

Wildlife Program

Week of January 28 – February 3, 2013

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Interagency Conservation Information Sharing – Biologist Ann Potter collaborated with staff in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Habitat Program and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to prepare and deliver the 2012 Annual Report to the Forest Practices Board regarding *The Status of a Voluntary Cooperative Approach for the Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly*.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1: Assistant District Biologist Shepherd attended a logistical meeting concerning the Smackout range rider program. Biologist Shepherd assisted Officer Anderson with the wolf response trailer. Biologist Shepherd discussed wolf sightings and issues with Biologist Jeff Heinlen from Region 2, contractor Jeff Flood, Officer Weatherman, and multiple Wedge and Pend Oreille County residents. Biologist Shepherd also prepared contractor Floods paperwork in preparation for payment. Dates for upcoming wolf meetings were discussed with Olympia.

District 3: District Biologist Wik entered last week's wolf locations of the Wenaha pack into the sightings database. The Wenaha pack returned to Oregon over the weekend.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Private Lands/Access

Establishing, enhancing and maintaining habitat: Private Lands Biologist Dawn Davis, in partnership with the Tri-State Steelheaders, developed and submitted a migratory bird stamp project proposal for a 23 acre site in Walla Walla County. The proposal would be for wetland restoration efforts on a perpetual conservation easement held by the Blue Mountain Land Trust.

The site has approximately two acres of existing cattail marsh and three shallow ponds covering more than two acres. Habitat enhancements (weed control and re-establishing woody vegetation) will help improve waterfowl nesting habitat and will provide critical habitat for migratory birds and resident wildlife. Since the site is a headwater to a fish-bearing stream (the Middle Fork of Reser Creek, which is a tributary of the Walla Walla River) the proposed project will also help reduce erosion and sedimentation, thereby protecting creeks and rivers downstream.



Private Lands Biologist Dawn Davis, in partnership with the Tri-State Steelheaders, developed and submitted a migratory bird stamp project proposal for this 23 acre site in Walla Walla County. Wheat is in the foreground of this photograph captured on May 24, 2012.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Washington ground squirrels: With assistance from Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Eidson, Biologists Finger and Gregory set 330 traps at Sage Hills Golf Course and 50 at Warden Middle School for pre-baiting over the next couple weeks. February 1 was the first day “significant” ground squirrel activity was observed at both sites so the translocation was scheduled to begin in two weeks, from February 14-15 and 19-20.

Gregory purchased materials to construct enough nest boxes for all females that will be put in enclosures and coordinated with volunteers who will begin raptor surveys within five miles of the translocation site to produce baseline data. Finger visited the Steamboat Rock site and found

no evidence of activity, but snow no longer remains on site and squirrels should be emerging from that area shortly based on favorable weather in the forecast.



Wildlife Areas

Sinlahekin Prescribed Burn Team – Currently we have 13 units totaling 800 acres on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, and eight units totaling 412 acres on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area that we intend to burn this spring. Leuschen and Guse continue to work on logistics to be ready for spring burning such as filling out burn permit applications that require expected tons/acre consumed in the prescribed burns upon which the fees for burning are determined. To determine what will be consumed, detailed fuels data must be inputted to burn consumption models.

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

Wildlife Areas

Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) Presentation – Manager Swedberg, Assistant Manager Haug, Fuels Specialist Guse and Forester Brett attended this winter's Citizen's Advisory Group meeting in Tonasket. We discussed numerous management accomplishments on all units of the Sinlahekin Complex and plans for this coming year throughout the complex. Swedberg, Guse and Brett also updated the group on the Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration Project (SERP).

Overall the group (approximately 15 people) seemed pleased with our efforts on the Sinlahekin and will continue to support WDFW in our management of these lands. Attendees included U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control Board (OCNWCB), Backcountry Horsemen, City of Tonasket, and private citizens.

Private Lands/Access

Pygmy Rabbits/Safe Harbor Agreements: Private Lands Manager Cotton spoke with a landowner that had received the letter recently sent to all landowners with Safe Harbor Agreements by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). He has several fields that have been re-enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) that will be mowed later this spring. The fields will be surveyed prior to mowing for presence of pygmy rabbits.

District 5: Grant/Adams District - Rich Finger/Sara Gregory

Weekender Opportunities: Warmer weather is upon us but winter sports remain in full swing, such as ice fishing on Moses Lake where perch are typically caught as well as rainbow trout.



Winter sports remain in full swing where people are still ice fishing on Moses Lake (above) and ice climbing on Banks Lake Wildlife Area (right).



Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Complex – Dale Swedberg/Justin Haug

Weekender Opportunities: Numerous species can be seen on the Sinlahekin this time of year. Northern Pygmy-Owls, Ruffed Grouse and various raptors can be found as well as snow bunting, juncos, and Townsend's solitaires. Larger numbers of white-tail deer and a few moose have also been observed in the Sinlahekin Valley as well.





REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Elk Survey: District Wildlife Biologists Bernatowicz and Moore completed the annual aerial/ground surveys of the Yakima elk herd with lots of help from Wildlife Area staff and Habitat Biologist Myer. On all feed sites, branched bull numbers were at or near all-time highs and there appeared to be plenty of total bulls on winter range. We will likely be able to recommend additional permits for both branched bull and antlerless elk this fall.



Two of the many bulls observed during the 2013 ground/aerial surveys of the Yakima elk herd.

Wildlife Areas

Muckleshoot Indian Tribe Deer Study: L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Winegeart met with Muckleshoot Indian Tribe (MIT) biologists to coordinate their deer net gunning activities within the L.T. Murray winter elk closure area.

Their capture efforts were somewhat successful, although snow and dense tree cover caused some difficulty. Some elk temporarily moved off the feed site due to helicopter activity in the area. Wildlife Area staff also took MIT biologists on the feed truck at Watt to dart and change out a GPS collar on one cow elk.



Muckleshoot Indian Tribe biologists replaced a GPS collar on this cow elk in Watt.

Other

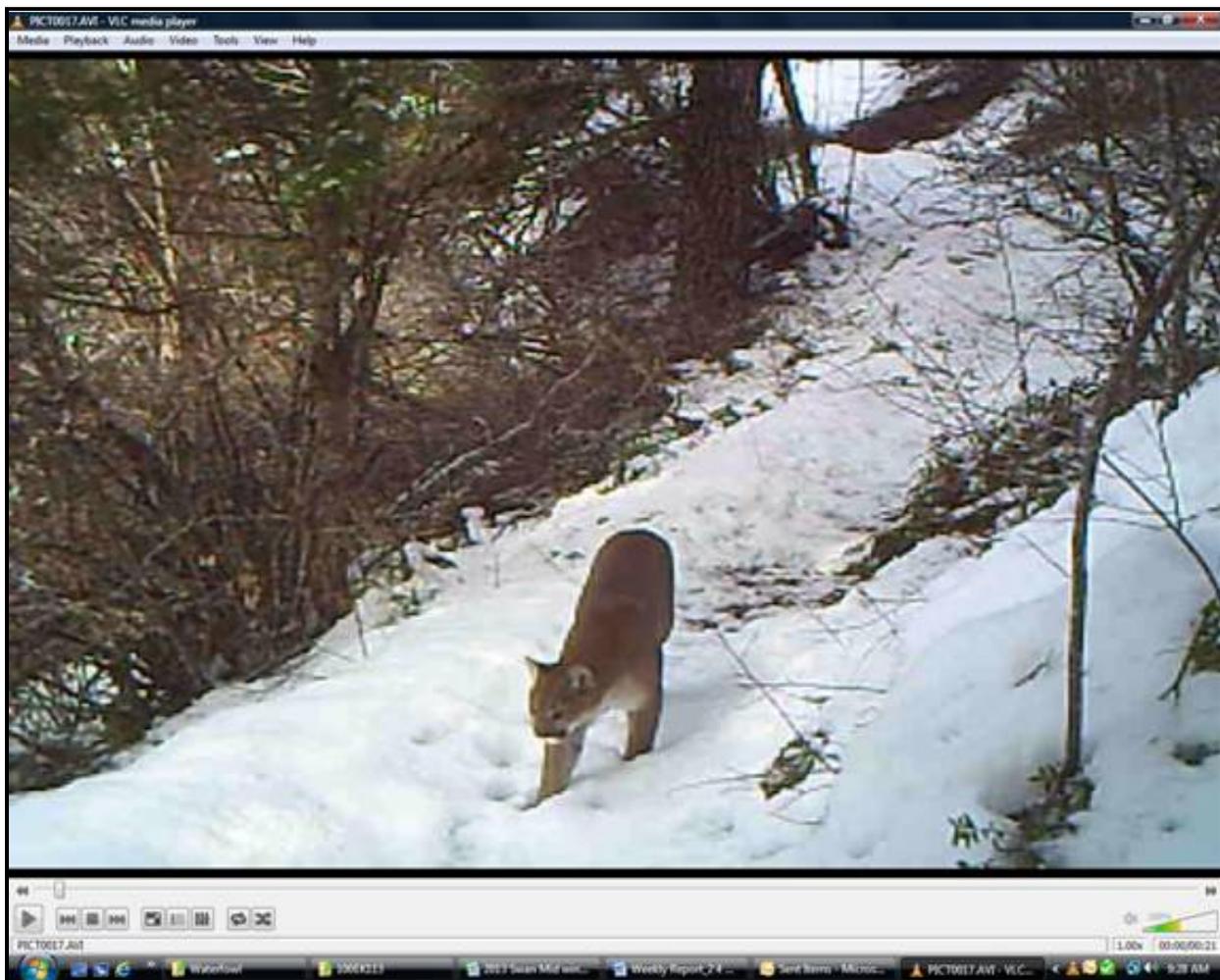
Winter Conditions: Low temperatures this week started out in the 20's but warmed up to the mid to upper 30's early in the week. High temperatures were in the mid to upper 40's. No new precipitation this week. Upcoming forecast is for lows to be in the 20's and highs in the 40's. No significant precipitation forecast for next week. Elk are in fair condition.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Wolf Monitoring: With helicopter support, Biologist DeBruyn conducted checks of half of the 15 motion activated trail cameras he installed in November. One camera recorded as many as three mountain lions (travelling together), as well as a bobcat, mule deer, snowshoe hare, and an as yet unidentified canid. District 14 personnel continue to monitor for wolf activity using trail cameras and track searches in areas with historic sightings/activity as part of the state-wide effort to document Washington's growing wolf population.



One of several mountain lions captured by motion activated trail cameras being monitored by Assistant Wildlife Biologist Paul DeBruyn.

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Project: This week 12 swans/feather piles were collected in Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. Swans collected included 11 trumpeter swans from Island, Skagit and Whatcom counties and one tundra swan from Skagit County. Lakes, sloughs,

and streams that were frozen last week thawed this week allowing for small water craft access to survey for and collect swan carcasses previously surrounded by ice. Anderson also provided trumpeter swan parts to the Lummi tribe to be used for ceremonial purposes. For the first time this season swans were collected in Island County (total of three), where one was from a power line strike and the other two were unknown cause of death.

Swan mortalities collected by WDFW in Washington State

	Skagit	Snohomish	Whatcom	Sumas*	TOTAL
Powerline suspect	19	4	24		47
Pb suspect	14	1	7	3	25
Trauma*	4		5	6	15
Unknown	10		2		12
Feather Pile	3		2	6	11
TOTAL	50	5	40	15	110

*Sumas swans are collected by Canadian Wildlife Service and were last updated the previous week

Washington State Migratory Bird Habitat Project Proposals: Biologist Danilson assisted Biologists Roozen and Milner in drafting two proposals for the 2013-2015 Migratory Bird Habitat Project Proposals. One proposal, if funded, would augment Private Lands programs by implementing forage plots on leased lands. The second proposal would ensure continued support for a landowner agreement in Snohomish County that provides forage for snow geese. Program Manager Link reviewed all proposals and forwarded them to Don Kraege, the Waterfowl Section Manager.

Wildlife Mortality: Biologist DeBruyn shipped several batches of dead pine siskins collected on roads treated with de-icer to the Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin for necropsy.

Winter Marine Waterfowl Aerial Surveys: Marine Bird Specialist Evenson and Assistant District Biologists Cyra and Murphie completed the annual marine waterfowl surveys for 2012-2013, completing 17 days of surveys over a two-month period. 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 are available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/psamp/>

Sea Duck Joint Venture (SDJV) Marine Waterfowl Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra obtained and prepared equipment for the upcoming continuation of these surveys. SDJV is funding structured waterfowl surveys along the Pacific coast of North America in conjunction

with similar surveys on the east coast. Previous surveys were flown along the outer coasts of Oregon and Washington. Additional information is available at <http://seaduckjv.org/>

Woodland Park Zoo-WDFW Citizen Science Amphibian Monitoring 2013: Biologist Anderson has been assisting volunteers in access needs for survey on various public and private properties throughout King County.

Osprey Nest Destruction Permits and Platform Advice: Biologist Anderson issued nest removal and exclusion permits to the Port of Seattle regarding Osprey nests surrounding SeaTac Airport. Biologist Anderson also provided construction and materials information to a citizen group, as well as siting and management considerations, in regards to an Osprey nest that was recently removed from East Lake Union. The group hopes to erect a platform on or near the site to provide for the territorial pair.

Anderson also provided further advice to Pilchuck Audubon who has been collaborating with Archbishop Murphy School to provide a platform at their ball field. Nesting Osprey have been removed from a light standard there for the past three years – no exclusion or alternate nest site had been examined until Biologists Anderson and Milner suggested it as a management option. The school was quite open to it and partnering with local Audubon.

Golden Eagle Surveys: District Biologist Milner provided dollar estimates for Districts 12 and 13 for golden eagle surveys. Further conversations with Biologist Hayes suggest there are some very old notes that he was able to find that might allow us to find some of the nests from the ground. We will try to get out in the field to assess whether or not some of the nests might be visible from the ground, although we all recognize that road access and tree canopy conditions have changed over the last 20-30 years, and it may not be possible to find any nests from the ground.

Winter Marine Waterfowl Aerial Surveys: Biologist DeBruyn assisted and received training from Marine Bird Specialist Evenson and Biologists Cyra and Murphie on the protocols, techniques, and skills associated with counting water birds from a low flying fixed-wing aircraft. It is anticipated that DeBruyn will be assisting in the future with these surveys.

Jim Creek Navy Pika Project: Biologist Milner worked with a grants officer from the U.S. Navy to finalize plans for receiving funds to conduct pika surveys at the Jim Creek Naval Station. This is a project the Navy wants WDFW to do and funds have been allocated.

Wildlife Areas

Intalco River Otters: Manager Kessler responded to reports by the Intalco Land Manager that seven river otters had been found dead on the Intalco Plant site. Kessler checked out the dead otters and contacted WDFW Enforcement Agent Dave Jones. Jones also responded and the dead otters were removed for later testing. It did not appear that the otters had been shot or trapped. Further testing will be done to try to pinpoint what happened to them.

Lower Nooksack Watershed Restoration: Manager Kessler, Watershed Steward Steve Seymour and Restoration Projects Coordinator Loren Brokaw toured the Tennant Lake and Nooksack units along with property owned by the Lummi Tribe to review the Lower Nooksack Watershed Restoration project.

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

Snow Goose Festival Planning: We will be inviting the volunteer coordinators who helped with the shorebird surveys that resulted in Skagit and Port Susan Bays qualifying as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve site to the designation celebration during the Stanwood Snow Goose Festival. Milner also worked on coordinating speakers and docents for the festival field trips. Snow Goose Festival information is available at <http://www.snowgoosefest.org/>.

North Cascades Elk Herd Planning: Biologist Danilson worked with Program Manager Link on a wide range of issues related to the North Cascades Elk Herd. This included a conference call with Manager Link and Section Manager Nelson, attending the WDFW-Point Elliott Treaty Tribes co-managers' meeting, and meetings/discussions about the transfer of responsibilities (particularly nuisance wildlife) from enforcement to the wildlife program.

North Cascades Elk Herd Clover Trapping Project: Biologist DeBruyn and Danilson conducted trap checks and coordinated with the tribes partnering on the North Cascades elk herd clover trapping project. To date, trapping has been unsuccessful. The primary objective of this work is to maintain a broad distribution of radio collared elk in the herd as part of the "mark-resight" methods used to estimate the population during late winter aerial surveys.

Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw met with San Juan County Public Works regarding a project in Deer Harbor to replace a 50-foot span bridge with a 120-foot bridge. The existing 50-foot bridge is at the end of its lifespan and constricts tidal flow to an inlet and creek mouth. Replacement of the bridge would restore natural processes and improve transportation. WDFW and San Juan County are working together to secure full funding to complete the project.

Samish Delta Wetland Project: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Belinda Rotton met with Natural Resource Conservation Service staff to outline next steps in a wetland restoration project near the mouth of the Samish River. WDFW will begin applying for permits within the next month to stay on track for construction this summer.

Nooksack Delta Projects: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Watershed Steward Seymour, and Wildlife Area Manager Kessler met to discuss the status of restoration projects in the Nooksack delta. A study is currently underway to model potential benefits and drawbacks to restoration actions in the area, including causing areas on WDFW property to flood more frequently. The results of this study will help determine the best actions to take in the area.

Boat Show: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Fish Biologists Garrett, Craig, Costello, and Clark, and Enforcement Officers Kim and Stephenson fielded questions at the WDFW/State

Parks booth at the Seattle Boat Show over the weekend. The main purpose of the booth was to promote Boater Education Cards.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: The combination of great waterfowling weather and last weekend for hunting made for a busy last three days of the 2012-13 waterfowl season. Unit surveys showed more than three-quarters of hunt units occupied the last weekend of the season. Beginning Monday, technicians Otto and Deyo began Waterfowl unit removal and cleanup, and will continue to do so through February.



Unharvested potatoes throughout Skagit and Whatcom counties have provided an abundance of food throughout the winter.

Snow Goose Quality Program: Hunt units over the last few days of the snow goose season were not heavily used. Geese were located in areas outside of WDFW managed lands, but were in areas some hunters could get access to. Snow geese returned briefly to Program units after the hunting season, but after several hours in the units, moved to other available food sources. Private lands staff will begin removing signage and litter from the units over the next weeks.

Private Lands Payments: Private lands staff continued meeting landowners to review and sign payment documents for cooperators in both the Snow Goose and Waterfowl Quality Hunt Programs. Private lands staff will continue meeting landowners over the coming days to ensure timely payments. Biologist Roozen scheduled to meet timberlands/forest landowners to return gate keys, ensure payments, and discuss the past 2012-13 and upcoming 2013-14 seasons.

Wildlife Areas

Whatcom Wildlife Area Hunting Access Sites: The waterfowl hunting season has now ended. Manager Kessler closed all the hunting access parking areas and locked the gates to the unimproved boat launches on the wildlife area.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk: Manager Kessler checked the water level at Tennant Lake. Due to the very high lake water level, the boardwalk is once again under water. Manager Kessler is keeping the boardwalk closed until the lake water level drops. Kessler hiked in and removed beaver dams to help drop the lake.

Whatcom Wildlife Area: Manager Kessler spoke with several hunters asking about small game hunting on the wildlife area. Rabbit hunting with beagles is very popular on the Intalco and BP units this time of year.

Crescent lake Unit: Wildlife Area Manager Brian met with representatives from the Sky Valley Stock and Antique Tractor Club to discuss renewal of an agricultural lease with them at the Crescent Lake Unit. The Tractor Club would like to continue leasing a portion of the fields to host a tractor show in August, and provide cover and forage for wildlife.

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

Wildlife Areas

Headquarters: Manager Rotton and Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) Meis prepared duck stamp proposals for drainage improvement on the Island Unit, agricultural enhancements on the Samish and Leque Island Units, and a proposal to fund a wetland ecology and management workshop. NRS Meis and Natural Resource Technician (NRT) Cosgrove met with Snoqualmie Manager Brian Boehm to discuss agricultural lease agreements and provide guidance on the internal approval process.

Leque Island: Manager Rotton attended the planning meeting with Lands Agent Kye Iris and representatives from the Washington Department of Transportation to discuss the plan for the Highway 532 road widening and Davis Slough Bridge rebuild scheduled to begin this summer. The meeting focused on construction timing and access changes for the Davis Slough parking area.

Manager Rotton met with representatives from Vista Clara, a water research group who has been doing research on the site and wanted to present a proposal for addition projects this spring. Additional information will be available from this effort to understand ground water salinity and flow.

Samish River Unit: Manager Belinda Rotton and Restoration Projects Coordinator (RPC) Loren Brokaw met with Kathy Kilcoyne of Natural Resource Conservation Service to discuss the latest design plans and timeline for implementation of the restoration project.

Manager Rotton and RPC Brokaw will be coordinating the WDFW aspects of project implementation to include permitting, public process and contracting.

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.

Oregon Spotted Frog Survey Project: Biologist Danilson received the candidate roster for the recruitment of two seasonal positions for the Oregon spotted frog project and began to review them. These seasonal positions are funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and will assist District 14 personnel in ongoing surveys of Oregon spotted frogs in Skagit and Whatcom counties.

Biologist Anderson conducted initial informal phone interviews with interested potential Biologist 2, Assistant District Biologist candidates. Anderson scheduled follow-up formal interviews and is working with the internal interview panel to prepare for these.

Motor Boat Operator Trainers Meeting: Biologist Milner attended the annual meeting in Olympia. Changes to the federal program that we use were discussed and the calendar for the coming year was set.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Golden Eagles: Biologists Anderson and Watson initiated golden eagle surveys in eastern Klickitat County. Three of five golden eagle territories visited to date have active adult pairs associated with nest sites. In addition, Biologist Watson successfully captured two adult golden eagles and fitted them with satellite radio transmitters.

The goal of Watson's work is to evaluate breeding golden eagle movements in association with wind farm development in Klickitat County. There have been several golden eagle mortalities associated with wind farm development in Klickitat County over the past several years. Information from this project will assist biologists and developers with a better understanding of the risk to eagles from wind turbine development.

Columbian white-tailed deer capture: Biologists Miller, Bergh, Holman, Stephens, and Hauswald assisted USFWS staff at Julia Butler Hanson National Wildlife Refuge in their capture effort for Columbian white-tailed deer. During three net drives, one male fawn was captured and one doe escaped through the drive line contingent. The fawn was ear tagged, but since the doe was not captured it was released a short distance from the capture site.

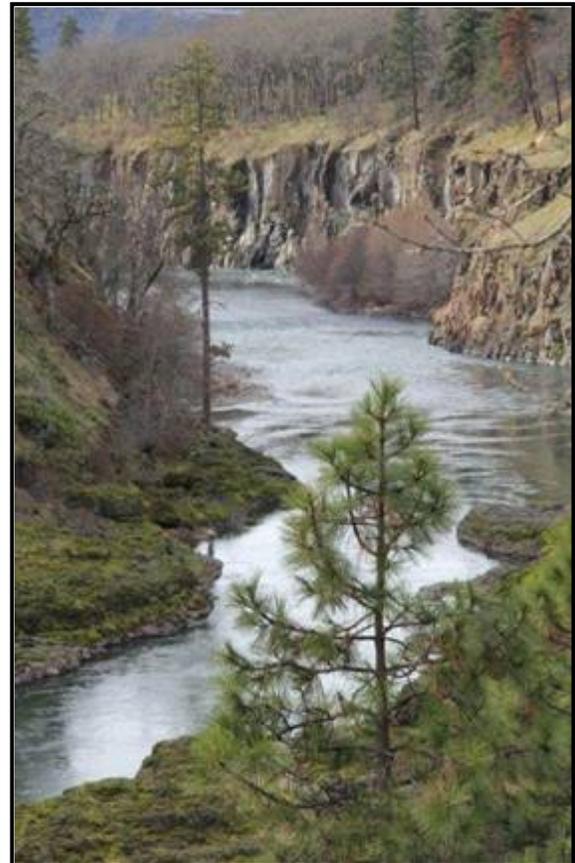


Columbian white-tailed deer drive net capture effort.

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Grazing permit on Fisher Hill Unit: Over the course of two days Wildlife Area Manager Van Leven met with District Team member Biologists Anderson, Fornes, Weinheimer, Stephenson, and WDFW Range Ecologist Burnham to evaluate the property involved in the permit, which is up for renewal. The Fisher Hill Unit lies along the lower Klickitat River and is the site of a tribal dip-net fishery. The group enjoyed observing many bald eagles in flight, fish spawning in the river, old structures such as dry-laid stone retaining walls along a historic road on the opposite bank of the river, and grand scenery.



The District Team (left) evaluated property near the lower Klickitat River (above).

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

Wildlife Management

Private Lands / Hunting Access: Biologist Holman met with members of the Yacolt Burn Sportsman's Club (YBSC) to prepare an Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant application for hunting access in Game Management Unit (GMU) 568 (Washougal). The Yacolt Burn Sportsman's Club has worked for the past 19 years to facilitate hunting access into Weyerhaeuser's forest lands in Clark County, a.k.a. "The Burn." Approximately 75 members strong, the Yacolt Burn Sportsman's Club also conduct hunter education and participate with wildlife surveys on a volunteer basis. Thanks to the YBSC for their ongoing efforts to maintain access to private lands for hunting, promote young people's entrance to the outdoors, and work cooperatively with WDFW.

Private Lands/Access

New Contract: Technician White delivered a contract for signature to a new Private Lands cooperator in Klickitat County. The new contract will add 680 acres to the program.

Other

District 10 and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: January temperatures and precipitation were both below average for the month. A cold dry period of weather persisted throughout the month with low snow levels, but no significant snowfall below 1,000 feet.

Short-Term Forecast: The 6-10 day forecast is for below normal temperatures and precipitation and the 8-14 day forecast is 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: Animals observed to date appear to be in good condition.

Mortality: One elk near the Sediment Retention Structure was found dead and appeared to be in very poor condition; two other mortalities in the Hoffstadt Unit have been reported. One of the two elk is a cow that was trapped and collared on the Mudflow Unit in 2005.

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: Warm weather dominated lower elevations of western District 9, bringing additional snow to higher elevations. Dry conditions continued in the eastern portions of the District this week as high pressure from the Columbia Basin kept marine weather systems from the South Cascades and eastern Klickitat County.

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, near 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 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		12/07/2012	12/14/2012	12/21/2012	12/28/2012	01/04/2013	01/11/2013	01/18/2013
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
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
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

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
JUNE LAKE	3,340'	Avg Snow							
		Depth (inches)	12.3	26.8	68.8	103.3	101.6	97.3	93.3
		Min Temp (F)	30.9	27.5	25.7	27.5	18.7	23.7	17.2
		Max Temp (F)	43.9	37.8	35.2	34.5	35.1	40.3	47.1
		Avg Temp (F)	36.6	32.7	29.9	31.1	27	33	28.8
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	68	72	82.9	84.6	85.9	86.3	98.6
SPIRIT LAKE	3,520'	Avg Snow							
		Depth (inches)	1.1	9.6	19.1	27.8	26.1	19.7	20.1
		Min Temp (F)	31.5	19	19	22.3	20.3	25.3	9.9
		Max Temp (F)	48.4	41.9	44.4	35.6	41.7	46	54.4
		Avg Temp (F)	37.9	32.7	30.2	31.6	29.2	34.5	28.2

		Year to date precipitation (inches)	34.4	37.6	42.2	45.2	45.6	47.7	47.8
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
PEPPER CREEK	2,140'	Avg Snow							
		Depth (inches)	0	0.17	14.7	24	24.6	23.8	22.8
		Min Temp (F)	32.4	30.4	30	30.4	21.6	27	12.9
		Max Temp (F)	48	43.2	36.9	36.9	39	41.4	43.5
		Avg Temp (F)	40.2	35.4	33	33.8	28	33.3	26.5
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	22.2	23.7	29.9	31	31.3	33.8	33.8

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
SHEEP CANYON	3,990'	Avg Snow							
		Depth (inches)	12.6	25.7	61.3	96.3	93.6	88.4	84.7
		Min Temp (F)	29.1	21.9	23.4	25.5	20.5	23.7	14.5
		Max Temp (F)	42.6	36.5	33.8	33.6	39.9	39.4	54.4
		Avg Temp (F)	35	30.7	28.2	30.2	28.4	32.3	29.1
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	60.4	63.8	69.6	77.3	81.7	86.3	86.3

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
CALAMITY	2500'	Avg Snow							
		Depth (inches)	0	0	13	22	18.7	17.7	15.3
		Min Temp (F)	33.8	32.5	29.1	31.3	23.7	28	21.2
		Max Temp (F)	47.7	41.2	40.3	36.3	36.1	43.5	56.7
		Avg Temp (F)	40.2	35.6	32.8	33.4	29.1	36	32.2
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	42.1	44.5	52.2	54.6	54.8	59.2	59.4

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

01/25/2013

02/01/2013

No new report	10" new and 2 ft base.
No new snow. 72 inch base.	14" new and 80" base.
No new report	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow

1/19-1/25

1/26-2/1

88.4	103.1
28.6	29.3
63	39
44.9	33.8

97.2	106.3
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1/19-1/25

1/26-2/1

18.1	25.9
27.7	28.6
54.3	42.1
39.1	34.4

48.4 56.2

1/19-1/25 1/26-2/1

23 28.9
23.9 33.1
55.2 43.7
33.4 35.4

34.3 37.3

1/19-1/25 1/26-2/1

81.4 102.7
25.5 28.2
58.5 37.8
43.6 32.3

87 95.9

1/19-1/25 1/26-2/1

15 15.9
32.5 32.4
62.1 43.2
47.2 36.3

60.1 66.4

01/25/2013 02/01/2013

139% 149%
286% 414%

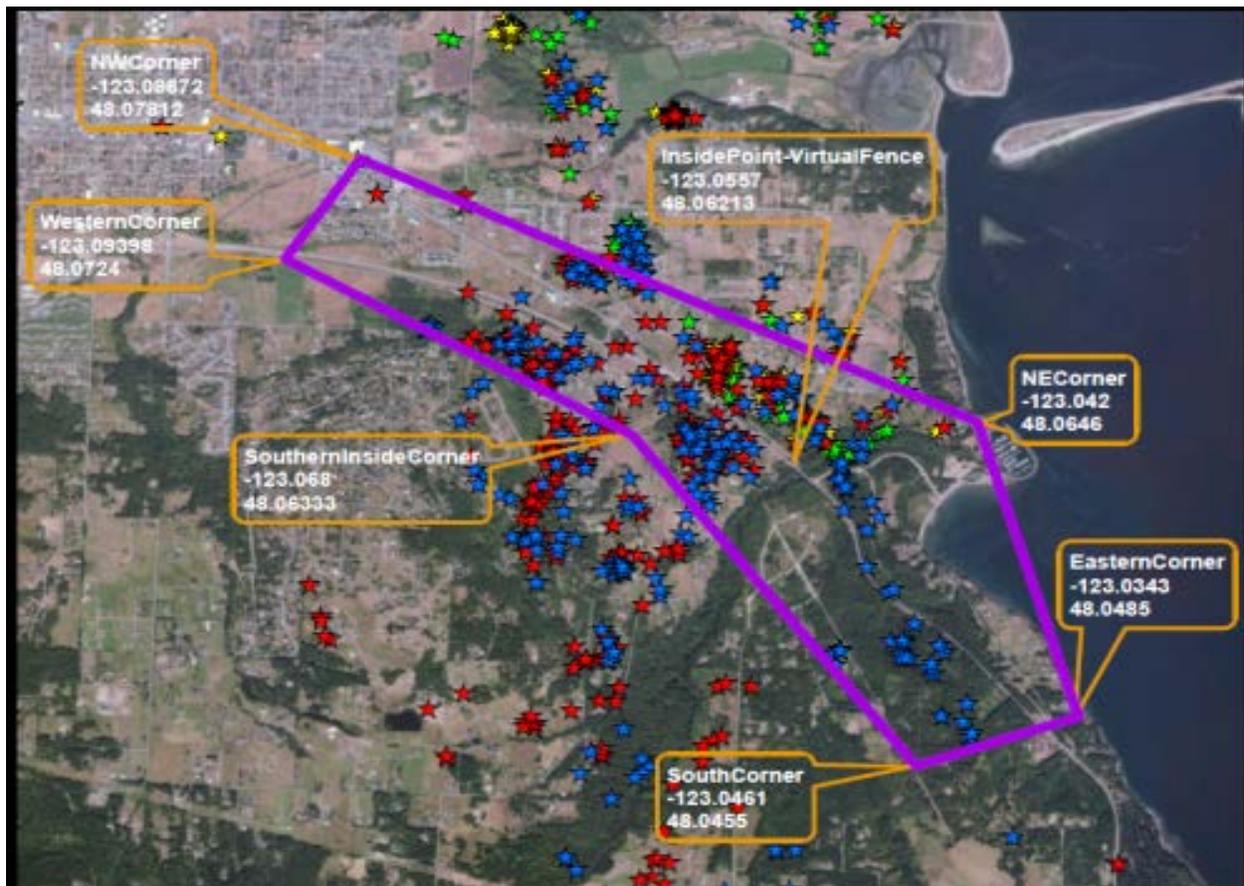
145% 164%

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Dungeness Elk Monitoring - Biologist McMillan completed reprogramming of the GPS collar (remotely through iridium). The new programming will engage an automated email alert when the collar is detected (during the regular programmed fix taking interval) crossing the boundary of a delineated zone around the highway.



Dungeness Elk Virtual Fence Polygon along Highway 101, showing GPS fixes (stars) from cow elk during the last few years.

This programming will activate the “virtual fence” feature on this collar. Biologist McMillan provided WDFW Enforcement staff the information on how to use the Vectronic Website (requiring a WDFW password) to view the most recent iridium download of collar fix locations. This will aid Enforcement staff to be able to obtain the most current information in the event the elk are in a place where they present danger to the public. Biologist McMillan will be offering to have the Highway Zone auto email alert be forwarded on to Enforcement, Volunteer Angiuli and Biologist Cullinan.

Biologist McMillan has begun inquiring about funding sources to assure continued data fix gathering and downloading. The existing account funds will be used up in less than six months, and the collar will not be nearly as useful without access to the GPS data. WDFW Enforcement and Pt No Pt S'Klallam Tribal Biologist Cullinan have been notified of the funding needs.

Western Snowy Plovers: Biologists Hoenes and Sundstrom completed a mid-winter western snowy plover survey at Damon Point, Oyhut, Copalis Spit, and Conner Creek. Only one plover was observed during the surveys and that observation occurred at Conner Creek.

Purple Martins: Biologist Tirhi met with staff from Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium (PDZA) to plan the Purple Martin Citizen Science Monitoring Program that will begin in March. Purple Martins are the largest native swallow in Washington State and have experienced significant population decline and continued threats. Martins have avoided being listed due to a mostly volunteer-based nest box program in place since the 1970s from British Columbia to Oregon.

The nest box program has increased over the years as has the martin population; however, martins are now dependent upon boxes in Washington and thus maintenance of the boxes. PDZA has adopted two established martin colonies in Tacoma for the first year of the project. Activities will include training volunteers, inspecting/cleaning/repairing and numbering boxes at each site, monitoring nest box/colony status through the nesting season, and completing and submitting annual reports to WDFW (Tirhi). The District 11 wildlife team will provide Quality Assurance (QA) for the data and then submit it to The Wildlife Resource Data System (WRDS). Tirhi is hopeful that the program will grow over the years to provide a quality monitoring program using trained citizen scientists while providing a low risk, pleasant wildlife opportunity for volunteers.

Mazama Pocket Gopher Prairie Reserve: Biologists Tirhi, Schmidt and Linders participated in a reserve design workshop hosted by USFWS. The intent of the workshop was to have participants designate geographic locations (reserves) important to the long-term viability of Mazama pocket gophers in Thurston County. WDFW staff spent the first hour of the meeting working with USFWS to understand that reserves may only be functional if protections were also in place for the larger occupied locations surrounding the reserves and/or a series of corridors for genetic/species movement between reserves were also incorporated.

Using a variety of maps and GIS overlays, the group was able to begin designating the first draft reserves in the Grand Mound vicinity. The team will be meeting again to continue the process. District 11 suggests that upper management be advised of the process and a policy call be made regarding the appropriateness of reserve designs and their use by USFWS as well as clarifying the interaction of state versus federal regulations regarding Mazama pocket gophers.

Mazama pocket gopher: Biologists Tirhi, Linders and Schmidt met with staff from USFWS to discuss strategies and identify areas of importance and opportunity that might be included in a reserve design that considers pocket gopher needs and requirements. The meeting was focused more on scoping than on specifics, which was necessary to lay the structural groundwork for a reserve and develop a common understanding of how a reserve system might function. A second meeting is planned for some time in mid-February.

Wildlife Areas

Migratory Bird Stamp Grants: Managers Guzlas and Gerchak submitted seven migratory bird stamp projects for the 2013-2015 funding cycle. These projects included critical operations funding for Chehalis, Chinook-Willapa Wetlands, John's River, and Davis Creek. Additional projects included matching dollars for several USFWS coastal wetland grants. Project list below:

Chehalis (wetland/field management on 165 acres)

Chinook / Willapa Wetlands (wetland/field/water control structure management on 300+ acres)

John's River (wetland/field/water control structure management on 85 acres)

Davis Creek (wetland/field management on 20 acres)

Dungeness (wetland restoration on 16 acres, matching \$930,000 in federal funding)

Kindred Island (wetland acquisition / public access on 355 + acres)

North Nemaah (wetland acquisition / public access up to 455 acres, matching secured funding from the Columbia Land Trust)

Coastal Wetland Grants: USFWS announced the 2013 recipients of Coastal Wetland Grants. WDFW received funding for both Region 6 projects located at Dungeness and North Willapa Bay. Manager Guzlas will work with USFWS over the next few weeks to complete the S7 and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process as the receivable contracts are established.

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

Wildlife Management

Black-tailed Deer: Biologist Michaelis continues to monitor radio-collared black-tail deer in Capitol Forest and no mortalities were reported this week. In addition, Biologists Hoenes and Michaelis assisted Research Scientist Rice with the capture and radio-collaring of four adult does. With the addition of these four does, there are now nine black-tailed deer being monitored in Capitol Forest (seven does and two yearlings). The four captured does were all fitted with vaginal-implant transmitters (VITs), which will alert biologists when the doe gives birth. This technology assists tremendously with the capture and tagging of fawns.



Willapa Bay Waterfowl Surveys: Biologist Hoenes summarized data from the five aerial waterfowl survey flights that occurred in Willapa Bay from October 2012 through January 2013. The primary intent of these flights was to determine peak use periods of Willapa Bay by dabbling ducks (i.e. mallard, American wigeon, teal, northern pintail, etc.). Peak use periods by dabbling ducks appear to occur sometime between mid-October and mid-November, while divers are more prevalent in Willapa Bay during winter months (Table 1).

The distribution and size of dabbling duck flocks is represented in Figure 1. The composition of dabbling ducks using Willapa Bay is represented in Figure 2. Biologists also plan to use this data to help determine how the distribution of waterfowl in Willapa Bay is influenced by the availability and distribution of native (*Zostera marina*) and non-native (*Zostera japonica*) species of eelgrass.

Table 1. The number of dabbling ducks (dabbler), divers, Canada geese, and black brant observed during Willapa Bay aerial waterfowl surveys, October 2012–January 2013. Results are presented by species and survey date.

Species	Survey Date				
	October 1	October 18	November 2	November 16	January 13
Mallard	6,124	4,578	9,806	9,221	2,645
American Wigeon	28,165	50,606	65,502	42,007	614
Northern Pintail	3,612	11,893	16,177	18,936	636
Teal	6,282	7,584	3,239	1,373	146
Gadwall	9	100	2	4	36
Northern Shoveler	0	0	0	0	133
Unknown Dabbler	7,249	18,917	4,271	3,100	668
Total Dabbler	51,441	93,687	98,997	74,641	4,878
Scaup	35	30	73	40	36
Bufflehead	0	0	269	643	833
Common Goldeneye	0	0	0	3	71
Unknown Goldeneye	0	0	0	0	53
Redhead	0	0	0	0	33
Canvasback	0	0	0	0	0
Ring-neck Duck	0	0	0	0	45
Unknown Diver	0	0	7	60	61
Total Diver	35	30	349	749	1,132
Canada Goose	824	782	954	1,730	1,627
Black Brant	0	0	23	80	439

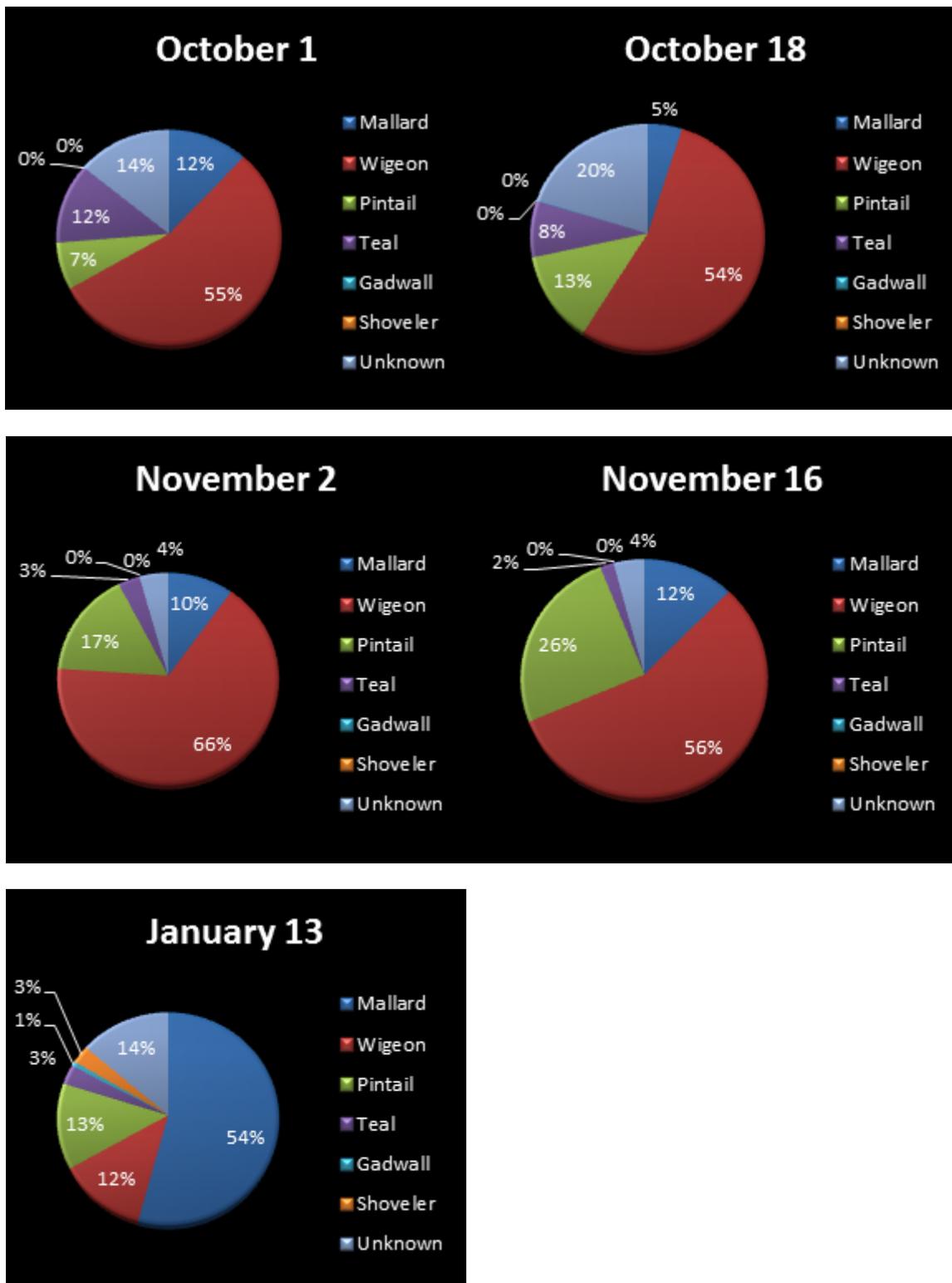


Figure 1. Species composition of dabbling ducks observed during Willapa Bay waterfowl survey flights, October 2012–January 2013.

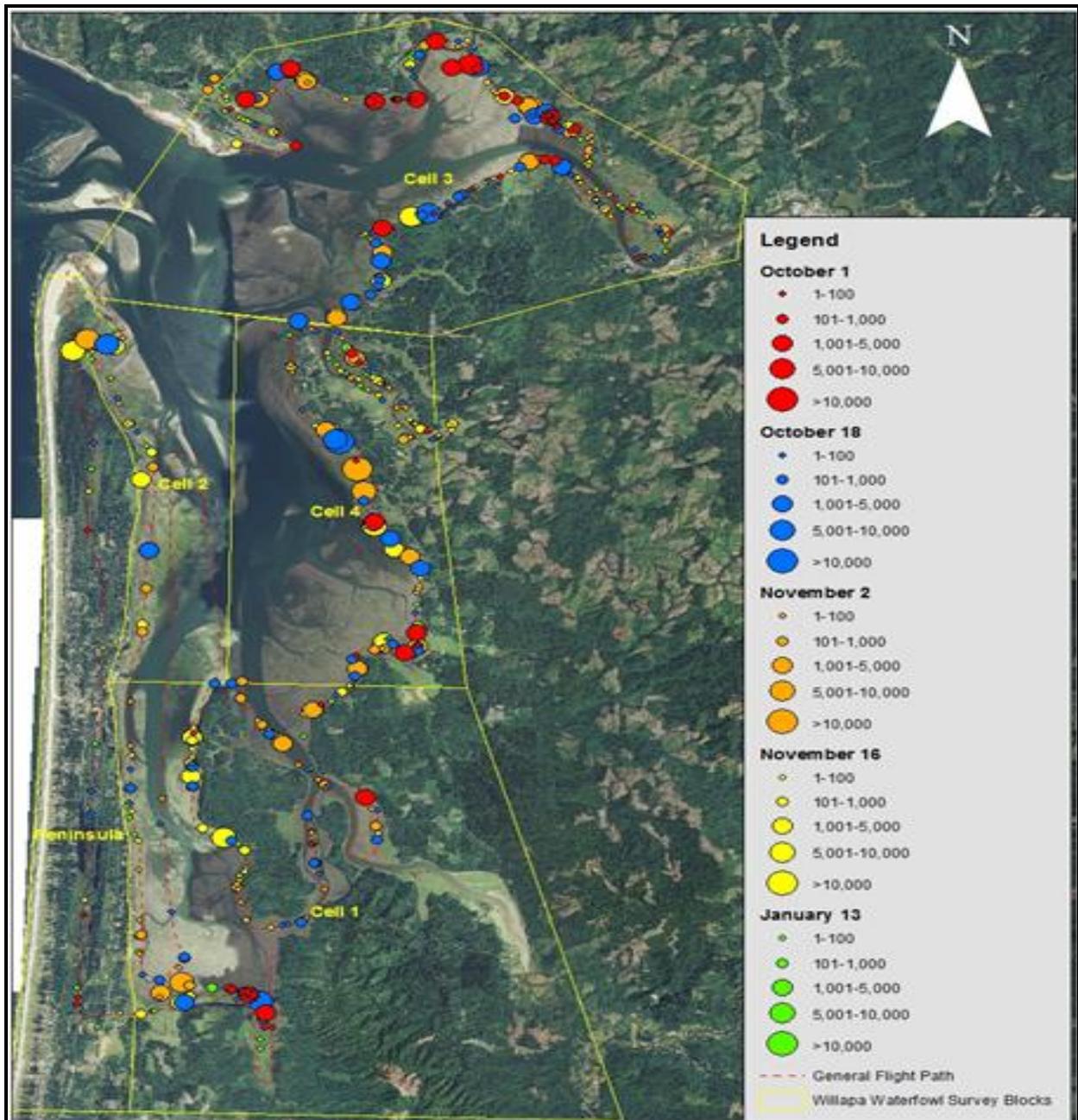


Figure 2. Image depicting the distribution and size of dabbling duck flocks observed during Willapa Bay aerial waterfowl surveys, October 2012–January 2013. Also included is the general flight path and boundaries of historical USFWS survey cells.

Private Lands/Access

Volunteer Habitat Projects: Biologist Harris spoke with Eyes in the Woods (EITW) Wildlife Director regarding potential habitat projects. He is recommending that EITW work with the USFS on current projects in the Matheny and Humptulips area of the National Forest. These are thinning projects that were partially funded by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF). Volunteers are needed to help pile slash and create forage openings.