

Wildlife Program

Week of December 23-29, 2013

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Butterfly Conservation: Fish and Wildlife Biologists Ann Potter, Derek Stinson, Mary Linders and Dave Hays began developing a two-year Action Plan for Taylor's checkerspot. The Action Plan is a new initiative intended to provide a blueprint for near-term actions and long-term goals for the conservation and recovery of Washington listed species – whether or not a recovery plan currently exists. Taylor's checkerspot is the pilot species for this initiative. The group reviewed recovery strategy elements, defined actions, and assigned leads to complete the action forms that will briefly describe essential information such as the action, the region or location of the action, funding sources, partnerships and resulting outcomes or products.

Nongame Technical Committee – Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan attended the mid-winter meeting of the Nongame Migratory Birds Technical Committee (NTC). The group discussed implementation of Double-crested Cormorant and American White Pelican monitoring, a federal proposal to modify a corvid depredation order, and Golden Eagle management issues. The NTC provides technical support to the Pacific Flyway Council.

REGION 1

None.

REGION 2

Wolf Management



Lookout Pack: Recent snow-tracking by temp biologist Spence and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) contract biologist Robertson indicate that there are still a minimum of five wolves in the traditional winter territory of the Lookout Pack. These are most likely the two adults and three pups that we have been documenting for several months indicating that the Lookout Pack should achieve breeding pack status for 2013.

Lookout Pack wolf – Photo by U.S. Forest Service.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Northern Leopard Frog

Reintroduction – Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei monitored water quality at Mansfield Pond. Mansfield Pond is being considered as a reintroduction site for the Northern Leopard Frog, a species of concern in Washington. Finger and Duvuvuei want to identify if water quality at Mansfield Pond can support Leopard Frogs year-round. The biologists tested water temperature, Dissolved Oxygen, and pH. They will continue to monitor this pond throughout the upcoming year.

Biologist Finger examined the 12-inch thick ice at Mansfield Pond. Photo by Orrin Duvuvuei.



North Cascades Wolverine Research Project:

Once again this year we received an early Christmas present in the form of a December wolverine capture. Biologist Fitkin and USFS staff put a new satellite collar on Logan, a young male we first captured last winter. This year he showed up with some significant wounds from a recent tussle with some type of carnivore, possibly another wolverine. Despite the injuries, his overall body condition was good, and the day following the capture he returned to the trap and consumed a large piece of beaver we had been using as bait. We took this as a good sign and are optimistic he will recover fully. The project's annual report detailing accomplishments for the last year is now available.

Holiday wolverine – Logan. Photo by WDFW.

Wildlife Areas

Pogue Mountain Slash Disposal: Bryan completed burning the remainder of the slash piles located on the Pogue unit with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) burn crew. Weather conditions were ideal, with approximately one-inch of snow. The burn crew will re-check piles as needed until significant snow fall.

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

Wildlife Areas

Bighorn Sheep (BHS) Management – Mt. Hull Herd: Biologist Heinlen conducted a ground survey for the Mt. Hull Bighorn sheep herd this period. A total of 90 bighorn sheep were classified (25 rams, 50 ewes, 12 lambs, and 3 unclassified) for a ratio of 50 Rams:100 Ewes:24 Lambs. This total is similar to the 2012 total of 89 sheep classified. However, the ram ratio is lower by half this year likely due to the snow free conditions that allow rams to forage at higher elevations where they are more difficult to observe from the ground. More surveys will be attempted this winter to gain a better measure of the ram component.



Bighorn Sheep, Mt. Hull herd – Photo by Jeff Heinlen.

Bighorn Sheep Management – Sinlahekin Herd: On December 5, 2013, during the aerial deer surveys Biologists Heinlen and Fitkin also surveyed the Sinlahekin Bighorn sheep herd. A total of 38 bighorn sheep were classified (5 rams, 29 ewes, and 4 lambs) for a ratio of 17 Rams:100 Ewes: 14 Lambs. This is an improvement over the 17-25 BHS observed in multiple fall/winter 2012 and spring 2013 surveys.

Mule Deer Surveys: Biologists Volsen and Gallie flew a one-day mule deer composition survey of Population Management Unit (PMU) 26 in Chelan County. The flight was productive with over 2,600 mule deer observed during the flight. The survey focused on the three primary winter range units in PMU 26, the Mission (GMU 251), the Swakane (GMU 250) and the Entiat (GMU 247). Within each Game Management Unit (GMU) we focused on the known high density areas to maximize our number of observations. Our initial survey target was for a minimum of 1,000 observed across the PMU, which we easily surpassed. Lack of snow cover in the PMU is a concern this year as it has been during past surveys. During low snow years the amount of winter habitat available to deer is much greater than normal.



The proportion of legal and older age-class bucks in the population continues to be high.

We have always suspected that buck ratios recorded during these low precipitation winters are lower than others due to the limited amount of habitat that can be surveyed. Does, fawns and yearling bucks are the first to appear on winter ranges, with bucks lagging behind. In past years we have tried to maximize our survey opportunity by waiting for snows to push deer onto winter ranges. However, we have experienced a pattern over the last six years of variable snow conditions during the survey period. Snow had not arrived so a decision was made to fly a composition survey rather than a full sightability survey, leaving an opportunity to do a formal survey if and when snow arrives.

Delaying the survey precludes us from identifying bucks following their antler drop. Therefore, the earlier composition survey gives us insight to buck and fawn ratios relative to our management objectives. An overall buck ratio of 23 bucks per 100 does was recorded for the PMU, down from the 28 bucks per 100 does observed in 2011 (weather precluded surveys in 2012). GMU 251 (Swakane) had the highest ratio at 27:100 does. Next was GMU 251 (Mission) with 23 Bucks per 100 does and third GMU 247 (Entiat) with 20 Bucks per 100 does. Management objectives for these units are 25 bucks per 100 does, so the overall ratios are near what we would like to see. One of the factors that has seemed to play into lower buck ratios this year is the fact that antler drop was occurring, resulting the numbers of antlerless deer observed being high, and the number of bucks being low, both influencing the ratio.



Images of a few of the legal mule deer bucks observed during the recent survey.

Private Lands/Access

Hunter Access: Biologist Dougherty completed all the work necessary to open 17,000 acres of property in the Hunt by Reservation hunter access program. Biologist Dougherty had originally reported that there were 12,000 acres, but after checking and confirming locations of other properties, 17,000 acres were totaled.

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

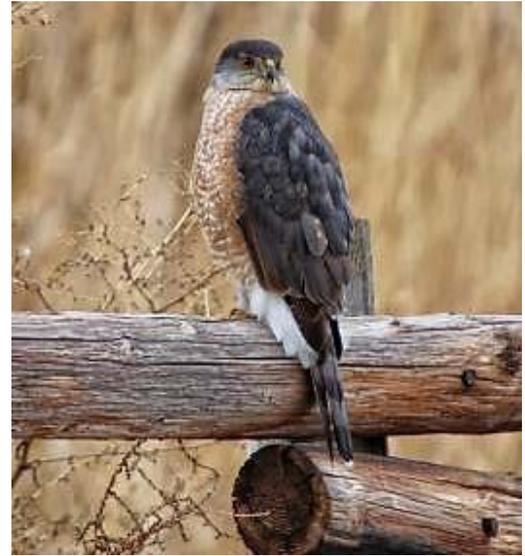
Private Lands/Access

Stemilt Fence Project: Specialist Bridges has continued to respond to questions regarding the installation of three cattle guards for the Stemilt Fence Project. Bridges has also created two new maps to assist contractors in locating the areas where the guards will be installed when they conduct a site visit.

Byrd Fence Project: Specialist Bridges has created shape files that identified where maintained fence occurs, and where previously installed fencing existed. This has then been layered over property owners in the first stages of possibly installing a fence.



Methow sunset closes out the year – Photo by Scott Fitkin.



Above: Sunset upon the cracking ice of Conners Lake, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Cooper's hawk (top right), One-eyed Great-Horned Owl (right), and Northern Harrier Hawk (below), Driscoll-Eyhott Wildlife Area. Photos by Justin Haug.



REGION 3

None.

REGION 4

None.

REGION 5

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

Wildlife Management

Youth Hunts: District Biologist Anderson assisted with hunter related questions regarding youth access in GMU 382. District 9 has several opportunities for youth doe hunts in GMU 382 during the months of December – mid-February. The majority of opportunity is offered for targeting youth hunts towards private lands that are experiencing deer damage.

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt: The 2013-2014 Southwest Washington goose hunting season resumed on December 11, 2013. To date, 488 hunters have checked in 1,035 geese at a rate of 2.15 geese per hunter. All zones continue to 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. **As a reminder, Management Area 2A will be closed to goose hunting on Wednesday January 1, 2014.** Thank you for your cooperation during the holiday season. Hunters interested in goose hunting in Area 2A 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.

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 has received multiple complaints of elk damage in the Packwood and Wahkiakum County areas and she will be meeting with landowners in between the holidays.

Winter Conditions

District 10 and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: December 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 in December during two snowfall events.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will range from 4,000 to 9,000 feet for the upcoming week with little snow expected. The 6-10 day forecast is for above average temperatures and average precipitation and the 8-14 day forecast predicts below average temperatures and average precipitation.

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

Habitat: Forage is available at all mid to lower elevations, with 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 continues to be below normal for this time of the year as snowpack is around 50% of normal as recorded at the Washington SNOTEL Snow/Precipitation site on Potato Hill near Mt Adams. Most snow accumulation is currently

above 5,000 feet. Night time temperatures are cold this week with warming during the day. There has been no new precipitation.

Winter Severity: Elevations below 5,000 feet continue to be 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 in the White Salmon River drainage. Those portions of Klickitat County east of Rock Creek have no snow accumulation and deer are reported in good condition.

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

Animal Concentrations: Deer are bunched in normal concentrations in good habitat east of Highway 97.

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 | 4" new snow | No new report | No new report | | | |
| WAKEPISH | 2,800' | | No report | | 1-2" snow | 1-2" snow | | | |

| 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 | 5.3 | 7 | | | |
| | | Min Temp (F) | 14 | 19 | 23 | 29 | | | |
| | | Max Temp (F) | 45 | 27 | 50 | 54 | | | |
| | | Avg Temp (F) | 30 | 22 | 36.2 | 38.3 | | | |
| | | Year to date precipitation (inches) | 27 | 27 | 27.7 | 30.9 | | | |
| | | Avg Snow | | | | | | | |
| SPIRIT LAKE | 3,520' | Depth (inches) | 2.43 | 3 | 0.86 | 0.86 | | | |
| | | Min Temp (F) | 11 | 18 | 21 | 29 | | | |
| | | Max Temp (F) | 46 | 27 | 52 | 51 | | | |
| | | Avg Temp (F) | 29 | 25 | 36.8 | 36.8 | | | |
| | | Year to date precipitation (inches) | 17.5 | 17.9 | 18.3 | 22.1 | | | |
| | | Avg Snow | | | | | | | |
| PEPPER CREEK | 2,140' | Depth (inches) | 0.31 | 2 | 0.3 | 0.42 | | | |
| | | Min Temp (F) | 14 | 16 | 24 | 28 | | | |
| | | Max Temp (F) | 48 | 26 | 46 | 46 | | | |
| | | Avg Temp (F) | 31.5 | 22 | 34.5 | 34.8 | | | |

| | | Year to date precipitation (inches) | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------|--|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | | 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 | |
| | | 13.1 | 13.5 | 13.6 | 15.3 | | | | |
| 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 | | 7 | 8.6 | | | |
| | | Min Temp (F) | 12 | | 20 | 28 | | | |
| | | Max Temp (F) | 43 | | 50 | 51 | | | |
| | | Avg Temp (F) | 26 | | 35.3 | 36.8 | | | |
| | | Year to date precipitation (inches) | 23.1 | | 24.4 | 27.8 | | | |

| 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 | 0.1 | 0 | | | |
| | | Min Temp (F) | 16 | 18 | 27 | 32 | | | |
| | | Max Temp (F) | 47 | 27 | 55 | 52 | | | |
| | | Avg Temp (F) | 31 | 23 | 39.2 | 41.2 | | | |
| | | Year to date precipitation (inches) | 18.8 | 22 | 20.3 | 23.2 | | | |

| 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% | | 13% | 21% | | | |
| SPIRIT LAKE | 122% | | 100% | 48% | | | |
| SHEEP CANYON | 20% | | 20% | 27% | | | |

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Fishers: Biologist Hoenes spent time following up on a report of a local trapper that had caught two separate Fishers in his live traps. It turns out the story was true so Biologist Hoenes notified Biologist Lewis who is managing the Fisher reintroduction for WDFW. Biologist Lewis worked with the trapper to get detailed information about the captures and to inform the trapper of information WDFW would like for him to collect if he captures a Fisher in the future. In this case, both Fishers were captured in areas well outside of Olympic National Park (ONP) and represent the distribution and establishment of breeding populations in areas not associated with the original release of Fishers in ONP. And in both cases, the Fishers were released unharmed.



Western Pond Turtles: A District 11 biologist spent time assisting Cedar Creek Correctional staff in setting up a dedicated rehab holding facility at the prison for state-listed Western pond turtle. WDFW transferred six turtles held at PAWS Wildlife Center to Cedar Creek this week. The turtles will be cared for and treated for Septicemic Cutaneous Ulcerative Disease and released in spring.



Wintering Marine Waterfowl and Marine Bird Aerial Surveys: Surveys continued apace this week. Bios Murphie, Evenson and Cyra report surveying areas in southern and central Puget Sound. These annual surveys provide trend data on select waterfowl and marine bird populations wintering on the Salish Sea, and are also used in the annual harvest setting negotiations in the Pacific Flyway for waterfowl. With this week's effort, 5 of an anticipated 20 survey days are complete.

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 two hunters brought in six geese (six western) on Wednesday and five hunters brought in six geese (four cacklers, one Vancouver, one dusky) on Saturday. This brings the total number of geese checked at the Raymond check station during the 2013-2014 goose season to 126 geese. At the Riekkola check station, Capelli reported that two hunters brought in five geese (three lesser, one cackler, one western) on Wednesday and three hunters brought in seven geese (four lesser, two cacklers, one taverner) on Saturday. This brings the total number of geese checked at the Riekkola check station during the 2013-2014 season to 195 geese. With the dusky goose harvested this week, there have been three dusky geese harvested in Goose Management Area 2B during the 2013-2014 season.

Private Lands/Access

Update Hunt by Reservation hunts: Bio Harris completed adding waterfowl hunts through the end of the season to the Hunt by Reservation system for Region 6. He has received many positive comments regarding the system. Additionally, the youth days at the South Bank sites are a hit!

Wildlife Areas

Salmon Center: During the week, following a break in weather, a new kiosk was installed at the Salmon Center, as part of the restoration following the removal of the dike and construction of a setback dike.

