area experiencing elk damage. Conklin observed approximately 30 head of elk on one of the

properties that did not appear to want to disperse. Conklin issued a kill permit and also persuaded the landowners to use Master Hunters in the near future. This is progress as neither landowner would even discuss public access or Master Hunters when first contacted by Conklin.

Wildlife Conflict: Biologists Miller, Bergh, Stephens, and Conflict Specialist Conklin attended a public meeting with landowners to discuss proposed Elk Area hunts to take place next year in the Grays River area. The landowners appeared to be quite receptive. Most of the landowners have contacted Conklin since the meeting to begin working with her on their damage issues.

Winter Conditions

District 10 and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: November temperatures and precipitation were below normal. There was little snowfall or accumulation below 3,000 feet until the first week in December, when arctic air arrived lowering temperatures to well below normal for the time of year. Most elevations between 2,500 and 1,500 feet only have a trace to a couple of inches of snow.

Short-Term Forecast: Temperatures are to remain cool over the next week with some snowfall above 2,000 feet. The 6-10 and 8-14 day forecasts both predict normal temperatures and above normal precipitation.

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

Habitat: Forage is available at all mid to lower elevations, with much of the landscape being snow free.

Snow Depths: Areas of low elevation remain snow free, with there being only minimal snow in the middle elevations.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The first monthly winter elk survey was conducted on December 5. A total of 100 elk were observed on the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area, distributed in small groups mainly on the eastern half of the Wildlife Area. The majority were bulls and all appeared to have normal pelage and condition.

Animal Condition: No reports of animals in poor condition that can be attributed to winter conditions. Animals observed to date appear to be in good condition.

Mortality: None reported.

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.

The Public is reminded the portion 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, 2014, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Precipitation in the South Cascades is below normal for this time of the year as snowpack is around 55% of normal. Most snow accumulation is above 3,500 feet. Average temperatures have fallen this past week to below normal levels.

Winter Severity: Low elevations areas below 3,000 feet are generally open throughout the District on both the west and east side of the Cascades. There is no concern for the current severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County. The eastern portions of Klickitat County have had no snow accumulation and deer are in good condition.

Habitat: Habitat is open and forage habitat continues to be available throughout District 9.

Animal Concentrations: Nothing out of the ordinary reported.

Animal Condition: Deer and elk appear to be in good condition and no winter stress/mortality has been reported except for typical road kills.

Mortality: None documented this week.

Public Contacts: No concerns raised by the public this week.

MOUNT SAINT HELENS ELK HERD
 2013/2014 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.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snotel/Washington/washington.html>

SNOWPARKS:									
Name	Elevation		12/6/2013	12/13/2013	12/20/2013	12/27/2013	1/3/2014	1/10/2014	1/17/2014
MARBLE MT	2,700'		No report						
WAKEPISH	2,800'		No report						

SNOWTEL STATIONS:									
Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
		Avg Snow							
JUNE LAKE	3,340'	Depth (inches)	0.66						
		Min Temp (F)	14						
		Max Temp (F)	45						
		Avg Temp (F)	30						
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	27						

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
		Avg Snow							
SPIRIT LAKE	3,520'	Depth (inches)	2.43						
		Min Temp (F)	11						
		Max Temp (F)	46						
		Avg Temp (F)	29						
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	17.5						

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
		Avg Snow							
PEPPER CREEK	2,140'	Depth (inches)	0.31						
		Min Temp (F)	14						
		Max Temp (F)	48						
		Avg Temp (F)	31.5						

Year to date
precipitation
(inches) 13.1

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
SHEEP CANYON	3,990'	Avg Snow							
		Depth (inches)	4						
		Min Temp (F)	12						
		Max Temp (F)	43						
		Avg Temp (F)	26						
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	23.1						

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
CALAMITY	2500'	Avg Snow							
		Depth (inches)	1						
		Min Temp (F)	16						
		Max Temp (F)	47						
		Avg Temp (F)	31						
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	18.8						

Snowpack % of Avg Snow Water Equivalent	12/6/2013	12/13/2013	12/20/2013	12/27/2013	1/3/2014	1/10/2014	1/17/2014
JUNE LAKE	5%						
SPIRIT LAKE	122%						
SHEEP CANYON	20%						

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Oregon Spotted Frogs: Biologist Tirhi conducted a site visit to a state endangered Oregon spotted frog oviposition to assess habitat conditions in preparation for the upcoming breeding season in February. Tirhi, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Thurston County Stream Team and volunteers have conducted numerous habitat restoration projects at the site to control invasive Reed canary grass and replant native plants to enhance the site for spotted frogs. In response to habitat treatments, spotted frog egg production has significantly increased. Tirhi is working with volunteers and Stream Team to complete an Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant to provide funds for 2014 volunteer projects including several work parties at which volunteers and students will weedwack canary grass, pile and remove, lay weed fabric and plant native species.



*Oregon spotted frog oviposition site habitat enhancement project update, Thurston County.
Left: Native plant replacement in foreground and remaining weed fabric in background.
Right: Reed canary grass removal in foreground and background (open patches).*

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

Private Lands/Access

Quality Waterfowl Hunting: All current quality waterfowl hunting opportunities have been posted on the WDFW website at <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/wqhp/>. In addition, all sites, including Hunt by Reservation sites, can be found at http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/search.php.

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

Wildlife Areas



North Olympic: Recently, staff worked tirelessly constructing a fence around the footprint of the old 3 Crabs restaurant that was recently purchased on the Lower Dungeness. A temporary fence was installed during demolition of the building to try to prevent public access to the exposed foundation. One of the coastal storms blew the temporary fence over and upset the porta-potty, hastening construction of the new fence.