

# Wildlife Program

Week of January 21-27, 2013

## **LANDS DIVISION**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE***

**Habitat and Recreation Land Acquisitions:** During the 2012 calendar year, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) completed 18 acquisitions totaling 5,671 acres valued at \$13,018,754. These involved transactions as diverse as the 2,181 acre first phase of the 4-O Ranch in Asotin County to a two acre wetland on Hood Canal in Mason County.

In addition, the second phase of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) land exchange was completed involving 13,743 acres valued at \$26,912,533. The completion of the second and final phase of the DNR land exchange has gone a long ways towards eliminating checkerboard ownership and improving management efficiencies.

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE***

**South Puget Prairie Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Information Delivery** – Staff in Wildlife Diversity and Science Divisions completed and delivered all agreed information products regarding services to aid preparation of the Prairie Habitat Conservation Plan. These products, developed over 10 months and delivered to Thurston County and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), included conservation narratives regarding 12 taxa, a summary report on Mazama pocket gopher surveys in 2012, various spatial data sets supporting the narratives and survey, and related explanatory text files. Information about pocket gopher surveys also were transmitted to Thurston County Economic Development Council.

**Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) List Annual Revisions** – At the beginning of each year Biologist Azerrad makes minor revisions to the PHS List. This includes updating the list to reflect recent changes to species state/federal status. It also includes revisions to range maps found in the PHS List.

The revisions to the maps reflect changes in species distribution as well as new information about the range of species in Washington. This past week the updates were completed with the exception of one final revision that's in review.

**Interstate Data Analysis for Flammulated Owl** – Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan submitted the 2012 Flammulated Owl survey data to Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory for analysis as part of a multi-state investigation on this species.

## **REGION 1**

### **Wolf Management**

**District 1:** District Wildlife and Enforcement staff participated in a meeting discussing livestock injury and mortality investigations concerning potential depredation by carnivores. This training was held with other WDFW staff in Wenatchee, WA at the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Headquarters.

Biologist Shepherd and Officer Parkert visited the Pond Ranch and followed a Smackout wolf with radio-telemetry. The two traveled on snowshoes attempting to haze it from the ranch where it was very close to the residence and where several dead cattle carcasses were present, most protected by electrified fladry. Another new carcass was moved into a horse trailer to make it unavailable to scavenging.

Biologist Shepherd discussed wolf locations with John Dawson and WDFW officers over the weekend as the other radio-collared Smackout wolf was one mile north and then one half mile south of the Dawson home ranch.



*Radio telemetry helped locate this Smackout wolf near a dead cattle carcass surrounded by fladry at the Pond Ranch.*



*Wolf track at Pond Ranch in the Wedge.*

**District 2:** Biologists Ferguson and Atamian attended the meeting in Wenatchee to review the department's depredation investigation form and the roles of staff in the investigations.

**Dog Attacked in Pullman Area:** Biologist Ferguson and Atamian coordinated with Biologist McCanna and Officer Vance in the investigation of a dog reportedly attacked by a large carnivore in south Whitman. Given the location it was decided that McCanna and Vance would conduct the field investigation.

Supervisor McCanna, Officer Vance and Officer Nelson responded to a dog attack in which one dog was killed and one was injured between Colfax and Pullman. After three hours of searching the area, the dead dog was not found and no wolf tracks were seen. We then traveled to the veterinarian clinic outside of Pullman with the owner to look at the dog that survived. From all the evidence on the dog that was attacked, it appears the dogs cornered an immature cougar.

**District 3:** District Biologist (DB) Wik and a volunteer spent two days in the field surveying for wolf activity. On day one, both met with two landowners along the Grande Ronde River who are missing 10-12 cows apiece from this summer's grazing activities. We spent the day riding four-wheelers across their ranches without seeing any sign of wolf activity. We did find lots of coyote

and cougar activity, including two fresh cougar kills. Both landowners were happy with the day and will likely be following up with Scott Rasley for Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) contracts.

On the second day, DB Wik and a volunteer spent the day in an area southeast of Dayton searching for OR-13, a young female wolf from the Wenaha pack in Oregon. In coordination with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), we were attempting to determine whether the rest of the pack made this trip with her. We were successful in finding an area with at least five sets of tracks.

We were also able to hear the collar, but unable to get close enough because of travel conditions. District 3 does not have any over the snow travel capability, limiting our winter work capacity. The following day ODFW flew the area when the weather cleared and counted eight black and two gray (four adults) on an open ridge in the Tucannon drainage.



*District Biologist Wik radio-tracked a young female wolf from the Wenaha pack in Oregon, OR-13, on the breaks of the Tucannon drainage.*



*A set of single tracks found in Game Management Unit 162, Dayton.*



*Five sets of tracks merging into a single trail in Game Management Unit 162, Dayton.*

**Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements (DPCA):** Biologist Rasley had a good meeting with Carl Flynn regarding our new DPCA Livestock contract. We covered each and every issue that could come up regarding all predators with most of the meeting being about wolves and the negative impact they might have when they come in contact with their livestock. After a very positive meeting Carl said he “would sign a DPCA contract with us.”

Biologist Rasley emailed a new DPCA Livestock contract to cattleman Wayne Bezona at Wayne’s request. Wayne’s land lies along the Grand Rhonde River in Asotin County and is the neighbor to Carl Flynn. Wayne said he would get back to me next week.

Biologist Rasley received a call from the Columbia County Cattleman President. The Cattleman President was asking for Joey and me to give a presentation to their members regarding our new DPCA Livestock contracts at their next annual cattleman meeting on February 5. We said we would be happy to come and talk to their members. The President was very excited and was looking forward to our presentation. He was referred to me by several Walla Walla County Cattleman members.

Biologist Rasley Met with Walla Walla County Cattleman Tom Beechinor. Tom is the southeast Washington District President. After a long but productive meeting Tom said he “would most likely sign our DPCA contract.” Tom said he “would get with me next week with a signed contract after he was done moving some of his cows.”

Biologist Rasley met with Broughton Land and Cattle regarding our DPCA Livestock contract. Broughton's are the single largest private landowner in Columbia County. Their Manager Dan McKinnley said he "liked what I had to offer especially since they have had confirmed sightings of wolves on their ranch." Dan was going to run it by his Board of Directors and would get back to me next week.

**Asotin County Cattleman Meeting:** Biologists Wik and McCanna presented a PowerPoint presentation to 24 ranchers who had heard about our livestock DPCA contracts. The meeting went well with a lot of interaction and questions during and after the meeting. Biologists Rasley and Earl met with several of the ranchers the next day to look at their operations and also discuss elk damage issues in Asotin County. McCanna has been contacted by the Columbia County Cattleman to do a PowerPoint presentation on February 5 in Dayton.

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Access**

**Moose Relocation** - On Wednesday, January 23, Access Manager Scott Young helped Region 1 Enforcement and other staff members with relocating a wayward moose from a south Spokane Valley neighborhood to more suitable habitat.



***Access Manager Scott Young, at the far left inside the trailer, helped Region 1 Enforcement and other staff members relocate a moose from a south Spokane Valley neighborhood.***

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Shop Work:** Debby Flynn and Cuevas Winegeart spent the majority of their holiday shortened workweek at the Clarkston Shop. They completed repairs on a cultivator used at Smoothing Iron Ridge and installed tracks on two project ATVs for use in snow. Debby and Cuevas also cleaned out upper level storage areas of the Clarkston Shop and disposed of some treasures which had been sitting around idle for the past eight or nine years.



***Cuevas Winegeart and Debby Flynn installing tracks on one of the wildlife area's ATVs. Fish Program staff has also been busy readying their adult trap for the Asotin Creek project.***

**Private Lands/Access**

**Wildlife Education:** Private Lands Biologist Earl conducted a wildlife education for third graders at a local school. The class was then asked to write a paper on what they had learned for an assignment.



*Biologist Earl engages a local third grade class on wildlife identification.*

## **REGION 2**

### **Wolves**

**Wolf Management:** Biologist Heinlen investigated a report of large canine tracks in Game Management Unit (GMU) 204 this period. A single set of large (five inches long by four inches wide) canine tracks were observed on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land. This is near where WA-018M traveled, but WA-018M left the County four days before these tracks were found and the reporting party stated that it had snowed in the area since then. These tracks were not covered by snow. This observation was documented and reported on the WDFW wolf observation form on the internet.

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

### **Wildlife Management**

**Caspian Tern - Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee (PRCC):** Biologist Finger and Regional Program Manager Monda attended a PRCC meeting at SeaTac to present the Caspian

Tern Supplemental Feeding feasibility study proposal. The proposal has generated both interest and concern. The committee will review the proposal over the coming week and will likely vote on funding shortly thereafter.

**North Cascades Wolverine Research Project:** Biologist Fitkin and the USFS crew placed a satellite collar on the second wolverine of the season. This animal is another new young male (Logan). He showed up at the same trap that our matriarch Xena had visited the day before, so there's a decent chance this is her kit from last year. DNA analysis should help us determine lineage. With two new young males on the air it will be interesting to document their home ranges relative to the territory of our alpha male Rocky, particularly since he may be the father of one or both animals. Logan visited another trap a couple of days later and was promptly released by the crew, but not before giving us some entertaining video.



*Biologist Fitkin and a U.S. Forest Service crew placed a satellite collar on Logan (left). Wolverine and marten tracks (right) were observed during the North Cascades wolverine research project. Scott Fitkin photos.*

**Washington Ground Squirrels:** Biologists Finger and Gregory along with Technician Anderson-Hastings performed maintenance on Washington ground squirrel traps. They maintained 240 traps and are ready to put to use and an additional 100 that were recently

purchased. Sixty traps remain unaccounted for and are hopefully stored at the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge. Volunteers have been tracked down and we believe we have enough volunteers to put crews together for the four-day trapping effort. Biologist Gregory scouted for Washington ground squirrel emergence at the Sage Hills Golf Course. The Warden golf course is the source site for the translocation that will occur next month. So far no squirrels have been observed above ground.

**Cougar Management:** Biologist Fitkin attended the release of a relocated cougar caught under a deck near his residence. If the cat returns to the neighborhood it will be closely monitored to proactively prevent potential conflict.

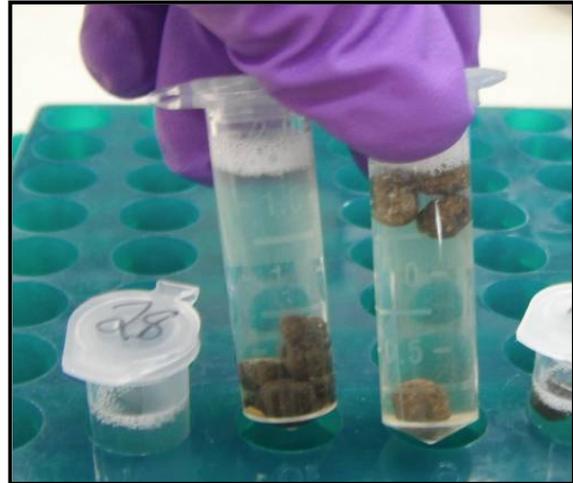


**Pygmy Rabbit Snow Survey Results:** Research Scientist Becker and graduate student Stephanie DeMay worked on analyzing and compiling results from genetic data collected during snow surveys completed in December and early January. In total, they surveyed more than 2,400 acres on or near Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area. Approximately 110 active burrows were located and pellet samples collected from each. Genetic analyses of the fecal samples at the University of Idaho laboratory revealed that 38 rabbits released in the 2012 breeding season are using those burrows (37 percent of kits released).

A comparison of radio telemetry and genetics results showed that radio tracking of released kits yielded data that was less valuable than genetic sampling. Snow surveys paired with fecal

genetics detected: (1) rabbits released without transmitters, (2) rabbits thought to have been preyed upon based on transmitter condition, (3) rabbits in a different location than last recorded based on transmitter location, and (4) rabbits that were missing after release even though they were fitted with transmitters.

In addition, four pygmy rabbits were located that are the offspring of rabbits released in the 2011 breeding season. Amazingly enough the parents of these individuals were located in February 2012 more than 1.8 kilometers away from each other, yet still managed to find each other during the breeding season! Results showing a large number of rabbits in close proximity to each other this year are very encouraging because breeding may begin in less than one month.



*Research Scientist Becker and graduate student Stephanie DeMay collected pygmy rabbit fecal samples on or near the Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area (left). DNA was extracted from those fecal pellets in the laboratory (right).*

**Aechmophorus grebes:** Biologist Finger obtained data from the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to characterize water surface elevation (WSE) changes in Potholes Reservoir during large grebe breeding season from 1952 to present. This data were included in the final grebe monitoring report, which is nearly completed. The data confirmed the suspicion that 2012 was not a normal year for WSE declines. Though we observed WSE declines of 1.8 inches per day, a “normal” year would have seen declines of 2.3 inches per day. Thus, over the nesting season, we should have seen an additional 14 inches of water level drop (approximately). Thus the results of the monitoring are not representative of a normal year, and in fact likely represent a best-case scenario for nesting grebes. During the 2012 breeding season, an estimated 29 percent of nests failed due to WSE declines. Finger discussed this with BORs Natural Resource Specialist Lesky and opened dialogue for some potential experimentation with floating nest platforms and designation of grebe management areas. More information will become available as things progress.

**Stemilt Basin Elk:** Biologist Volsen worked with the Enforcement Program to hire a hazer to combat local problems with elk damaging orchards in the Stemilt Basin. This winter’s snow conditions have pushed elk into the basin at higher rates and the hiring of a hazer is our assistance to the local producers to solve the problem. In addition, the Wildlife and Enforcement

Programs are assisting the local producers in the construction of a series of new fences to prevent elk damage in the future. Local producers have developed a plan to link existing fences together to form an elk fence to protect the lower basin and the Wenatchee Heights. WDFW will assist with local issues to make the fence construction effective.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Chesaw Fuels Reduction:** Crews from Pioneer Harvesting continued thinning conifers on the Chesaw unit. It is evident that this treatment is necessary and timely. The Western Spruce Budworm in this timber stand has gradually increased over the past three or four years, and now the tops of even the largest Douglas fir trees are defoliated. The smaller trees and saplings are completely without needles. It is hoped by reducing competition for resources that the remaining trees will be stronger to help fight off these insects. To date, they have completed approximately 50 acres of the 220 acres planned for thinning this winter.



**Sinlahekin Prescribed Burn Team\_**– Fuels Specialist Guse completed a spreadsheet listing all prior fire training and current qualifications that has been accomplished by the crew and collected documentation of the training. This is required information for red-carding our staff and it will streamline data entry for the process. A training schedule for individuals to meet target fireline qualifications was also completed. Using information supplied by Tveten and Palmer, Guse digitized and created a map of a cooperative prescribed fire project on the Sherman

Creek Wildlife Area with the USFS where a 1,600 acre unit was burned in 1966, 1978 and 2000; 320 acres of the project were on the wildlife area.

**Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration Project (SERP) – Phase 2 Logging:** Sinlahekin Restoration Forester Brett continued compliance visits with loggers; progress still going slow due to equipment problems, but quality of work thus far looks good. He also visited with the Zosel mill in Oroville to build a working relationship and hopefully open new markets for our wood products. Brett also continued preparations for SERP Phase 3 timber sales (mostly office recon at this point) and got some initial estimates from local cable loggers.

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

**Winter Recreation:** With abundant snow and occasionally clear weather, winter recreation on the Methow Wildlife Area is in full swing. It seems that at any point on the wildlife area that can be reached with a vehicle is being used as a jumping off point for recreation. Just in the last week on the Methow we've seen people skinning up and skiing down Lewis Butte, cross-country skiing both on and off trail, snowshoeing, riding fat bikes, shooting, and walking their goats.

In the past two weeks the new winter sports trail (this is the first year) on the Lloyd Ranch has been discovered. Operating as a multi-use trail like that at Big Valley it's not uncommon to see skiers, snowshoers and fat bike riders all at the same time. As more people find out about this new opportunity the public response grows ever more enthusiastic. This site is also getting broad exposure. Last week a writer for the Seattle Times came to the Methow to do a story on the rapidly growing sport of winter fat bike riding. For the on-snow part of the story they went to the Lloyd Ranch. Next week a reporter from the Tacoma News Tribune will be in town to do a similar story and they will also be trying the bikes at the Lloyd Ranch. A photo of fat bike riding at the Lloyd Ranch will also be featured in Wired Magazine.



The primary roads system through the wildlife area, while not open to public use of motorized vehicles, are also being heavily used recreationally. A few intrepid souls pioneered paths down the roads following the first big dump of snow, and more recently, the cougar collaring crew has been using their snowmobiles on these roads for accessing more remote areas. The result is packed surfaces that are more easily traveled for all. There are several points that are seeing increased use every year.

Snowshoeing appears to be gaining popularity in the Methow. Staff is seeing snowshoe tracks, not only on the packed trails, but also all over off trail areas as well and are very curious to see how this activity evolves.

With our new snow plow, keeping recreation facilities open this winter has been quick and efficient. This has been particularly well received by the shooters in the valley. With the parking lot open and a couple of simple trails pushed out, the shooting range is seeing regular use.



*Stephanie Rowatt photo.*





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

**Access**

**Access Maintenance:** Access Managers Joe Graves and Josh Harmon serviced Access Areas in the Seep Lakes, Potholes Reservoir, and Desert Wildlife Areas. They also repaired a cattle guard in the Seep Lakes main access road.



***Access Managers Joe Graves and Josh Harmon repaired the Seep Lakes cattle guard.***



*Ruffed Grouse (gray morph) perched in maple (above), a North Pygmy-Owl near Forde Lake (right), and Hooded Merganser pair (below) – Sinlahekin Wildlife Area.*





*Dying pine isolated high in the valley – Sinlahekin Wildlife Area.*

### **REGION 3**

#### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

##### **Wildlife Management**

**Hanford Elk Survey:** Deer and Elk Conflict Specialist Hand summarized the survey data and photos of individual elk groups from the annual Hanford Elk Herd survey. A total of 825 elk were classified during the two-day flight, with a herd composition of 52 bulls and 22 calves per 100 cows.

##### **Wildlife Areas**

**Wenas Lake Fire Emergency Elk Fence Rebuild:** Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor met on-site with the fence building contractor, Konnowac, LLC. They have laid out the metal fence posts along the western end of the project and have started driving posts. They are able to reach over the existing fence wire with the driver-mounted arm of the excavator and pound the posts. They will then come along after to remove the wire, cut off the existing wood posts, and install the new wire. Once they get the kinks worked out, they expect to be able to drive up to 40 posts per hour.



*Kelley Hollow with new three-inch metal posts installed (left). Stretch point with larger five-inch pipes installed (right).*

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** The number of visitors to the wildlife area continues to be high, especially on weekends. State Park's Rangers continue to sell Discover Passes but a majority of people are starting to show up with a pass. Tour truck interest is continuing to increase with almost every truck full all weekend long. Below are some pictures of visitor's at Oak Creek over the weekend.



*Elk feeding at the Oak Creek headquarters feed site with a feed truck and a tour truck in the background.*



*Visitors enjoyed a close up view of the elk at the Oak Creek Visitor's Center.*

## Other

**Winter Conditions:** Weather the past week remained cold. The inversion lifted for a day or two and we saw blue skies, but overcast skies returned. Low temperatures were in the 20's and highs were in the mid 30's. The forecast for the coming week is about the same with mostly cloudy skies and lows in the 20's and highs should be around 40 if we get some sunshine. If the inversion stays then it will be foggy with colder temperatures. Snow cover has been reduced and southern slopes are free of snow. Cold temperatures are holding elk on the feed sites. Elk are in good condition.

## **REGION 4**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Mid-winter swan surveys:** Biologist DeBruyn organized and conducted surveys of all swan habitats in Skagit, Whatcom, Island, and Snohomish counties as part of the mid-winter waterfowl surveys. Volunteers and staff from private lands and the wildlife program assisted in the two day effort which is intended to count all wintering swans in our area. Volunteers also counted swans in King and San Juan counties and in British Columbia. Swan numbers were up in Skagit and Whatcom counties with a total of 11,660 Trumpeter and Tundra swans counted. Biologist Milner covered the northern part of Snohomish County and Island County. There were 908 trumpeter swans counted, with the highest of birds at one site occurring on Camano Island.

**Swan Mortality and Morbidity Study:** Swan Technician Anderson collected 11 swans/feather piles. All swans collected were trumpeter swans from Skagit or Whatcom counties. Many bodies of water were frozen this week and made surveys and collections difficult or impossible to conduct. The colder temperatures are believed to facilitate mortalities associated with lead toxicity. WDFW Technician Brad Otto recovered the remains of M43 on Lake Terrell this week. The trumpeter swan M43 was collected on Wiser Lake on December 3 and transported to NW Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (NWWRC). This, along with another swan M44, was collected on Blaine Road in Whatcom County and was also a NWWRC release was re-sighted this week in Whatcom County during the mid-winter swan surveys.

	Skagit	Snohomish	Whatcom	Sumas	TOTAL
Powerline suspect	21	5	26		52
Pb suspect	21	1	9		31
Trauma*	5		7		12
Unknown	13		2		15
Feather Pile	5		4		9
TOTAL	65	6	48		119

**Leque Island Meeting:** Biologist Milner attended a meeting that included staff from the Enforcement, Wildlife and Habitat Programs to discuss moving forward with discussions about management options for Leque Island. Milner began looking into estuary restoration projects that have included bird monitoring as part of the project. Post-dike-removal bird monitoring is occurring at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, Qwuloolt, and Port Susan Preserve. These projects may help inform future options for Leque Island.

Manager Link has been communicating with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding their review of the water quality study that was completed this fall. A meeting of the Technical Team will occur in February and a finding from EPA regarding the Sole Source Aquifer determination will hopefully occur soon after that meeting.

**Winter Marine Waterfowl Aerial Surveys:** Despite poor marine and aviation forecasts for the week, the annual winter marine waterfowl surveys continued with Marine Bird Specialist Evenson and Assistant District Biologists Cyra and Murphie completing three days of surveying. The surveys are now 88 percent complete with only Skagit Bay and portions of the San Juan Islands and northern reaches remaining.

Time on the ground was used to transcribe data from days flown earlier. These annual surveys are used to determine trends in marine waterfowl species – both game and diversity species; and results are used to help inform the Pacific Flyway in season setting for sea ducks. Maps, data, and species information from the nearly 20 years of annual surveys can be found at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/psamp/>

## Wildlife Areas

**Leque Island Outreach:** Restoration Projects Coordinator presented a Leque Island status update and project timeline to the Stillaguamish Watershed Council (SWC). SWC consists of representatives from stakeholder groups within the Stillaguamish watershed. The group is responsible for making grant funding recommendations for restoration projects.

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

## Wildlife Management

**Puyallup Sportsmen's Show:** Biologist Milner worked the Department of Fish and Wildlife booth at the sportsmen's show on Friday night. The number of people stopping to view our booth and visit with staff was relatively light, and the overall number of people at the show seemed lower than is typical for a Friday evening.

## Wildlife Areas

**Island Unit:** Manager Belinda Rotton and Natural Resources Specialist Greg Meis discussed the plan for installation of beaver deceivers and improved screens on drainage culverts and water control structures for this spring season. Natural Resources Technician Curran Cosgrove monitored and managed water levels for the last week of the hunting season.

**Tennant Lake Beaver Damage and Water Levels:** Manager Kessler coordinated with the Whatcom County Parks Manager on continuing beaver damage affecting the recreational use on the Tennant Lake Unit. The beavers have now plugged up a culvert under the road at the boat launch parking area. This plugged culvert is causing flooding of the road to the launch. The beavers have also started cutting down trees at Hovander Park. With the hunting season now over, the lake water level will be lowered to allow use of the lake boardwalk. Other control options are being reviewed.

## Private Lands/Access

**Snow Goose Quality Program:** Region 4 private lands staff monitored and noted hunter use in units. Limited snow goose activity within the units proved little opportunity for goose hunters through the week. Few birds were harvested at the Quality Hunt units. However, snow goose hunting was available to those who did their homework at other "Quality Hunt" locations.

Access manager Derek Hacker spent two days at the Seattle Boat Show working at the Washington State Parks Boater Education Booth. Adam Lindquist from the Fish Program, Ericka Thomas from customer service, and Officer Mike Apple from Enforcement also participated. Topics covered included information on the Discovery Pass, Adopt a WDFW Access, and how to get a boating license from State Parks.

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** The last week of hunting provided great opportunities for those who utilized the hunt units. With agricultural fields thawing and air temperatures remaining low, ducks of all species consistently moved throughout the Program area.



*Hunter submitted picture of male canvasback harvested in one of the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program units (above). An empty Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program unit was filled with three species of ducks mid-day (below).*



Private lands staff began meeting landowners to review and sign payment documents for cooperators in both the Snow Goose and Waterfowl Quality Hunt Programs. Staff will continue meeting with partners over the next two weeks. Cooperating landowners continue to support the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program, committing ground enrollment for the 2013-14 hunting season.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Headquarters:** Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resource Technician Curran Cosgrove installed the Audubon Important bird area and birding trail signs at Headquarters, Leque Island and Big Ditch.

Manager Rotton coordinated with the WDFW Engineer Ray Berg and Permit Biologist Chris Gorley regarding design and permitting information for the proposed pump station on the Headquarters Unit.

***GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE***

**Wildlife Management**

**Radio Communication:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra provided radio communication training and assistance to several program staff per contract with DNR.

**REGION 5**

***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE***

**Wildlife Management**

**Western Pond Turtle Management:** Biologist Holman continued work on the 2012 annual report summarizing work done in the Columbia River Gorge related to management of the State Endangered western pond turtle. The report summarizes work accomplished and includes sections on habitat management, the head-starting program, participation by the Oregon Zoo and Woodland Park Zoo, bullfrog control, environmental education, population estimation, etc. Highlights of the 2012 pond turtle season in the Gorge include release of the 1,357<sup>th</sup> head-start turtle, participation in the Population and Habitat Viability Analysis, and development of population estimates for the Sondino site.

**Turkeys:** Biologist Anderson responded to two landowner requests for information on dealing with wild turkeys in abundance around private residences. Both contacts were in central Klickitat County and both landowners were informed about the need to not feed turkeys as this tends to concentrate birds in areas where they become a nuisance.

**Elk Collar Retrieval:** Biologists Miller and Bergh retrieved a radio-collar from a dead elk near the Sediment Dam on the North Fork Toutle River. The cow elk's backbone was protruding and its bone marrow was red and gelatinous. Both of these are indicators that the elk was in very poor condition. Thanks to the Army Corps of Engineers staff and to the public for reporting this radio-collared elk so that we could retrieve and re-use the collar.



*Biologists Miller and Bergh retrieved a radio-collar from this dead elk on the North Fork Toutle River (left). The cow elk's backbone was protruding and its bone marrow was red and gelatinous (right), both of these are indicators that the elk was in very poor condition.*

**Regional Wildlife Program Response to Proposed Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) I-5 Corridor Powerline Proposal:** Biologists Anderson and Holman along with Priority Habitat and Species/Growth Management Act (GMA) Biologist Fornes developed comments in response to BPA's most recent proposal for new powerlines bisecting Region 5. The proposed route crosses diagonally across the landscape from roughly Camas to Castle Rock, impacting DNR, Pacificorps, private industrial forestlands, and small landowners. Impacts to terrestrial wildlife include loss of forest cover, introduction of weeds and people into remote areas, soil erosion, fragmentation of the landscape, flight obstructions for eagles, loss of large structural components in the forests near the powerlines (i.e. large trees and snags), as well as impacts to riparian, wetland, old-growth, Oregon white oak and other habitats. Comments from each of the Region's Programs will be compiled by Biologist Fornes and forwarded to Habitat Program's Major Projects Division for inclusion in a WDFW response to the proposed powerlines.

### Wildlife Areas

#### **Klickitat Wildlife Area**

**Forest Management:** Wildlife Area Manager Van Leven met with Technician White to plan forest inventory work on the Soda Springs Unit. Areas that might benefit from understory thinning were identified on maps and prioritized for ground-truthing in the field. White conferred with WDFW Forester Kuehn to discuss agency objectives and priorities and began visiting these

stands this week to make a quick reconnaissance and set up some sample plots to quantify basic stand characteristics extent of the forest.

**Frosty Landscape:** Cold temperatures combined with foggy conditions created a frosty landscape bristling with long crystals of ice on the Klickitat Wildlife Area. Since the air was still, the crystals grew undisturbed for days.



*The Klickitat Wildlife Area's frosty landscape created long crystals of ice.*

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt:** The Southwest Washington Area 2A regular goose hunting season concluded on Sunday, January 27. A total of approximately 1,400 geese were checked in during 32 hunting days. This was a slower year when compared with the 1,600 geese checked in 2011 and the 1,800 checked in 2010. Hunter visits to check stations were down as well. This year saw approximately 700 hunters compared to 800 in 2011 and 925 in 2010. Harvest numbers remained about the same at two geese per hunter.

This week begins the Southwest Washington Area 2A Late Goose hunting season, which opens on February 2, 2013, and runs through March 6, 2013. This extended season is only open to authorized master hunters in an attempt to assist landowners with goose depredation concerns.

On Wednesdays and Saturdays from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., authorized master hunters will be available to assist landowners with goose depredation issues provided that landowners have a hazing program in place in addition to this assistance. An assigned Coordinator is available to

connect landowners with master hunters on the designated hunt days. Landowners that are experiencing crop damage from geese are encouraged to contact the Regional Office to gain more information and/or become enrolled in the program.

## **Other**

### **District 10 and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions**

**Past Weather:** December temperatures were average and precipitation was above average for the month. Cold dry weather that was over the region recently has moderated into a cool and wet trend for the next week, with on and off rain and sun breaks.

**Short-Term Forecast:** The 6-10 and the 8-14 day forecasts are for normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

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

**Habitat:** Forage is available at lower elevations, while most areas above 2,500 feet currently have some snow cover, and areas above 3,000 feet have significant snow cover.

**Snow Depths:** See table below for detailed information.

**Animal Concentrations:** No unusual concentrations of elk noted to date. On January 3, 2013, a total of 58 elk were present on the Mudflow Unit monitoring area. The Wildlife Area Manager observed 165 elk on the Mudflow Unit on January 14, 2013.

**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 to report.

**Public Contacts:** None to report related to winter conditions. The public is reminded that the Mudflow Unit 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 to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

### **District 9 Winter Conditions**

**Past Weather:** Dry conditions continued this week as high pressure from the Columbia Basin kept marine weather systems from the South Cascades and eastern Klickitat County. Ongoing cold weather continued until late in the week when warmer marine air pushed cold air out of the South Cascades.

**Winter Severity:** The Klickitat Wildlife Area continues to be mostly free of snow and eastern Klickitat County is generally snow free below 2,000 feet.

**Habitat:** Habitat continues to be open below 1,500 feet with snowpack above 2,000 feet in the south Cascades, below normal levels. The Rock Creek drainage of eastern Klickitat County is open and there are no reports of habitat limitations at this time below 2,000 feet.

**Animal Concentrations:** No unusual concentrations have been reported for big game this past week. Deer numbers are low in eastern Klickitat and animals are dispersed.

**Animal Condition:** Deer and elk appear to be in very good condition and no winter stress/mortality has been reported this week.

**Mortality:** None reported this week.

**Public Contacts:** None.

## MOUNT SAINT HELENS ELK HERD

### 2012/2013 WINTER CONDITIONS - SNO-PARK SNOW DEPTH, NRCS SNOTEL DATA, AND SNOWPACK

From web pages:

<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.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/sno_narr3_pl)

<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snotel/Washington/washington.html>

SNOWPARKS:									
Name	Elevation	12/07/2012	12/14/2012	12/21/2012	12/28/2012	01/04/2013	01/11/2013	01/18/2013	01/25/2013
TRAIL OF TWO FORESTS	2,200'	No report	Trace of new snow	2ft of snow	More than 2ft of snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	No new report
MARBLE MT	2,700'	No new report	5" new snow	4ft of snow	More than 4ft of snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	No new snow. 72 inch base.
WAKEPISH	2,800'	No snow	5" new snow	42" of snow at the sno-park	More than 42" of snow	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	No new report

**SNOWTEL STATIONS:**

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25
JUNE LAKE	3,340'	<b>Avg Snow Depth (inches)</b>	12.3	26.8	68.8	103.3	101.6	97.3	93.3	88.4
		<b>Min Temp (F)</b>	30.9	27.5	25.7	27.5	18.7	23.7	17.2	28.6
		<b>Max Temp (F)</b>	43.9	37.8	35.2	34.5	35.1	40.3	47.1	63
		<b>Avg Temp (F)</b>	36.6	32.7	29.9	31.1	27	33	28.8	44.9
		<b>Year to date precipitation (inches)</b>	68	72	82.9	84.6	85.9	86.3	98.6	97.2

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25
SPIRIT LAKE	3,520'	<b>Avg Snow Depth (inches)</b>	1.1	9.6	19.1	27.8	26.1	19.7	20.1	18.1
		<b>Min Temp (F)</b>	31.5	19	19	22.3	20.3	25.3	9.9	27.7
		<b>Max Temp (F)</b>	48.4	41.9	44.4	35.6	41.7	46	54.4	54.3
		<b>Avg Temp</b>	37.9	32.7	30.2	31.6	29.2	34.5	28.2	39.1

(F)

Year to date  
precipitation  
(inches)

34.4      37.6      42.2      45.2      45.6      47.7      47.8      48.4

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15- 12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25
PEPPER CREEK	2,140'	<b>Avg Snow Depth (inches)</b>	0	0.17	14.7	24	24.6	23.8	22.8	23
		<b>Min Temp (F)</b>	32.4	30.4	30	30.4	21.6	27	12.9	23.9
		<b>Max Temp (F)</b>	48	43.2	36.9	36.9	39	41.4	43.5	55.2
		<b>Avg Temp (F)</b>	40.2	35.4	33	33.8	28	33.3	26.5	33.4
		<b>Year to date precipitation (inches)</b>	22.2	23.7	29.9	31	31.3	33.8	33.8	34.3

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25
SHEEP CANYON	3,990'	<b>Avg Snow Depth (inches)</b>	12.6	25.7	61.3	96.3	93.6	88.4	84.7	81.4
		<b>Min Temp (F)</b>	29.1	21.9	23.4	25.5	20.5	23.7	14.5	25.5
		<b>Max Temp (F)</b>	42.6	36.5	33.8	33.6	39.9	39.4	54.4	58.5
		<b>Avg Temp (F)</b>	35	30.7	28.2	30.2	28.4	32.3	29.1	43.6
		<b>Year to date precipitation (inches)</b>	60.4	63.8	69.6	77.3	81.7	86.3	86.3	87

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25
CALAMITY	2500'	<b>Avg Snow Depth (inches)</b>	0	0	13	22	18.7	17.7	15.3	15
		<b>Min Temp (F)</b>	33.8	32.5	29.1	31.3	23.7	28	21.2	32.5
		<b>Max Temp (F)</b>	47.7	41.2	40.3	36.3	36.1	43.5	56.7	62.1
		<b>Avg Temp (F)</b>	40.2	35.6	32.8	33.4	29.1	36	32.2	47.2

**Year to date  
precipitation  
(inches)**

42.1      44.5      52.2      54.6      54.8      59.2      59.4      60.1

**Snowpack % of Avg  
Snow Water Equivalent**

**12/07/2012    12/14/2012    12/21/2012    12/28/2012    01/04/2013    01/11/2013    01/18/2013    01/25/2013**

JUNE LAKE	no data	no data	180%	134%	no data	no data	147%	139%
SPIRIT LAKE	no data	200%	410%	134%	447%	371%	350%	286%
SHEEP CANYON	86%	91%	151%	165%	170%	184%	169%	145%

## **REGION 6**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Prairie Species Mitigation Banking:** Biologist Tirhi met once again with Center for Lands Management, Capitol Land Trust, and USFWS staff to further work on securing a mitigation site primarily to address private land constraints associated with Mazama pocket gopher, but potentially directed to other prairies species as well. Tirhi organized several meetings with staff throughout 2012 to locate and secure a property with a significant pocket gopher population for which credit could be sold to private land developers whose own sites were encumbered by pocket gopher, but which mitigation could not be applied on site. This tool is desperately needed, particularly considering improvements in the housing and development market over the coming years. An opportunity exists for a large property south of the Olympia Airport, although market price may disqualify this site for consideration. A meeting is being set with the property owners to discuss options. Tirhi hopes to further this discussion in a meeting this week on prairie reserve design being hosted by USFWS.

**Taylor's Checkerspot (TC) Surveys:** District 16 Staff Biologist McMillan and Ament completed and submitted all of the data forms and maps for surveys conducted during 2012 on TC and TC searching. Biologist Ann Potter has been working on the 2012 TCB Annual Report and had contacted Biologist Ament to provide her with map products for her surveys conducted last season. Biologist Ament worked with District Biologist McMillan to produce maps from GPS tracks and waypoints. All maps for surveys completed in 2012 were provided to Potter.

**Taylor's Checkerspot Survey and Habitat Assessment Meeting:** Biologist Linders met with staffs from Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) and Center for Natural Land Management (CNLM) to discuss a proposed need by JBLM to assess the status of Taylor's checkerspot habitat on JBLM and the steps and resources needed to complete habitat enhancement activities. Biologist Linders was asked to take the lead on developing a proposal for Taylor's checkerspot survey needs for 2013 as well development and implementation of habitat assessments on JBLM. Staff from JBLM will be cooperators on the habitat assessment project.

**Taylor's Checkerspot and Golden Paintbrush:** Biologists Linders, Hay and Potter attended a meeting with staffs and students from USFWS, CNLM, University of Washington-Seattle, and DNR to discuss the nature and scale of overlap in recovery efforts for Taylor's checkerspot and golden paintbrush. There was agreement on many issues regarding risks and potential benefits to both species that would result from joint recovery. There were also several issues identified that would require further exploration and/or research. Among these is whether Taylor's checkerspot larvae can develop on golden paintbrush (potential native host), which was preferred over *Plantago* (exotic host) in oviposition trials in the lab at Mission Creek. As a follow up to this meeting, Biologist Linders visited Glacial Heritage Preserve with staff from CNLM and a new PHD student from UW-Seattle to look at the relative phenologies of golden and harsh paintbrush (known native host) as well as *Plantago*. All species had green growth that would be available to foraging larvae. As a final step, Linders visited the extant Taylor's checkerspot site at Range 76 on a warm sunny day and found two Taylor's checkerspot larvae out basking. This is the earliest

date larvae have been observed out of diapause; it is also earlier than most people believed either golden or harsh paintbrush would be above ground.

**Taylor's Checkerspot propagation:** Biologist Linders met with staffs from the Oregon Zoo, and The Evergreen State College (TESC) to plan for the 2013 rearing and field seasons. Topics discussed included protocols to standardize packaging and associated materials between facilities when animals are being sent to the field for release; numbers of larvae available for 2013 release and breeding; strategies for mating the offspring of wild adults collected in 2012; and the master plan detailing all wild and captive-mated contributors to the propagation program since its inception.

**Taylor's Checkerspot genetics:** Biologists Linders and Potter had a phone conference with Paul Severns of OSU to discuss collection of Taylor's checkerspot larvae from Ranges 76 and 50 for the purpose of genetics analysis. We will try to supplement the existing specimens while numbers and opportunity permit, assuming access is granted.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Definition of Sensitive Areas at Scatter Creek:** Biologists Linders, Hays, Potter, Guzlas and Gorrell met to review designation of sensitive areas at the north and south units of Scatter Creek Wildlife Area and the criteria used to define them. The USFWS wanted more clarity in the HCP on how sensitive areas were designated, particularly in relation to recreational uses such as dog trials. A working definition was drafted that would allow us to revisit the location of sensitive areas on a periodic basis (i.e. every six years) or more frequently if we wish.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Dungeness Elk Monitoring - GPS Plus Program Issue:** Biologist McMillan worked with Andy Duff to get some computer GPS Plus settings reentered to allow the records from the GPS collar to download and display on ArcMAP. Biologist McMillan will be working on reprogramming the collar through the iridium system for the purpose to increase the frequency of fixes being gathered and transmitted when in the proximity of Highway 101. This is a use of the "virtual fence" feature with the Vectronic GPS collars. With the virtual fence feature operating there is the capability of remotely changing the fix location schedule and/or the configuration of the "virtual fence."

The GPS location of the one collared cow has been instrumental in the management of these elk. The coordination of the location information has proven invaluable for the local enforcement, state and tribal biologists. There are two more GPS collars and several VHF collars (for triggering the Hwy 101 signage; as the GPS collars are not set at the right pulse to work for the Hwy crossing receiver). The capture efforts were put off to allow for more flexibility with the harvest of the elk during the winter. Some discussion has included the possibility of establishing a corral trap system where the elk may have some capture system set up within a typical travel

corridor or feeding area. This concept will be brought forth amongst local biologists including Graysmarsh Biologist Berry to see if there are land ownerships where this can be considered. The Peninsula Daily News had another photo and story about the Dungeness elk herd on the front page of last Friday's paper. The story was reporting that the herd has once again been hanging out near Highway 101. The reporter had some communications with Tribal Biologist Tim Cullinan who has been monitoring their movements.

#### ***GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE***

##### **Private Lands/Access**

**Livestock Depredation Training:** Biologist Tirhi attended livestock depredation training in Wenatchee hosted by Donny Martorello and Scott Becker. The training was to orientate wildlife and enforcement staff on the new protocol for responding to depredation of private livestock. The new method will be a tag team of one biologist and one enforcement agent, at minimum, will respond to the depredation complaint and begin the investigation. Protocol involves collection of evidence at the depredation site, photo vouchers, inspection of carcass, skinning of carcass if mortality was involved, completion of data form, and later at office, conference call on findings, group determination of cause of death including suspected predator, and filing of electronic report and pictures. If the depredation is determined to have involved wolves, the district biologist(s) will be responsible for the investigation; if other predator, enforcement staff will remain responsible party. No District 11 Enforcement attended the training; however, Tirhi will soon be visiting enforcement detachment meetings at which she intends to discuss the new protocol. Tirhi found the training very beneficial and is eager to attend in-the-field training in Idaho or other western state which headquarters is organizing.

**Puyallup Sportsmen's Show:** The Wildlife Program staff from Region 6 worked up to six shifts each at the Puyallup Sportsmen's Show. As usual, Fish Program staff was well represented and did a fine job representing the agency. John Pahutski's demonstrations on release methods for rockfish suffering from barotrauma were a huge hit.

The Region 6 Wildlife Program would like to thank Stephan Kalinowski, Travis Nelson, Doris Small, Chris Waldbillig and Leonard Machut from the Habitat Program. This was one of the first Puyallup Sportsmen's Shows where the Habitat Program helped to staff the booth. Bob Cannon from Real Estate also took a shift to help out with this WDFW priority. Their contribution and expertise was greatly appreciated. Other Wildlife Program staff that proved to be incredibly knowledgeable on so many topics was Ruth Milner from Region 4 as well as Walt Cooper and Ron Kim from Olympia. Thank you to everybody that helped out.