Wildlife Program

Week of July 15-21, 2013

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Taylor's Checkerspot Conservation – Biologists Ann Potter and Loni Beyer conducted surveys for Taylor's checkerspot within areas designated for habitat management for this endangered butterfly in fall 2013. Searches for Taylor's checkerspot host plants and pre-diapause larvae were completed for seven restoration units within two occupied sites in Clallam County. This intensive survey work is a component of habitat management effectiveness for the State Wildlife Grant Prairie-Oak project, and required as part of new U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Endangered Species Act (ESA) protection measures for Taylor's checkerspot.

Fisher – With the assistance of biologists from National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Biologist Jeff Lewis completed a draft of the implementation plan for the Cascades fisher reintroduction. Lewis sent the plan out for internal review and Dr. Dave Graber (Chief Scientist, western region, NPS) will also facilitate a peer-review of the plan.

Prairie Restoration – Biologists Dave Hays worked with Wildlife Area staff to prepare firebreaks for prescribed fire at Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie. Firelines are prepared over a period of two weeks. Initially, Wildlife Area staff mows 10-20 foot firebreaks surrounding 2-10 acre prescribed fire units. Work crews follow, and cut extremely short grass adjacent to burn units, and then crews rake the firebreak to increase safety. Shrubs and small trees near firebreaks are limbed or removed by work crews as well.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1: Assistant District Wildlife Biologist (ADWB) Prince checked self-activated cameras deployed within Game Management Unit (GMU) 105 (the wedge). The cameras were deployed for documentation of wolves and/or grizzly bears in the area. Animals "captured" on the cameras included red squirrel, coyote, white-tailed deer, bobcat, black bear, and a potential wolf (edge of frame at night). Cameras were reset and left in the field. ADWB Prince teamed with District Habitat Biologist Sandy Dotts to deploy self-activated cameras in Ferry County in an effort to document wolves that may be in the area. The cameras will be checked next week and will remain in the field for at least one month.

Conflict Specialist Shepherd and a U.S. Air Force liaison spent time in Ruby Creek discussing recent wolf sightings, survival school activities, and viewing livestock use of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Ruby Creek grazing allotment in relation to these issues. After the wolf was

radio-collared in Ruby Creek this week, the conversation continued concerning wolf locations in relationship to survival school activities and possible data sharing. Specialist Shepherd contacted the range rider in Smackout Meadows in person and discussed wolf activities, the locations from the GPS collar and associated website, and other issues. A more powerful spotlight was delivered. Specialist Shepherd mailed a depredation report concerning the Diamond M calf from July 3 to the Diamond M by U.S. Postal Service and was notified it was received.

WDFW and the Sheriff's Department reports were discussed by the conflict specialist and WDFW Enforcement at length after being scrutinized in the local print and radio media outlets. Specialist Shepherd walked the Tiger Hill grazing allotment with an enforcement officer, wildlife biologist, and contract range rider and found a relatively large dead calf that appeared to have died last grazing season. Many large leg bones and the entire rib cage were intact. Specialist Shepherd and a contract range rider went to the regional office in Spokane and picked up a truck to use in the Tiger Hill and other allotments this season. Specialist Shepherd wrote a draft of an article titled "Straight Talk about Wolves" for local media outlets to describe WDFW's actual monthly activities concerning wolf management.

District 3: Nine wolves were reported in Wenaha-Tuccanon Wilderness near the Washington-Oregon border. A report from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) cast some doubt that this group was either the OR Wenaha or Walla Walla pack. Assistant District Biologist Vekasy drove roads in the area looking for sign and talked with the USFS lookout at Table Rock, but did not find or hear of any activity. Trail camera was placed west of the sighting area in habitat typical of denning and rendezvous sites.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

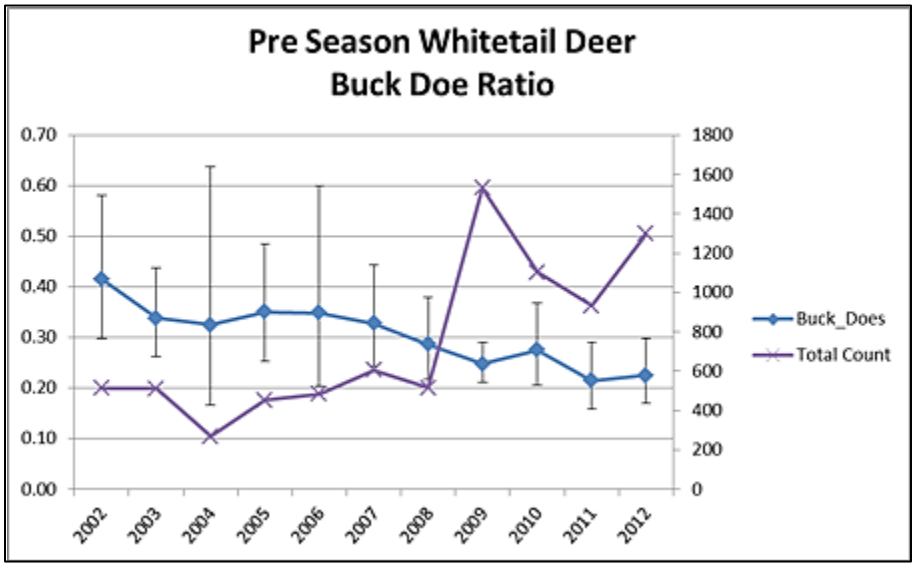
Columbia Basin Jackrabbit Project: Contract Biologist Savanah Walker continued creating maps and calling landowners for permission to survey on their property. Sample vials were sent to cooperators at the Yakama Tribe, Region 2, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Volunteers were in the field four days this week covering nine points between Odessa and Davenport. At one point near Odessa field crews located several fresh jackrabbit pellets with a total of 13 collections from one location.

Area near Odessa (left) where 13 fresh jackrabbit pellet clusters were observed and sampled (may have been a latrine), including this large jackrabbit pellet (right).

Long Lake Western and Clark Grebe Survey: Biologists Ferguson, Atamian, and Walker borrowed a boat from the Fish Program and surveyed Long Lake (Spokane County) from the Nine-mile boat launch to the dam. At the Nine-mile boat launch we counted 29 active nests, 3 inactive nests, and 58 individuals. At Sportsman Paradise we observed nine adult grebes (six Western and one Clark); additionally one pair of adult Westerns had one chick. At Felton there were four Western Grebe adults. At Willow Bay there were no adult grebes or signs of nesting. At McLellan Point there were two adult Westerns, but no sign of nesting. At Long Lake Dam there were no adult grebes or signs of nesting. Biologist Ferguson also produced maps of occupied and potentially occupied areas by Western Grebes on Long Lake for habitat biologist Karin Divens.

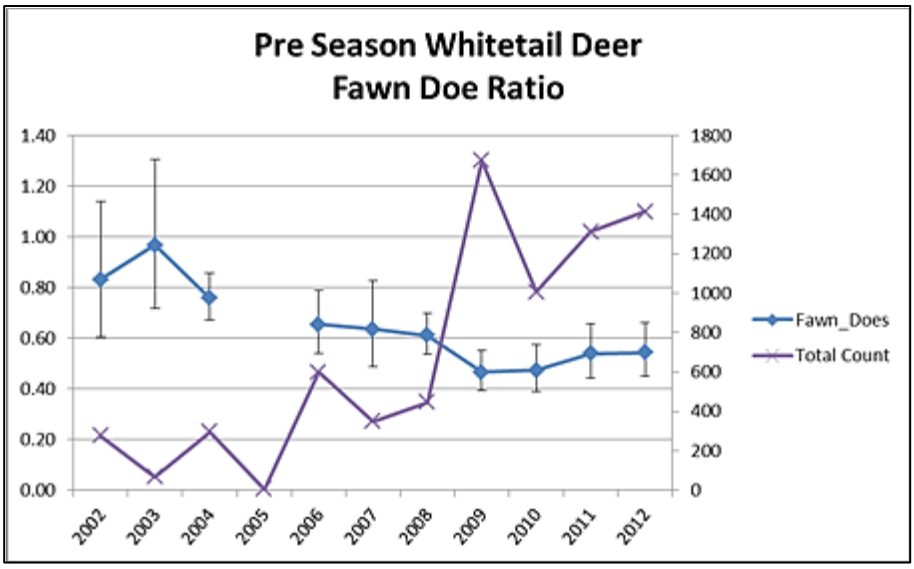
Lone Western Grebe (left) turning eggs in nest (right) on Long Lake in Spokane.

Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep Coordination: District Biologist Wik attended and hosted a two day meeting of the Hells Canyon Initiative members at the Smoothing Iron Ranch. The meeting discussed research direction changes and needs for achieving bighorn sheep recovery goals. The final proposal, yet to be flushed out with a final proposal for logistical and budget needs, will change the focus to two or three specific herds (Lostine in Oregon, Asotin, and possibly Black Butte). The proposal will be to try and identify the chronic shedders of *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* bacteria through repeated sampling. The chronic shedders will then be removed from the population to see if lamb survival improves.



Deer Preseason Composition Surveys: Biologist Atamian finished entering the 2012 composition data. Seventy-six surveys were completed with a total of 3,959 deer counted (2,250 does, 1,167 fawns, and 542 bucks). Mule deer populations look good with fawn to 100 doe ratios stable and in the

mid-60s and buck to 100 doe ratios stable around 40. Whitetail ratios (buck and fawn) also appear stable the past 4 years, but show declining trend over the last 10 (see graphs). Some of this though may be due to bringing on master hunter volunteers to increase coverage and count.



Wildlife Areas

4-O Ranch Wildlife Area – Tree thinning project: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice and David Woodall went to the 4-O Wildlife Area on Monday to retrieve one of our five-ton trucks and look at Mike Odom's tree thinning project. Dice spent several hours with Mr. Odom on Monday looking over completed thinning work. A contractor hired and paid for by Mr. Odom is using machinery to thin excess trees in the Mountain View area. The thinning should promote good forest health and reduce risk to timber stands from wildfire.

In a shower of wood chips, a ponderosa pine is shredded by a cutter head mounted on an excavator at the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area.

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

Wildlife Management

Tucannon Wind Resource Area development could result in hunting closures: The assistant district biologist spoke with a representative from Portland General Electric, a power company that recently purchased wind power rights to Tucannon Wind Resource Area northwest of Dayton. Development of the area is planned to begin this fall and will result in hunting closure of possibly 35,000 acres in GMU 149.

Wildlife Areas

Sign installation: Access Manager Young installed a new sign at the West Medical Lake Access Site and reconfigured one old sign in hopes of clearing up any confusion to fishers at that site. There had been problems in the past concerning folks parking right at the launch, not allowing others to use it. New signage delineates where folks must move back from, after using the launch, and makes it easier for enforcement staff to ticket violators.

Private Lands/Access

New Hunt by Written Permission (HBWP) Access (Asotin County): Biologist Earl and Natural Resource Worker 2 Wade worked on a contract for a "new" HBWP property in Asotin County. They met with the landowner to verify the legal description of the included acres. While touring the 691 acre property, several groups of whitetail bucks were seen.

New Hunt by Written Permission property at Ten Mile Creek

REGION 2

Wolf Management

Wolf Follow-up: Biologist Fitkin responded to three possible wolf reports. The first came from a Libby creek resident that believes she heard wolf pups howling behind her house one evening in an area traditionally frequented by the Lookout Pack at this time of year. Our follow-up howling failed to yield a response. This is the third unsuccessful attempt this summer to locate the Lookout Pack with howling surveys. We have had no definitive wolf documentation for over a month now.

The second report involved a wild canid that the observer thought possibly sounded like a wolf howling on the resident's porch three miles west of Twisp the previous night. On-site follow-up yielded little sign, but what was found (old scat) appeared to be coyote. The homeowner will continue to monitor and try to get photos and audio recordings if the animal returns.

The third report came from an observer who photographed a single animal on the Robinson Creek trail several miles northwest of Mazama. The photograph shows what appears to be a wild canid moving away through tall brush from some distance. Unfortunately, the animal cannot be definitively identified from the picture.

It is interesting to note that this sighting occurred about halfway between the Lookout Pack Territory and the vicinity of the suspected pack activity in the Hozomeen area. If we get any additional reports in this area, cameras will be deployed to follow-up.

Landowner Agreements: Biologists Fitkin and McCoy met with a local Methow Rancher who runs cattle on both USFS and WDFW land to explore the utility of a landowner agreement for this operator. We identified some helpful cost-share projects, as well as alterations to land management and cattle management practices that should help minimize the opportunity for conflict with wolves and other predators. Fall is the critical period for this rancher, so we will be working to get the agreement and changes in place before then.

District 7 Wolves: District 7 received a report of an observation of a telemetry collared wolf 4.5 miles up the Entiat Valley. Biologist Volsen spoke with the reporting party and, in coordination with biologist Becker, attempted to locate a telemetry signal from the area. The observers could not provide enough information to determine if the collar was a VHF or GPS collar. No signal was found in the area.

Detachment 15 officers responded to a reported attack of a free ranging goat in the Badger Mountain area. The goat survived the attack and officers found no indication of wolf, cougar or bear involvement. The area of the attack was highly compromised by goat and dog tracks, with no evidence of wild carnivores. It is suspected that dogs or possibly a coyote were responsible.

There has not been any reported activity from the Wenatchee pack over the past week.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

The Nature Conservancy LEAF Student Field Trip: Research Scientist Becker led a field trip for The Nature Conservancy's Leaders in Environmental Action for the Future (LEAF) program. Four students and a teacher from Tacoma were taught about shrub steppe and pygmy rabbit conservation and learned techniques for wildlife monitoring, such as radio telemetry.

LEAF program students take a moment during radio telemetry practice to pose for a picture.

Update on Releases of Pygmy Rabbits: Research Scientist Penny Becker, graduate student Steph DeMay, Scientific Technician Brooks Kohli, and a team of staff and volunteers worked to capture and release pygmy rabbit kits from all breeding enclosures to the wild at Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area. The week marked the end of releases from the two Sagebrush Flat enclosures as most all unmarked kits have been captured. July 23 will be the last day to release Dormaier enclosure rabbits at Sagebrush Flat. As of now, 201 kits have been released this season, nearly doubling the 104 released last year. The released kits continue to be monitored with radio telemetry until their glue-on transmitters fall off so that we can track movements post-release.

Left: A flashlight is used to check the numbered ear of a rabbit kit to determine if it is to be released or kept for future breeding in the enclosures. Center: Megan Heinlen carries a captured pygmy rabbit back to be processed for release. Right: A crew of staff and volunteers carry pygmy rabbits out to the release sites.

Mountain Goat Surveys: District Biologist Fitkin and Assistant District Biologist Heinlen conducted aerial mountain goat surveys in the Methow Goat Unit 2-2. Despite favorable conditions, we classified only 26 goats unit-wide (adults, yearlings, kids). Unfavorable weather and limited helicopter availability delay the flights for over three weeks; this later survey window may have negatively affected goat sightability. Data will be analyzed through the Mountain Goat sightability model to correct for observational biases; however, the estimated population size will be lower than anticipated.

Left: Methow Goat Unit survey blocks outlined in blue. Dots show survey route; red dots equal mountain goat locations. Right: Methow mountain goat country. *Photo by Scott Fitkin.*

Stemilt Basin Elk Fence: Biologist Volsen and Captain Chris Anderson met with basin landowners to discuss the initiation of fence building. The Washington Legislature dedicated funds to assist with material purchase, with WDFW administering those funds. A contract will be written for those landowners whose property the fence crosses; the fence then becoming the responsibility of the landowner to maintain. Chelan County is allowing the installation of cattle guards at fence crossing locations to extend the effectiveness of the fence.

Coordination with USFS on sheep grazing: Biologist Volsen is working with the USFS on grazing issues and roaming wild and domestic sheep on the Entiat Ranger District. Four wild bighorn sheep are now using areas close to domestic grazing allotments. WDFW will likely remove the four sheep as a precaution to potential spread of disease. Biologist Volsen is working closely with the USFS on these localized actions. Domestic grazing has recently moved off the Entiat Ranger District and onto the Wenatchee River Ranger District to the west, outside the range of the Swakane bighorn sheep herd.

Odonate Training: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen attended one-day U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Odonate (dragonfly and damselfly) training in the Methow Valley put on by the leading Odonate expert Dr. Dennis Paulson. The USFS is being directed to survey for three Odonate species that have been added to their sensitive species list. All three are thought to occur within District 6. This was a great opportunity to learn Odonate identification from the leading expert. Even better, watching grown adults flailing wildly with long-handled nets trying to catch the incredibly quick and maneuverable insects is quite entertaining. All told, we surveyed three wetlands in the Methow and documented a total of 17 species.

Left: On the chase. Right: Dragonflies in hand. *Photos by Scott Fitkin.*

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Dove Banding: District Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz banded doves for five days in District 8. A total of 127 (105 HY, 22 AHY) doves were banded. The capture rate is slightly above average, but below 2012 figures. Relatively few adults or recaptures were seen during the first week. One of the few recaptures was banded in 2009. Eurasian collared doves are now common in traps.

District Wildlife Biologist Gregory, Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Buser and Hatchery Specialist Huwe began trapping mourning doves at the Ringold Hatchery in District 4. Thirty-nine new birds received bands during three days of trapping. Non-target species included four collared dove and two quail.

Left: Biologist Gregory trapped mourning doves at Ringold Hatchery. Right: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Buser helps with dove banding at Ringold.

Jackrabbits: Biologists Gregory and Stutzman, Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Buser, and Technician Kaelber conducted a jackrabbit survey orientation at a survey point in Franklin County. It was a good opportunity to get everyone coordinated and comfortable with the survey protocol. Unfortunately, no rabbit pellets were found that were fresh enough for DNA analysis.

A Franklin County jackrabbit survey plot

Wildlife Areas

Rock Creek Road Maintenance and Abandonment: Manager Huffman continued work on the Rock Creek Unit road abandonment process. Huffman reviewed the second round of draft maps from Richard Tveten and began a draft summary of road plans in each section.

Oak Creek Road Construction: Manager Huffman coordinated with the USFS on a contract for the USFS to complete the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis for the construction of a new road in Oak Creek. The road is on USFS but will access WDFW land. The contract and environmental review should be complete so work may be able to happen this fall.

Oak Creek Forest Restoration: Manager Huffman spent some time working on the Oak Creek Forest Restoration Project including the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Jobs Now contract and planning for the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) restoration funding. Huffman talked to retired DNR regional fire supervisor Rex Reed about providing some technical assistance for prescribed burning.

Beaver Deceiver at Mesa Lake: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Buser installed a beaver deceiver to help control water levels on the East Pigeon Pond at Mesa Lake, along with some re-shaping of the levee.

New beaver deceiver at Mesa Lake

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Darrington Mule Barn Bat Surveys: Biologist Milner conducted bat surveys at the Darrington Ranger Station historic mule barn. This site used to house a small colony of Townsend's big-eared bats. However, the barn is in a state of disrepair and is in danger of degrading to the point where it won't be feasible to save it. We were interested in determining bat use of the barn as a tool to help inform future plans for the barn. Although several species were identified in the area,

the site is not currently serving as a maternity site. Thanks to Greg Green, Phyllis Reed, and Adrienne Hall for assistance with the survey.

Skagit Delta Land Acquisition Meeting: Biologist Danilson participated in the Skagit Delta Land Acquisition Meeting with the Regional Team. The purpose of the meeting was to continue ongoing discussions and strategy development related to WDFW potentially acquiring farmable lands in the Skagit Delta to provide hunting opportunities in lieu of department lands that have been (or will be) restored for salmon recovery purposes.

Skagit Important Bird Area: Skagit Bay is a new Important Bird Area (IBA) on the Washington State Audubon list of sites. It also qualifies as a Globally Important Bird Area under the Audubon Society system. Biologist Milner created a map for submission to National Audubon showing the area where data were collected to qualify the site as an IBA.

American Pika Lowland Survey: Assistant District Biologist Cyra completed the first two exploratory surveys for American Pika at a low-elevation naval installation. Staff had observed and photographed an American Pika at this anthropomorphic site in the past, and given the unusual location and elevation for this usually alpine species the U.S. Navy contracted with WDFW to perform follow-up surveys to confirm occupancy. Listening stations were established and surveyed in appropriate habitat, and ground searches for evidence of American Pika sign were completed following established national survey guidelines. While the USFWS declined to list the American Pika under the Endangered Species Act, it was determined that climate change was the leading likely cause of Pika population reductions in other parts of the country. With increasing temperatures, low elevation populations while rare, may be at increased risk in the future. No American Pika was seen, heard, nor sign observed on these two visits. Additional surveys to this and other habitat patches will follow.

American Pika Survey Area: An individual was observed and photographed in the rock riprap along the stream in 2009.

Peregrine Falcon: While in the general area for American Pika surveys, Assistant District Biologist Cyra heard begging calls and located an adult Peregrine Falcon on a cliff face with no know prior falcon use, no other bird was observed. An adult and young had been observed flying at altitude several weeks earlier in the same general area but were attributed to another eyrie several miles away. Due to the late season observation, follow-up surveys next year will need to be performed to confirm this as a new eyrie.

Potential new Peregrine Falcon eyrie

WDFW Golden Eagle Monitoring: Biologists Anderson and Smith confirmed an 8.5 week old nestling at the known King County Golden Eagle nest site. The adults were not seen, but the nestling was documented foraging on food items cached in the nest. Anderson provided the Survey Forest Section with updates to status of this nest for analysis. This data will be used for a statewide survey and analysis of eagle occupancy and productivity.

An 8.5 week old Golden Eagle nestling in a nest in King County

Wildlife Areas

Natural Resource Tech Deyo repaired a water control device on Rainbow Pond at the Lake Terrell Unit. The water control device had a large hole (above) in it which is allowing too much water to drain out of the pond. Repairs (below) will keep the water control working until we can secure funding to replace it.

State Listed Common Loon Efforts: Biologists Anderson and Smith checked on active territories on the Snoqualmie Tree Farm. Lynch did not show any birds. Calligan had the territorial pair, which continues to exhibit behavior indicative of care for chicks. However, no chick was seen. If a chick is present – it is estimated at 3 weeks old or so. Further efforts will provide follow-up to confirmed or suspected chick, or determine if suspect is appropriate for data monitoring efforts.

Wildlife Areas

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) representative John Tellesbo to discuss the weed maintenance plan for the WSDOT parking area under the HWY 2 trestle. Additionally, Manager Boehm informed the representative that plans to replace the three bollards that block the west parking lot entrance are underway. Relocation of the bollards is expected to be completed by the end of July.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) member Paul Gilmore and a local farmer to mow a portion of the unit for dog training and trials. Approximately 100 acres have been mowed for dog training and hunting areas. Additional mowing will take place while the sun shines and the equipment is working. Various members of local dog clubs have expressed interest in providing volunteer labor to keep the mowed areas in shape for dog training and user access in coming months. A permit is required for commercial use activities and can be applied for at the Mill Creek office.

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm began mowing at the Stillwater Unit this week. A neighboring farmer and CAG member Mark Ryder have volunteered their services to expedite the mowing of approximately 80 acres of hunting area. Trail improvements have also begun to improve access to various portions of the unit.

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

Wildlife Management

Band-tailed Pigeon Surveys: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn conducted annual band-tailed pigeon mineral spring surveys at Pigeon Point and Sumas Spring. At Pigeon Point, Danilson observed a total of 51 pigeons, while DeBruyn observed 83 pigeons at Sumas Spring. These surveys are part of a coordinated Pacific Coast population estimate conducted annually between July 10 and July 20. Band-tailed pigeons are a hunted game bird species and the annual surveys are used by the Pacific Flyway Council to inform harvest management (see http://pacificflyway.gov/Abstracts.asp). The annual band-tailed pigeon hunting season in Washington State runs from September 15-23.

Band-tailed Pigeon Study: Biologists DeBruyn and S.Anderson continued tracking Band-tailed pigeons with radio telemetry. Nailing down their nest areas was accomplished by tracking after dark when it is assumed the males are roosting near their nest sites. Finding new mineral springs

is a bit more involved as the males visit them early in the day and don't go to the springs every day. Repeatedly locating them in the morning and then assessing the habitat in the area is the current strategy.

Mount Baker Mountain Goat Surveys: Biologist Danilson made final preparations for the Mount Baker mountain goat surveys which will occur next week. Danilson's activities included coordinating with flight crew staff and the aircraft vendor, preparing a flight plan and filing it with North Cascades National Park, and coordinating with U.S. Forest Service staff to obtain the key for the helicopter base of operations at Komo Kulshan Guard Station near Baker Lake. The objective of the annual surveys is to estimate the total population size for harvest management decision making and to obtain current estimates for neighboring populations that may be considered for future translocation or hunting opportunities.

Region 4 Pheasant Release Program Annual Meeting: Biologist Danilson attended the Region 4 pheasant release program annual meeting in Mount Vernon. This informational meeting is an opportunity to meet with a dedicated group of volunteers and hunters to discuss the Department's plans for the upcoming season. About 25 people attended the meeting, where topics ranged from pheasant raising challenges, release numbers, changes to wildlife areas and leased lands, and volunteer opportunities.

All Girls Hunter Education: Biologist Milner joined Officers Downes, Jones, and Peters to give presentations to 50 girls attending an outdoor camp on Orcas Island. The camp has been in operation for 23 years and teaches the entire hunter education course during the week-long camp, so all the girls who attend can receive their hunter education certification.

Stillwater Passerine Bird Monitoring and Habitat Comparison Project: Biologist Anderson completed the 2013 songbird monitoring at Stillwater for breeding bird use in established riparian buffers and wildlife riparian habitat enhancement areas. Anderson noted a number of recently fledged birds, still being provisioned by adults and yet to be fully independent. One of which was Lazuli Bunting, which is patchily distributed and uncommon in King County. Stillwater is one of the few places that have confirmed breeding birds. Most of these birds will be finished with their rearing of young by end of July.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Agricultural Enhancement and Lease Program

Island Unit: Natural Resources Specialist (NRS) Greg Meis and Natural Resources Tech (NRT) Curran Cosgrove completed field prep and planting of millet on the Island. NRT Cosgrove continued to monitor field drainage conditions. Mowing of other locations will begin now that planting is completed.

Samish Unit: NRT Cosgrove mowed cattails in a pond at the Samish Unit to improve open water habitat and hunter access. The entry and parking area were also mowed.

Stillwater Revetment Removal Project: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Lands Agent Iris are continuing to work with Wild Fish Conservancy on the terms of the Right of Entry Agreement to complete work on WDFW lands. A pre-construction meeting is scheduled for July 29, where the Wild Fish Conservancy, the Contractor, and WDFW will coordinate final details on construction access and signage on the property.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw worked with the project consultant to install staff gauges and groundwater well monitoring equipment, which will be utilized in the Adaptive Management Plan for the project. They also completed a data download test-run on each of the water quality loggers to make sure they are working properly.

Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo hiked into Tennant Lake and cleared out the existing beaver deceiver pipes that had been plugged up by beavers. They also installed one new deceiver pipe to keep the lake water levels down and help keep the boardwalk dry.

Private Lands/Access

GMU 418 Elk Hunt: Natural Resource Tech Otto worked with District 14 staff in preparation for an upcoming meeting with selected hunters. Otto located materials for the hunter packets.

Whidbey Island Deer Hunting: Natural Resource Tech Otto met with Whidbey Camano Land Trust to determine open hunt dates for their property. Otto updated the flier for property posting.

Island Pheasant Hunting, Whidbey: Natural Resource Tech Otto toured the Arnold Farm property checking for crop rotations and available foliage cover.

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

Wildlife Management

Special Permit Hunts in King County: Biologist Smith has been working to facilitate reporting of hours worked by a volunteer Master Hunt Coordinator.

Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group: Biologist Smith attended the monthly meeting of the Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group. Group members provided updates on collared elk locations and recent elk/vehicle collisions in addition to planning for upcoming events.

Wildlife Areas

Pheasant Meeting: Staff attended the annual Pheasant Hunting Community Meeting held in Mount Vernon on July 18. A panel of DFW staff provided Wildlife Area updates, pheasant release numbers, and responded to various questions from the general public. Manager Boehm provided contact information to three individuals interested in volunteering on Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Units.

Wiley Slough and Island: Manager Rotton and staff released 1,000 Galerucella beetles on the purple loosestrife plants on the Wiley Slough restoration and the Island Unit to develop a local population of beetles to assist with the control of this plant in the restoration area and the marsh. Additional mechanical and chemical controls are scheduled for later in the season on other sites in these units.

Debay Slough: Skagit Wildlife Area staff removed a fallen tree at the Johnson-Debay Slough Swan Reserve entry road.

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

Wildlife Management

Regional Directors Meeting: Staff attended the regional directors meeting in Mill Creek. Managers Link and Boehm received a Team Award for their participation in the Cherry Valley Fish Passage Barrier Project which was completed June 30, 2013.

Private Lands Biologist Interviews: Biologist Danilson assisted Biologist Milner with interviews for the Private Lands Biologist 2 position.

Farms, Fish, and Floods Initiative: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw attended a workshop organized by the Nature Conservancy regarding the Farms, Fish, and Floods Initiative

(3FI) in the Skagit Valley. The 3FI is an effort where groups concerned with farmland preservation, fish habitat restoration, and flood protection collaborate on projects with benefits to each of the three interests.

Lands 20/20 Workshop: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw attended a webinar that outlined this year's Lands 20/20 process. Lands 20/20 is an internal WDFW review process for acquisition of properties by WDFW. Applications for this year's Lands 20/20 process are due in early September.

Waterfowl Ecology Workshop: Manager Rotton continued coordinating with Waterfowl Program Manager Don Kraege and Dr. Leigh Fredrickson to schedule a Waterfowl Ecology workshop early this fall dates have not been finalized.

Radio Training: Assistant District Biologist Cyra provided radio training and information to several Program staff.

Supervisor Responsibilities: Biologist Milner summarized results of the first interviews for the Private Lands Biologist position and worked on next steps in the hiring process.

Region 4 North Wildlife Area and Access Area Tour: Paul Dahmer, Steve Sherlock, Brian Boem and Derek Hacker participated in a Wildlife Area Access tour this past week. They visited the Cherry Valley, Stillwater and Ebey Island Wildlife Areas as well as the Lake Stickney Water Access Site. Both Brian and Derek gave comprehensive updates on current issues and future recommendations on the management of these sites.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle Management: Biologist Holman marked the next 10 "Head Start" western pond turtles in preparation for their release in early August. A complex system of notches is used to assign numerical digits to specific scutes on each turtle's carapace so that individual animals may be identified.

Western pond turtle illustrates some of the notches used in the numbering system.

Streaked Horned Lark Survey: Biologists Bergh and Miller assisted biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Center for Natural Lands Management with surveys for streaked horned lark on sites in the Lower Columbia River. Survey transects are positioned inside areas of suitable lark habitat and larks are counted, sexed, and aged. These surveys are conducted in order to estimate relative abundance at occupied sites across the Lower Columbia and south Puget Sound. Many birds were seen this week and three young of the year were observed.

Resident Dark Geese: Biologist Miller detected four of five recently radio collared geese and two previously radio collared geese in the vicinity of Miller Sands Island this week while conducting streaked horn lark surveys. In addition, approximately 200 Resident Dark Geese (RDG) were present with several hundred other geese in the vicinity of Miller Sands Island. Rice Island and Grays' bay were examined but no geese were observed. Surveys of RDG and resident geese are scheduled for August to contribute to a population estimate.

Band-tailed Pigeon Surveys: Biologist George conducted three band-tailed pigeon surveys this week with help from Natural Resources Technician Sample. Close to 500 pigeons were observed arriving at known mineral sites in three locations throughout the region. Biologist Anderson completed the annual band-tailed pigeon mineral springs survey along the Wind River in Skamania County. These surveys are conducted as an index to the population trends for the Pacific Coast band-tail pigeon population. Data for these surveys are used by the Pacific Flyway Council to determine the threshold by which band-tailed pigeon hunting seasons are set.

Beaver Relocation Project: Biologist Anderson along with staff from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Yakama Indian Nation conducted a site visit to three potential beaver wetland release sites on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. The field trip was the second in a preliminary evaluation of future potential beaver release sites in drainages with habitat for salmonids and other native fish. The benefits of restoring beaver to historically occupied habitat include improving water quality, ground water storage and temperatures, decreasing sediment and increasing nutrient availability, not to mention the benefits to many wildlife species found in wetland habitats. The added benefit of this project will also be the ability to move nuisance beavers from private lands to habitats more suitable on state and federal ownerships.

Potential beaver wetland release sites on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

Region 5 Deer Management-Status and Trend Report: Biologist Holman initiated work on this year's Game Status and Trend Report for deer management in Region 5. The annual report features sections on deer management strategies, hunting season structures, survey efforts and results, population estimation, habitat condition, etc. Those interested in reading about WDFW management activities on the hunted species of Washington should visit the Hunting page of WDFW's website and look for Game Status and Trend Reports.

Wildlife Areas

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area -- Noxious Weed Removal at Oneida Unit: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Natural Resource Technician Sample spent a day at Oneida treating and removing English ivy, Purple loosestrife, and Yellow iris infestations within the unit. This was some of the first work that WDFW had done to remove noxious weeds from the unit since the land was acquired. The English ivy was growing up several Red alder and Sitka spruce trees in the area and was mostly cut using a chainsaw due to the large diameters of the vines. Several of the ivy vines growing up the trees were four to eight-inches in diameter making it the largest ivy vines Wildlife Area staff had ever seen. After the vines were cut, the stumps were treated with an herbicide to destroy the remaining roots of the plant and prohibit any re-growth. The area will be retreated in the future to remove any plants that were missed. Staff also noticed a tree that appears to have been excavated by Pileated woodpeckers for foraging over the past several years.

Pileated woodpecker foraging tree

English Ivy removal (left, center) and the four to eight-inch diameter ivy vines (right).

Cowlitz Wildlife Area

Peterman Unit: Cowlitz Wildlife Area staff sprayed 7.5 miles of roadside within the Peterman Unit of the Wildlife Area to control encroaching vegetation. Also, work has begun on "abandoning" those roads identified in the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) checklist as non-essential to recreational and administrative activities.

Swofford Unit: Cowlitz Wildlife Area staff conducted a second chemical application to the persistent population of yellow archangel that had spread quite vigorously throughout the area near the trailhead on the Swofford Pond Unit. The first application had controlled approximately 80% of the original population and this follow-up application was to those plants that escaped the first treatment. It is expected that a treatment in 2014 will be likely.

Kiona Unit: Cowlitz Wildlife Area staff sprayed Scotch broom, perennial pea, and reed canarygrass along the dike, access road, and field approaches on the Kiona Unit of the Wildlife Area. Approximately 1.8 acres (3/4 mile) was treated.

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

Wildlife Areas

Cowlitz Wildlife Area -- Hunter Education Class: Cowlitz Wildlife Area staff conducted a two-day, 16 hour hunter education course. Fifteen students enrolled in the course with 14 passing all the requirements. The students, ranging in age from 9 to 40 years old (half the students were over the age of 18), were instructed in safe firearms handling, principles of conservation, and the ethical elements of sportsmanship. At the end of the instructional portion of the class the students have to successfully pass a 75 question test (80% required to pass). The students are then evaluated on their understanding of safe handling skills while walking a simulated field course. The last day culminated on the shotgun range where the students are given the opportunity to shoot shotguns at stationary targets. The students are directly supervised during all shooting activities. The students were also provided lunch both days thanks to the efforts of Officer Sympson who gathers food donations from area grocery stores.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Dark Goose Capture: Biologists Hoenes and Michaelis captured and marked four resident dark geese ("Wuskies") in Willapa Bay. Each goose was marked with a leg band and neck collar VHF radio-transmitter. Geese are being marked in an effort to gain a better understanding of where resident dark geese nest in western Washington. Most resident dark geese nest on islands in the

lower Columbia River, but it was suspected they were also nesting in other locations. Hoenes and Michaelis surveyed the entire shoreline of Willapa Bay and only observed 35 dark geese; all were associated with the Bear River area on the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge.

Midway Beach Foot Access Trail: Biologists Hoenes and Sundstrom met with State Park Ranger Plunkett and more than 20 local volunteers to construct a foot access trail through the snowy plover nesting area at Midway Beach. There is a long history associated with Midway Beach Road, but in short, it is located on State Park lands and has been decommissioned for many years because the creation of a seasonal wetland made it impassable. Because of that, WDFW and State Parks included it when they marked the boundary of the snowy plover nesting area that is closed to public access. However, several local residents wanted to be able to walk out to the beach from their homes and sighted that the road was actually an easement so access should be allowed. WDFW and State Parks agreed so the trail was constructed. Limited foot access on the trail is not expected to negatively impact nesting snowy plovers. However, the effect and potential conflict will be monitored closely by WDFW biologists. All in all, it was a good turn out and the 20 some volunteers made short work of the project. The one half mile long trail was finished in 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Sea Otter Surveys – Biologists Ament and McMillan participated in the Outer Coast Sea Otter surveys from July 16-18, which were paired with Aerial Fixed-wing/Ground Sea Otter counts. Multiple ground crews were coordinated by USFWS Biologists Deanna Lynch and Ron Jameson with flights conducted on Tuesday and Thursday. Biologist Jeffries led the fixed-wing aerial counts. No flights were conducted Wednesday due to weather conditions. Most ground counters had very good viewing conditions this year with minimal swells, no fog, and little glare. A

combination of the ground counts and aerial survey counts (for the three day effort) will be used to prepare the 2013 trend count for the sea otter population along the Washington coast. Ground crews include staff and associates from USFWS, Seattle Aquarium and Point Defiance Zoo.

Biologist McMillan and Biologist Jameson (retired USFWS) were stationed at Duk Point (north of Pt. Alava, south of Pt. of Arches). On Tuesday, Michael Werner, a PBS producer, and Greg, camera operator, visited the site. Michael and Greg filmed and interviewed Biologist Jameson about his many years involved with sea otter research and monitoring.

Ron and Gwen Jameson along with Biologist McMillan and her husband Mike Langley at Duk Point viewing location.

Counts at Duk Point ranged from a low of 8 (6 adults with 2 pups) when the film crew were around on Tuesday, to a high of 42 (36 adults and 6 pups) on Thursday. Overall, these counts were lower than usual for Duk Point.

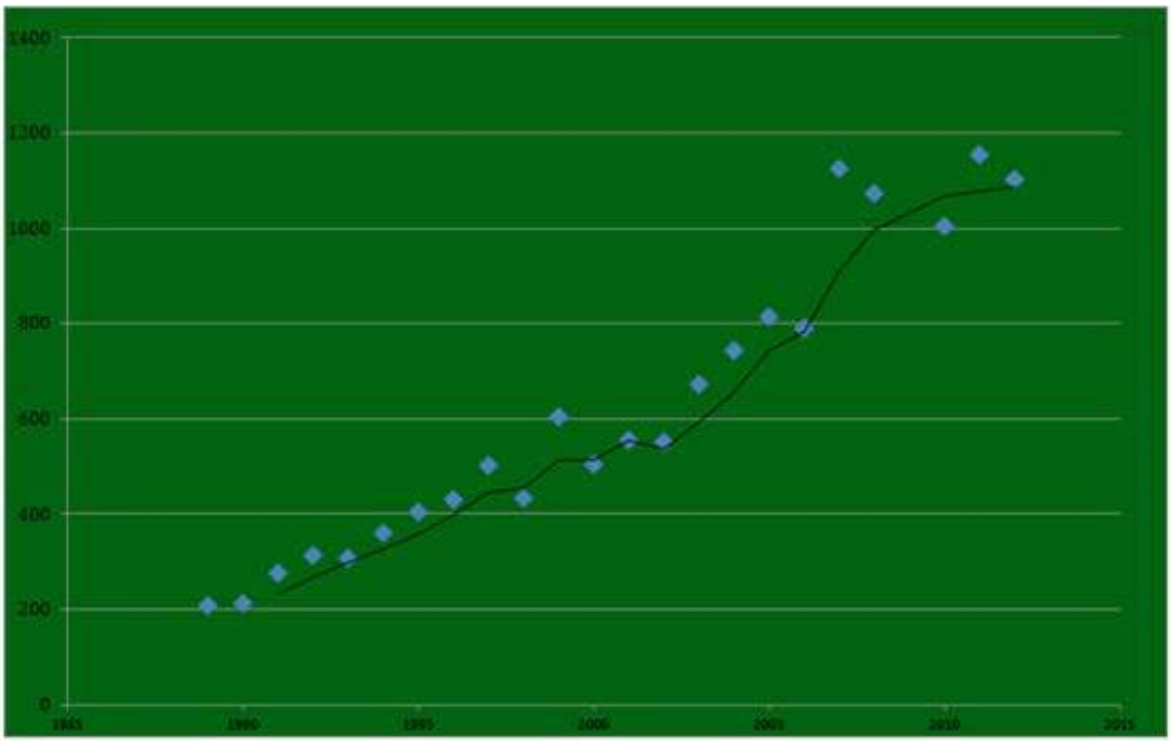
Duk Point survey location

Biologist Ament was stationed solo at Norwegian Memorial (north of Cedar Creek/Jagged Island). Ament backpacked into the area and camped for the week. Each day she climbed up to the top of a steep rocky point and basically "perched" in the limbs of a large tree to conduct her counts each day. Her counts ranged from the lowest count of 41 to the highest count of 96. The group of otters using this area is mostly females. Some large and small otter pups were documented by Biologist Ament in the area.

Norwegian Memorial survey location

The rate of increase for the population since 1989 has been 7.9%. The population estimate for 2012 was 1,105 otters. Survey results from 2012 indicate growth of the Washington sea otter population and it continues to remain positive overall, but is slowing as shown on Figure 1 from the Results of the 2012 Survey of the Reintroduced Sea Otter Population in Washington State.

Figure 1. Growth of Washington sea otter population showing 3-year running average, 1989-2012.



Black-tailed Deer – Capital Forest: Biologist Michaelis continued to monitor radio-collared deer in the Capitol Forest Cluster. He was able to download activity data from another adult doe. Sometimes transmission of these data is difficult due to thick vegetation. The total number of deer being monitored in the Capitol Forest Cluster remains at seven does and two yearlings.

Black-tailed Deer – Satsop/Mason: Biologist Murphie checked the status of radio-collared deer in both clusters and downloaded data from all doe collars last week. One collared fawn died due to coyote predation. Another transmitted a false mortality message, but is still alive. Thirteen does and eight fawns remain "on-air" for the two units in District 15.

Black-tailed Deer – Pysht Cluster: Biologist Loafman was the lead for field investigations while Biologists McMillan and Ament were on the Outer Coast conducting sea otter surveys all week.

Fawn Collaring: One fawn collared this week.

One doe from the Pysht Cluster had not yet dropped her VIT. On July 18 the VIT alert finally happened for this remaining doe. Biologist Loafman (with two volunteers) responded to the VIT alert and captured and collared a single fawn. The search was brief after Loafman got a visual of the doe approximately 100 feet from the trail.

Collared fawn observed hiding during the third search attempt to find a twin fawn.