

Wildlife Program

Week of December 9-15, 2013

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1

Wolf Monitoring: Conflict Specialist Shepherd and Assistant District Biologist Prince went to an area in Pend Oreille County where multiple locations of the Ruby Creek female wolf were clustered near what appeared to be a house on an aerial photo. The owner of the property could not be contacted although tracks of two wolves were observed on nearby U.S. Forest Service (USFS) property. The house/property appeared to be unoccupied as well.



Wildlife Conflict Specialist Shepherd (left) followed these wolf tracks (right) on U.S. Forest Service property in Pend Oreille County.

Missing Dogs: Specialist Shepherd checked remote cameras with a family missing two dogs in northern Stevens County and obtained coyote and deer pictures. Remote cameras were redeployed near the residence.

Deer Carcass: Specialist Shepherd was called about a deer carcass hit by a vehicle on the Northport–Deep Creek Road that may act as an attractant to the Smackout wolf pack members to the area and its nearby residences. A contract range rider who lives in the area was contacted and the carcass was retrieved to be used for monitoring Smackout pack activity near Deep Lake area ranches.

District 2

Wolf camera near Ewan, Washington: Conflict Specialist Bennett and Private Lands Biologist Lewis checked the camera placed near Ewan. Several night photos were taken, but due to the quality, some photos were inconclusive. Photos included deer and mostly coyotes. The camera station was re-baited and left for another round of photos.

Cattle producer concerns of wolves near Seven Mile: Conflict Specialist Bennett discussed concerns regarding wolves with a cattle producer near the area of Four Mounds Road, Nine Mile Falls, Washington. Bennett met with the producer to walk the property and discuss options to minimize potential conflicts.

Canid injured Spokane Valley: Conflict Specialist Bennett and Wildlife Technician Kujala responded to a home within the Spokane Valley city limits where the landowner thought there was an injured wolf. The animal was no longer in the reporting party or neighbor's backyard when we arrived. The landowner will be sending pictures of the animal to Bennett or Officer Langbehn (the original party that responded to the call).

Palouse Conservation District Presentation: Conflict Specialist Bennett prepared and presented a PowerPoint presentation to the Palouse Conservation District Winter Meetings held in Pullman, Washington.

District 3

Reports: District staff has received secondhand reports regarding two wolves which have been seen around the Oregon border near Mormon Grade above Walla Walla. These reports are likely Walla Walla pack wolves that may be in the area.

Tracks: A local hunting guide passed along information to District Biologist Wik regarding what appeared to be a small pack of wolf tracks (see photo) coming out of the headwaters of Meadow Creek heading north on the Skyline road.



GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Columbia Plateau Mule Deer Project: Biologists Ferguson and Atamian finished up aerial surveys in Phase 2 and ground surveys in Phase 1 and Phase 2. No data has been entered yet, but general counts went well and numbers appear to be in the same range as last year.



Pivot Circles are where we find the largest groups of mule deer in western Lincoln County at this time of year.



Left: One of the infamous “Super 2” buck found in District 2. Right: During the mule deer surveys we observed a cow moose and calf in northeast Lincoln County.

Wildlife Areas

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer observed this northern saw-whet owl roosted in an old building on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area this week.



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

Wildlife Management

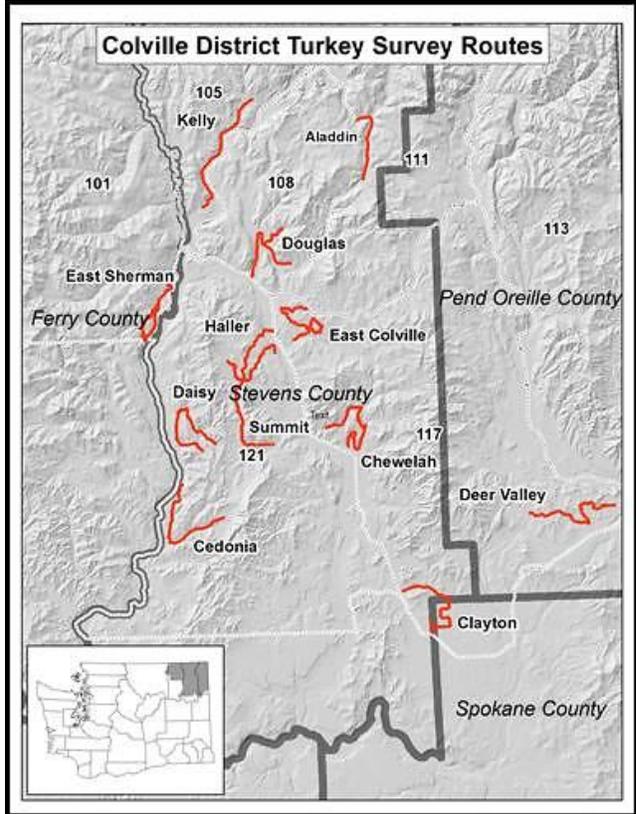


Winter Turkey Survey: Biologists Base and Prince initiated annual winter surveys of wild turkeys within District 1. Protocol calls for surveying twelve 15-miles long transect that are set up along rural roadways in the district (see map and photos). Surveys are generally accomplished between December 15 and January 31 each winter.

Wintering Merriam’s Turkeys as typically observed within District 1.



Above: Wintering Merriam's Turkeys as typically observed within District 1. Right: Map depicting turkey survey transects in District 1.



Wildlife Areas

Blue Mountains Wildlife Area – Ice jams:
Ice from last week's extreme cold weather has still been hanging around access sites and hindering steelhead fishing activities.



Ice from the Grande Ronde River clogged the Heller Bar ramp on Wednesday.



Ice observed at the Boggans Access Site.

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

Private Lands/Access



Trail leading to an alfalfa field looking west.

Oregon Elk: Conflict Specialist Rasley met with 2 muzzleloader hunters and 5 farmers regarding 202 head of elk that are coming out of Oregon and crossing approximately 3 miles of winter wheat heading to a 2-3 acre alfalfa field and hay stack. The farmers are worried about the damage the elk will cause when the ground thaws out. The muzzleloader hunters are going to rotate their time to try and keep the pressure on the elk.

REGION 2

Wolf Management

Lookout Pack: Professional tracker David Moscovitz made an effort to track the Lookout Pack over the weekend and found evidence of five wolves (likely two adults and three pups) traveling together in the pack's traditional winter territory. This is consistent with observations earlier in the fall and suggests the pack will likely be tallied as a breeding pair for the first time since 2009.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Wolverine Research Project: Biologist Fitkin and USFS staff began opening wolverine traps for the winter capture season. Currently we have our six primary traps open and will likely open three more in the next week or two. We hope to deploy all six of the project's new satellite collars that have an increased battery life of 14 months. These longer lasting collars should get us an entire of year of home range use data and we're optimistic that will include females with kits. In addition, collared animals will be an instrumental part of projects efforts to develop and evaluate a potential summer camera/DNA monitoring protocol.



Wolverine country – Photo by Scott Fitkin.

Washington Ground Squirrel Translocation: Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei met with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Biologists Newsome and Warrick to discuss future plans for Washington ground squirrel translocation on Columbia National Wildlife Refuge. Previous translocations to this area have been unsuccessful, presumably due to predator activity as evidenced by activity and sign (e.g., tracks, digging, and one partially consumed carcass) on site. Discussions centered on methods to reduce depredation by enhancing infrastructure (e.g., tunnel building, creating artificial cavities much like burrowing owl burrows, electrified netting, and bird netting). The plan is to use all of these tools in hopes of giving squirrels more time to settle before predators become aware of the newly introduced squirrels. In addition, a more thorough investigation of soils suitability at this site and at several alternate sites will occur when the ground thaws. If this site is determined to be unsuitable, other options will likely be available on the refuge.

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

Wildlife Management



Columbia Plateau Cooperative Mule Deer Survey: Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei finished post-harvest mule deer surveys by ground. In Game Management Unit (GMU) 272, they observed and classified 1,207 mule deer with a resulting ratio of 29 Buck (B):100 Doe (D):59 Fawn (F). In GMU 284, they observed 308 mule deer with a resulting ratio of 20B:100D:70F.

Post-harvest deer surveys in Game Management Unit 284 – Photos by R. Finger.



Private Lands/Access

Hunter Access: Biologist Dougherty has finished working on the Columbia Basin Cropland Hunting Access Initiative (CHAI; Corn Stubble Program). All sites are running smoothly and all have received use from the hunters. Most notably, at one site (Road R x Road 6) hunters were able to fill limits of geese on two consecutive days. Additionally, Biologist Dougherty has noted that all hunters appear to be using the sites correctly (i.e., following site rules). Biologist Dougherty assisted a landowner by converting a 1,000 acre property from Hunt by Written Permission to Hunt by Reservation. After Biologist Dougherty explained the advantages of being enrolled in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Hunter Access Program, the landowner also enrolled an additional 12,000 acres in Hunt by Reservation. There are several aspects of this Hunter Access agreement to work out with the landowner, but there is a strong possibility that some of this property could be opened before the end of the calendar year. Biologist Dougherty has sought comments from Region 2 WDFW Enforcement Officers to determine the best ways to regulate the site. Biologist Dougherty hopes to finalize and submit all paperwork by next week.

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

Wildlife Areas

Sinlahekin 75th Anniversary Celebration – Public Information Officer (PIO) Luers has been cranking out letters of invitation to people who indicated availability to present on topics from mollusks to bighorn sheep as well as dignitaries and other officials. The latter letters of invitation have gone out through the Director's Office. There will be an article by Allen Gibbs, retired USFS PIO, in the Okanogan County Historical Society quarterly publication. Planning is ramping up rapidly.

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

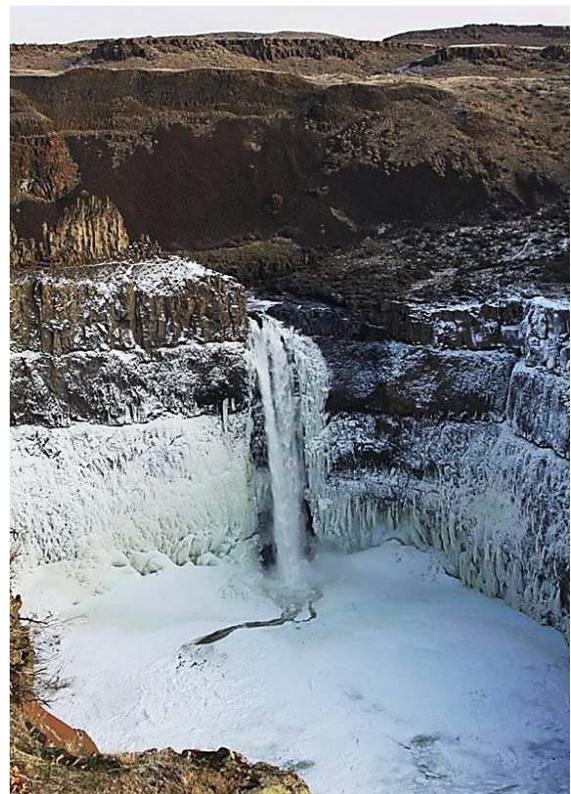
Wildlife Areas

New Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Assistant Manager – Manager Haug completed the interview process for hiring the new assistant manager and offered the job to Nathan Wehmeyer. Nathan brings to the Sinlahekin a plethora of knowledge and a variety of skills developed from a broad background in the field of Natural Resource management. Nathan has over five years with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as a range specialist, experience in planning with Okanogan County and a stint with the Colville tribe working with their forest practices division. We look forward to a bright future with Nathan and many successful, productive years here on the wildlife area!

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



Golden eagle flushed off road-killed deer carcass during post-harvest deer surveys. – Photo by R. Finger.



Left: Sunrise near Sinlahekin Headquarters – Photo by Justin Haug. Right: A cold day at Palouse Falls – Photo by R. Finger.



Left: Northern “Red-Shafted” Flicker, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Right: Three Otters peeking through the ice at Forde Lake, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Photos by Justin Haug.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management



Biologist Moore completes a blood draw on a ram secured by Manager Huffman and some fantastic volunteers.

Big Horn Sheep Capture:

Biologists Bernatowicz, Moore, Wik, Huffman, and Gregory along with a crew of volunteers including individuals from Idaho Fish and Game, the Yakama Nation and the Sierra Club captured 16 big horn sheep at the base of Cleman Mountain outside of Naches. The objective of the capture was to collect blood and nasal fluids for disease testing. Biologists Moore and Wik also managed to successfully dart and remove a radio collar from a ewe after the collars automatic release mechanism failed.



Cleman Mountain bighorn sheep head toward the trap on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area.



The big horn sheep capture operation on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area near Naches.

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area Road Management: Wenas Wildlife Area staff continued upgrading signs by replacing the reader board at Black Canyon with the new style of reader board and map. They designed a new framework using 6”x6” posts, making for a much more professional looking sign. A new kiosk will also be installed to complete the new look.



The old (left) and new (right) reader board at Black Canyon on the Wenas Wildlife Area.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management



Snoqualmie Valley Elk Damage: Biologist Smith used a trail camera to monitor intermittent nocturnal elk activity on agricultural properties. Elk activity increased late in the week, allowing for one cow to be harvested as part of the Elk Area 4601 Master Hunter damage hunt.

Elk seeking cover prior to sunrise after spending hours of darkness foraging on a Snoqualmie Valley agricultural property.

Port Susan Canada Goose Game Reserve: Biologist Milner conducted a Canada goose survey within the Port Susan Game Reserve in order to evaluate the need for the reserve to conserve the Vancouver sub-species of Canada goose. No Canada geese were observed during the survey.

Swan Mortality and Morbidity: This week, Technician Anderson conducted searches for swans in Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties, responded to calls on the Swan hotline, and monitored roost sites and known sources of lead toxicity. This week, 11 carcasses were collected: 6 from Whatcom County, 2 from Skagit County and 3 from Snohomish County. Power

line strikes were the leading cause of mortalities this week. Freshwater bodies that were previously frozen are expected to thaw next week and thus provide the needed opportunity to survey lakes and sloughs that have historically produced lead affected trumpeter and tundra swans. The Swan hotline is up and running. Folks are encouraged to call the hotline (360) 466-4345 ext. 266 to report sick, injured or dead swans.

	Skagit	Snohomish	Whatcom	TOTAL
Power line suspect	7	3	7	17
Lead suspect	2	1	3	6
Trauma	1	1		2
Unknown	3			3
Feather Pile	2	1		3
TOTAL	15	6	10	31

Wildlife Areas

Wood Duck Nest Boxes: Manager Kessler dropped off materials and supplies to the wood shop program at the Ferndale High School for students to build wood duck nest boxes. The materials were purchased with Duck Stamp funds, and the boxes will be installed on units of the wildlife area.



Ferndale High School students built wood duck nest boxes.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reserved the ADA duck blind for a second time this waterfowl season. A fellow with mobility challenges has returned to hunting after approximately 10 years because of his disability. A good friend assists him in getting to the blind and setting up for the hunt. Through a follow-up phone conversation, Manager Boehm could tell “Dave” was just beaming about the opportunity provided him.

Lake Terrell Coho Salmon: Manager Kessler monitored beaver activity and the water level at the Lake Terrell dam on Terrell Creek. We continue to have coho salmon entering Lake Terrell from Terrell Creek. The Whatcom County Conservation District led a tour of the Lake Terrell dam site to see the salmon coming up Terrell Creek.

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with Wild Fish Conservancy to continue planting the construction area for the revetment project. Despite the difficult planting conditions and cold weather, the planting project is progressing as planned.

DeBay's Slough: Manager Rotton met with Washington Waterfowl Associations (WWA) representatives at the hunt unit to discuss potential projects to improve hunting access on the site. WWA will work with WDFW to develop a proposal for Migratory Bird Stamp funding for some site improvement work. The organization will also provide volunteer labor for the projects. The proposal will include some blind building and vegetation control.

Additional signs were posted regarding dog walking on the site at Johnson/Debay's Slough Swan Reserve. Swan use numbers in the open water area of DeBay's Slough have been in the hundreds during this recent cold weather. Late afternoon use of the reserve by swans has been observed.

Hunting Season: Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis and Natural Resources Tech Curran Cosgrove monitored water levels, waterfowl and hunter use on Samish, Leque Island, Debay's Slough and Island units. Thawing temperatures late this week increased waterfowl use on all Wildlife Area units.

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

Wildlife Management

Big Game Season Setting Recommendations: Biologist Danilson responded to a request from management to distribute a summary of the 2014 big game harvest recommendations to the Point Elliott Treaty Tribes. Most of the changes were related to ongoing agricultural damage issues in the Skagit River Valley. This has generated a lot of interest and feedback.

North Cascades Elk Herd Management: Biologist Danilson made arrangements with Washington State Patrol (WSP) staff to develop procedures for using aircraft mounted infrared videography to attempt to survey elk along the State Route 20 corridor. Danilson also met with a biologist from the Swinomish Tribe who is on the population monitoring and research committee of the North Cascades Elk Work Group to develop maps for future survey efforts.

North Puget Sound Dabbling Duck Aerial Survey: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn flew a dabbling duck survey on estuaries and bays from Port Susan Bay north to the Canadian border. As usual, mallards prevailed with good numbers of wigeon and pintails also observed.

After canceling Monday when icing precluded flying, conditions on Wednesday were perfect with light winds and high cloud cover. Fresh water inland was mostly frozen resulting in most ducks being on the bays where they could be counted. Numbers of ducks were roughly double the November flight indicating the arrival of northern migrants. Danilson and DeBruyn disseminated data to interested individuals and groups. Danilson also provided data to be posted on the WDFW website.

District 14 Aerial Waterfowl Survey - Port Susan to Drayton Harbor					
Date: 12/11/2013	Plane/Pilot: N4793F/Jeff Wells (Rite Bros)		Observer(s): P. DeBruyn, C Danilson		
Weather: High Clouds, N wind 0-5		Tide @ Beginning: 7.5		Tide @ End: 10.6	
Location	Mallard	Northern Pintail	American Wigeon	Green-Winged Teal	Totals
Port Susan Bay	2,425	650	385		3,460
Livingston Bay	2,300	300	400		3,000
Skagit Bay	47,100	3,500	1,300	925	52,825
Fidalgo Bay				300	300
Padilla Bay	20,900	11,075	21,000	2,300	55,275
Samish Bay	29,500	15,800	12,200	500	58,000
Nooksack Delta/Portage	7,900	100			8,000
Lummi Bay	2,300	4,100	300		6,700
Birch Bay	1,400	1,500			2,900
Drayton Harbor	300	200			500
Totals	114,125	37,225	35,585	4,025	190,960



Ducks (mostly Northern Pintails) on icy estuary near Birch Bay, Washington.

Wildlife Areas

Samish Unit (West-90) Project: Project Coordinator Brokaw and Manager Rotton discussed the project timeline and next steps with Ducks Unlimited. Ducks Unlimited is working with a contractor to complete drainage modeling work, which will inform the project design. Ducks Unlimited, Brokaw and Rotton are meeting with the modeling contractor this week to discuss results.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt (WQH) Survey: Biologist Caldwell and Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo monitored quality hunt sites for use, identifying any maintenance needed or issues to address. Biologist Caldwell further reviewed and revised survey protocols and design to meet and exceed program objectives.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Parking: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo performed maintenance on parking sites for Waterfowl Quality Hunt units in Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish counties.



“Jobs Now” funding at work at the Kenmore Access located at the mouth of the Samish River on Lake Washington. Opening Day of fishing season at the end of March is the goal for completion of this long awaited project. Construction updates can be found at http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/lands/water_access/30250/.

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

Wildlife Management

Skagit County Elk Conflict: 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 (DPCA). Pinjuv assisted with permit delivery.

Conflict Technician Kyle Pinjuv purchased more hazing supplies for District 14. Pinjuv continued to work on the elk fencing project near Birdsvie.



Elk in a residential backyard near Birdsvie in Skagit County

Wildlife Areas

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm and WDFW Enforcement officials determined that the Crescent Lake Unit had to close due to evidence of baiting with knocked down corn. While numerous managers from various department levels tackled the policy, administrative, and public relations issues, Manager Boehm handled issues on the ground. Manager Boehm placed signs and met with hunters to inform and advise. Additionally, to prevent the unit from being closed for the remainder of the season, Manager Boehm spear-headed a volunteer cleanup effort. With the support from all of these individuals, the unit will reopen for waterfowl hunters on December 24, 2013.



Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm spear-headed a volunteer cleanup effort in order to prevent the Crescent Lake Unit of the Snoqualmie Valley Wildlife Area from being closed for the remainder of the season due to an issue with baiting waterfowl.



This is one of the truck loads of corn taken off the Crescent Lake Unit during the volunteer cleanup effort.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and the WDFW project team completed a Question and Answer Sheet that is posted on the project

webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/skagit/leque_island_project.php. The sheet answers questions asked by attendees at the public meeting on October 30 along with questions asked in the survey distributed for the project.

Projects Coordinator Brokaw sent an email to the “Leque Island Stakeholder and Interested Party email group,” announcing that the project Stakeholder Committee has been formed and the first meeting is planned for January 8. To be added to this email group to receive updates, email Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov.

Alcoa Intalco Land Manager: Manager Kessler met with the Alcoa Intalco managers to be updated on new personnel. The current land manager is retiring and Kessler was introduced to the new manager. The current access agreement, recreational access and activities were discussed. No changes to the management was recommended or needed at this time.

Samish River Unit: Manager Rotton reviewed and provided edits on the Compatible Use agreement on the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Easement on the Samish River Unit property. Manager Rotton and Restoration Projects Coordinator Loren Brokaw continue to work closely with NRCS on permitting and design issues.

Private Lands/Access

Follow up with landowner: Biologist Caldwell and Technician Deyo followed up with a landowner regarding private lands access at the Norman property. An agreement was reached to build a new access gate for hunters. The Norman site now has a new access point.

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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Program Administration: Wildlife Area staff is developing planting plans for all the wildlife area sites which includes lease review and development as well as coordinating with local growers and sharecrop farmers.

Ag Leases: Manager Rotton has completed an Agricultural lease summary form to request leasehold excise tax payments.

Enforcement: Biologist Caldwell and Sergeant Phillips performed routine patrols throughout Skagit County. Sergeant Phillips introduced enforcement perspectives on private lands signage, rules of take, shoot time misperceptions, shell limits, and other areas of interest.

Private Lands Access Program Management: Biologist Caldwell coordinated agendas with technician staff pertinent to program goals and objectives. Biologist Caldwell reviewed and discussed the supervisory roles of technicians with volunteers.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Region 5 Deer Management: Biologists Holman, Anderson, and George made preparations for next week's aerial deer surveys over Klickitat County. The up-front work includes developing flight plans, arranging for contractors, accounting for all needed equipment, developing maps for navigation during the survey, securing permissions, etc. The surveys are scheduled to cover portions of all three Klickitat County Game Management Units. Data generated from this effort is used to evaluate the current hunting season structure and monitor the population in consideration of the post-season buck to doe objective of 15-19 bucks per 100 does outlined in the Game Management Plan. Survey results will be posted on future Weekly Reports and included in the annual Region 5 section of the Game Status and Trend Report.

Hydropower Mitigation/Acquisition: Pacificorps owns and operates three hydropower projects on the North Fork Lewis River. As mitigation for the impact of creating reservoirs and the resulting loss of terrestrial habitat, the utility is required to acquire and manage mitigation lands. The utility does an excellent job of managing 13,000+ acres of wildlife habitat surrounding their hydropower facilities and does so in cooperation with WDFW, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Cowlitz and Yakama Tribes, the U.S. Forest Service, etc. Biologist Holman represented WDFW Region 5 throughout 2013 at semi-monthly meetings with the Utility and other parties to implement management activities related to this mitigation effort. The final meeting for 2013 was held in December. Thanks to Pacificorps for their outstanding job of managing wildlife habitat.

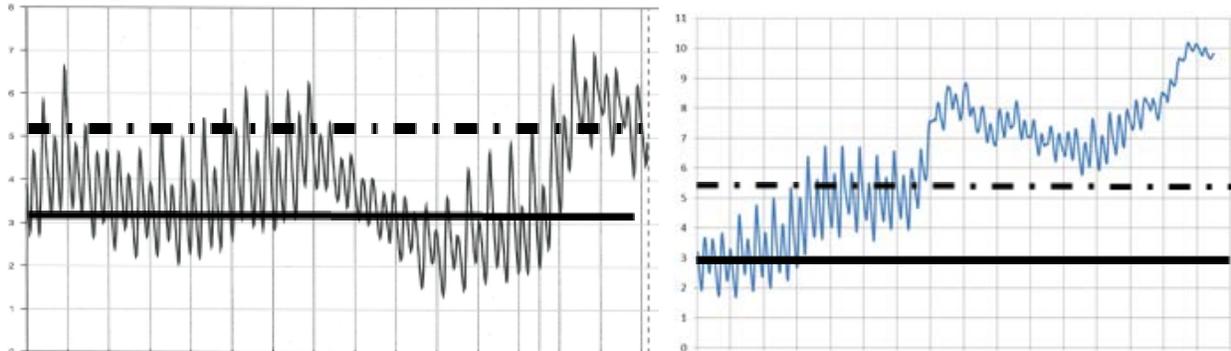
Columbia White-Tailed Deer: Biologist Miller assisted USFWS employees in conducting a Columbia White-Tailed Deer (CWTD) survey on an island in the Columbia River. Approximately 20 deer were observed on Tennashillahee Island. These surveys provide information on recruitment and buck:doe:fawn ratios for the Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed deer in the Lower Columbia River. On a side note, USFWS staff observed 35 deer on the Oregon mainland near Dibblee Point, several of whom were wearing neck collars or ear tags. This is quite a few more deer than had been present in the past.

Wildlife Areas

Shillapoo Wildlife Area – Water Management: The pumps have been in operation at the Vancouver Lake Unit and South Unit since November 6. The Vancouver Lake Unit wetland basins all contain open water and many water control structures are nearing capacity. This has created more open water and emergent habitat for waterfowl, and increased duck hunting opportunities in the unit. The South Unit requires water to be pumped directly from the Columbia River and can only be operated during a minimum water level reading of 3.6 feet as measured at the Interstate-5 bridge gauge station. The pumping station also has a large capacity pump which requires a minimum river level of 5.5 feet. Below average fall precipitation has resulted in lower-river levels compared to last year and has significantly reduced the amount of

time the Wildlife Area managers can pump water into the South Unit. As a result, very little water has yet filled the wetland basins in this unit. The following hydrographs compare the river levels during the first month of South Unit pump operations with the same one month period last year. Solid lines mark the 3.6 feet small pump minimum and the dotted lines mark the 5.5 feet large pump minimum river level. Note that water levels allowed the large pump to run anytime the last two weeks over this time period in 2012, by contrast the large pump has only operated for a total of seven hours this year.

One month hydrograph comparison of 2012 and 2013 (Dotted line = large pump minimum level. Solid line = small pump minimum.)



Left: November 6 – December 6, 2013. Right: November 6 – December 6, 2012.



Viking Warrior

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Grazing Permit Environmental Review: Fish Biologist Weinheimer, Range Ecologist Burnham, Technician Davis, and Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven visited a grazing permit area on the Fisher Hill Unit to evaluate habitat condition and impacts of grazing activity. The permit is up for renewal, and some in the group were seeing the site for the first time. In addition to enjoying the natural beauty of the property, we were surprised to find a concrete sculpture about 7 ft. tall near the property line. Not sure where this sculpture comes from.

Forest Insect Field Trip with Columbia Land Trust: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven joined a group of forest land managers to meet with two forest entomologists to learn about the various beetles affecting pine trees within central Klickitat County. There are several beetles present, along with other pathogens such as midges and root fungi that are weakening or killing pines. The red turpentine beetle, the western pine beetle, and the 5-spined ips beetle are the most common beetle species that attack live pines. In addition, we learned that predatory beetle species are able to locate and kill pine beetles in the trees. Pines that are killed by beetle infestations are often affected by more than one species of beetle.

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

Wildlife Management

Hunting-Related Public Inquiries: Biologist Anderson responded to public inquiries regarding hunting issues and access in District 9. Hunters were concerned about public access to state lands owned by Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Washington State Parks, as well as opportunity for elk hunting in the upper Lewis River drainage. Many hunters are expressing concern for the lack of elk over the past two years in traditionally good units including GMUs 560 (Lewis River) and 572 (Siouxon).

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

Wildlife Management

Klickitat Wolf/Livestock Program: Biologist Anderson and Biologist McDonald have been working to monitor agreements made between WDFW and livestock producers in Klickitat County. This is the first year of a pilot program to engage local ranchers with preparing for the potential future presence of wolves in south-central Washington.

Radio Training: Biologist Miller conducted radio training in the Region 5 office for staff from Wildlife and Fish Programs. New staff and other employees with radios were provided information on proper use of DNR radio frequencies and how to communicate in an emergency via the radio when cell service is not available. Radio numbers have been assigned to new staff and radios are being installed as they become available.

Wildlife Conflict: Conflict Specialist McDonald met with a dairy farmer in Trout Lake regarding 60 to 80 elk causing damage to his fields. He has been making progress installing a New Zealand type fence, but the elk are walking around the unfinished side and past the landowner's dogs housed near that unfinished fence corner. A Master Hunter has been called to the property. In addition, McDonald met with an orchard owner near BZ Corner experiencing elk damage. For the last several winters, elk push down his six-foot-tall welded wire/t-post fence and get into the orchard. There was fresh elk sign within the orchard and new damage to young apple trees. Preventative measures were discussed, and a fencing upgrade was recommended. A Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement and landowner damage access permits are in the works.

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 areas between 2,500 feet and sea level only received a trace to a couple of inches of snow the past week.

Short-Term Forecast: Temperatures will moderate with snow levels beginning around 5,000 feet the first of the week and lowering to 2,500 feet by the end of the week. The 6-10 day forecast is for normal temperatures and precipitation, and the 8-14 day forecast predicts below normal temperatures and 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 below 3,000 feet.

Snow Depths: Areas of low elevation are snow free with there being only minimal snow in elevations above 3,000 feet.

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.

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. Temperatures moderated this week, warming up from unusually cold weather throughout the District in the week prior.

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	5 inches					
		Min Temp (F)	14	19					
		Max Temp (F)	45	27					
		Avg Temp (F)	30	22					
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	27	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	3					
		Min Temp (F)	11	18					
		Max Temp (F)	46	27					
		Avg Temp (F)	29	25					
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	17.5	17.9					

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	2					
		Min Temp (F)	14	16					
		Max Temp (F)	48	26					
		Avg Temp (F)	31.5	22					

**Year to date
precipitation
(inches)**

13.1 13.5

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
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	5.5					
		Min Temp (F)	16	18					
		Max Temp (F)	47	27					
		Avg Temp (F)	31	23					
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	18.8	22					

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

Goose Surveys: Biologists Hoenes and Sundstrom conducted the December general goose survey. Hoenes concentrated his survey efforts in Pacific County, while Sundstrom primarily surveyed in Grays Harbor County. Hoenes observed 4,883 geese while Sundstrom observed 4,754 geese. The number of each species observed is summarized in the table below.

Observer	Dusky	Cackler	Less/Tav	Western	Aleutian	White-fronted	Snow	Unident.	Total
Hoenes	1,387	2,436	580	76	0	44	0	360	4,883
Sundstrom	1,278	828	683	661	1	1	1	1,301	4,754
Total	2,665	3,264	1,263	737	1	45	1	1,661	9,637

Willapa Bay Waterfowl Surveys: Biologist Hoenes spent time entering and summarizing data from the second aerial waterfowl survey in Willapa Bay. The primary intent of the surveys is to document the total number of dabblers using Willapa Bay during their migration south and to identify the core use areas. During the November 20 flight, observers estimated 29,000 dabblers were using Willapa Bay, which represented a more than 50% decline compared to the October 29 survey when biologists observed 71,000 dabblers. The results were not surprising however because it has been well documented that the number of ducks using Willapa Bay drop precipitously between early and mid-November.

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

Wildlife Management

Goose Check Stations: Biologist Sundstrom and Scientific Technician Capelli operated the Raymond and Riekkola goose check stations. At the Raymond check station, Sundstrom reported that four hunters brought in nine geese (three cackler, five western, one taverner) on Wednesday and five hunters brought in six geese (five cackler, one greater white-fronted) on Saturday. This brings the total number of geese checked at the Raymond check station during the 2013-2014 goose season to 114 geese. At the Riekkola check station, Capelli reported that one hunter brought in two geese (one lesser, one taverner) on Wednesday and one hunter brought in four geese (three lesser, one taverner) on Saturday. This brings the total number of geese checked at the Riekkola check station during the 2013-2014 season to 183 geese.

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

Wildlife Management

Taylor's checkerspot Captive Rearing and Release: Biologist Linders gave a one-hour presentation to the Washington Butterfly Association in Seattle, covering all aspects of the work from the restoration to the reintroductions and including how the Sustainability in Prisons Project is utilized in many steps along the way. The audience was very attentive and enthusiastic and asked many questions across a broad range of topics.