

# Wildlife Program

Week of July 22-28, 2013

## **SCIENCE DIVISION**

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

**Arid Lands Initiative (ALI):** Mike Schroeder participated in an Arid Lands Initiative meeting on July 25, 2013. Attendees included Elizabeth Rodrick (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife retired), Sonia Hall (Independent), Leslie Robb (Independent), John Gamon (Department of Natural Resources – Heritage), Jessica Gonzales (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Madeline Steele (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Joanne P. Schuett-Hames (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), Chuck Warner (The Nature Conservancy), Khem So (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Michael Schindel (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Chris Sheridan (Bureau of Land Management), and Tom Miewald (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). We had a great discussion about Marxan and the modeling effort for shrubsteppe integrity in the Columbia Plateau. We considered some of the alternate assumptions such as the importance of fragment size. We also talked about level 2 Ecological Integrity Assessments (EIA) since these will be used to ground truth the Marxan models. Their EIA effort is very compatible with the EIA effort currently underway on wildlife areas with the aid of citizen science. Rex Crawford (Department of Natural Resources – Heritage) and Joe Rocchio (Department of Natural Resources – Heritage) helped design the protocols.

**Publications:** Matt Vander Haegen, Gene Orth (Science Division), and Mary Linders (Diversity) are coauthors on a paper in the current issue of the Journal of Wildlife Management. The paper, “Survival and causes of mortality in a northern population of western gray squirrels,” provides the first quantitative assessment of annual and seasonal survival for this species and is based on seven years of intensive research in Klickitat County. The paper also presents an assessment of the role that notoedric mange may play in this population and how mange outbreaks may be influenced by weather and squirrel behavior. Contact Matt Vander Haegen if you'd like a copy of the paper.

## **REGION 1**

### **Wolf Management**

**District 1:** Conflict Specialist Shepherd and Officer Kirsch investigated and confirmed a depredation of a calf in the Wedge area of Stevens County. A depredation report was completed. Specialist Shepherd and a contract range rider patrolled the McKinley Mountain area of the Wedge with spotlights and audio deterrent devices overnight.

Specialist Shepherd, District Biologist Base, and a contract range rider attended the Stevens County Wildlife Advisory Committee meeting. Wolves were discussed. Specialist Shepherd and

Private Lands Technician Bendixen visited and observed wolf locations in the Tiger Hill grazing allotment to determine if cattle were present at the locations. Specialist Shepherd and Assistant District Biologist Prince checked remote cameras in Ferry County. No wolves were detected. Specialist Shepherd discussed wolf-cattle issues with several ranchers in the Smackout wolf pack territory and in the Wedge area. Specialist Shepherd initiated a volunteer range rider program using local riders to be put on an on-call list.

**District 3:** Mountain Quail Tech Heimgartner reported seeing a single wolf in upper drainage of Charley Creek. District Biologist Wik checked trail cams in general area, but no wolf activity detected; however, one camera was stolen and one had the memory card removed. No further reports of wolf sightings from near Table Rock, but we did receive reports of possible wolf scat from the area.

Assistant District Biologist Vekasy checked trail cam in Maloney Mountain area, lots of whitetails and a bear, but no wolf activity. Roads are dusty and good for tracking; lots of bear, coyote, deer and elk tracks, no wolf activity to report. Conflict Specialist Rasley met with one cattleman in Asotin County regarding a lone wolf that was sighted crossing the road and entering into the cattleman's cows on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands. The cattleman immediately deployed his range rider per our Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement contract and "is currently on site for the next four to five days." He really appreciated the phone call as well.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**



**Loon Nesting Activity:** Assistant District Biologist Prince returned to Big Meadow Lake on July 24 to monitor common loon nesting activity. Two loons were observed with one chick (see photo). The chick was only a few days old and was seen riding on its parent's back. This is the latest hatch date recorded for common loons in northeastern Washington. The chick will be monitored on a weekly basis to determine survival.

***Adult common loon and chick observed at Big Meadow Lake on July 26, 2013.***

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**2013 Status and Trends Reports:** Wildlife Biologists in all three Districts completed their Status and Trends Reports. This concludes several weeks of data analysis and report writing.

Status and Trends Reports fulfill Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) reporting requirements to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for federal aid moneys and are used by hunters and other parties interested in big game species.

**Hunting Prospects for 2013:** Wildlife biologists and Private Lands biologists also completed and submitted a write-up of the 2013 Hunting Prospects. The Hunting Prospects publication is generally made available to the public within a few weeks of the beginning of traditional fall hunting seasons.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Swimmers at boat launch sites:** Access Manager Young has encountered swimmers blocking launches at access sites. He contacted headquarters to ask whether "No Swimming" signs are available to post at these locations.



*Swimmers at Silver Lake launch site blocking boat launches. Diamond Lake also experienced the same problem.*

### **Private Lands/Access**

**New Feel Free to Hunt (FFTH) Property in Whitman County:** Biologist Lewis met with a landowner interested in the Voluntary Public Access (VPA) program. The landowner owns ground in the Stuart canyon area and will be signing up approximately 1,000 acres in the VPA program as FFTH. This is in addition to several other properties recently contracted in the Steptoe and Stuart Canyon area. Lewis has enrolled approximately 6,000 acres in the area with properties going into Feel Free to Hunt and Hunt by Reservation.



*New Feel Free to Hunt property in Stuart Canyon.*

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

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Winter Canola seeding:** Technician Debby Flynn spent the majority of her work week preparing and seeding approximately 25 acres to Roundup Ready winter canola in an old agricultural field on Smoothing Iron Ridge. The canola was planted as a lure crop to keep elk on the wildlife area and away from private agricultural fields in the Cloverland area. Preparing the field involved early spring plowing, disking, cultivating, packing and seeding which was completed Thursday morning. Conflict Specialist Scott Rasely and farmers in the Cloverland area have high support for the project. Now we'll see how it grows!



***Debby Flynn seeded winter canola on Smoothing Iron Ridge using our 6420 tractor and 10' Great Plains Seed drill.***



*Recently seeded winter canola at Smoothing Iron Ridge completed by Debby Flynn.*

## **REGION 2**

### **Wolves**

Nothing to report.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Releases of Pygmy Rabbits:** Research Scientist Penny Becker, graduate student Steph DeMay, Scientific Technician Brooks Kohli, and a team of staff and volunteers worked on July 23 to capture and release pygmy rabbit kits from the Dormaier breeding enclosure to the wild at Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area. Although it was suspected that this release would be the last because of breeding season finishing, the Dormaier enclosure still produced a large number of kits, including some that were less than two weeks post-emergence from the natal burrow. Twenty-five kits were caught this week, of which 21 were released. As of now, 222 kits have been released this season. Another release will be performed next week. The released kits will continue to be monitored with radio telemetry until their glue-on transmitters fall off so that we can track movements post-release.

**Caspian Tern:** Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei accompanied Wildlife Area Technician, Carpenter at the Frenchmen Ponds Restricted Access Area to determine forage availability for

Caspian Terns. Finger, Duvuvuei, and Carpenter sampled fish with dip nets to attempt to determine whether species other than carp had spawned. A few sculpin and what appeared to be centrarchids (most slipped through mesh of the net) were captured as well as a new, apparently younger cohort of fingerling carp. One Caspian tern was observed foraging over these ponds but the nesting season is nearly over on Goose Island. RealTime Research reported a high count of 313 active nests this year. Other important observations from RealTime were a complete failure of the ring-billed gull colony on Goose Island, Banks Lake and a large abandonment of the double crested cormorant colony on North Potholes Reserve. However, herons and egrets nesting adjacent to the cormorants appear to have been unaffected. The portion of the cormorant colony that abandoned was within the center of the rookery, thus human disturbance is unlikely.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Fire:** A fire started Saturday in Chelan County along the Colockum Road and Tarpiscan Canyon. Winds, with gusts up to 30 mph, drove the fire to over 3,500 acres on Saturday and increased it to a reported 10,000+ acres on Sunday. The fires surrounded the Colockum Wildlife headquarters and the hay barn and corral was lost. Five residences were lost to flames.

**North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team:** Restoration Specialist Guse and Scotch Creek Technician Dupont refined prescribed fire burn unit boundaries and discussed logistics for two prescribed fires on the Chesaw Wildlife Area scheduled for this fall. The primary objective for both burns is to stimulate aspen regeneration, and the clones should respond quickly to a fire disturbance by sending up new shoots. With Dupont's input and knowledge of the area, Guse has collected enough information to begin writing the burn plans and define the actual environment parameters in the prescription, along with the needed resources to meet objectives and control the fire. The two burn units span over 28 acres.



*Remnants of a decadent aspen clone located on the Chesaw Wildlife Area that will be stimulated with a prescribed fire this fall.*

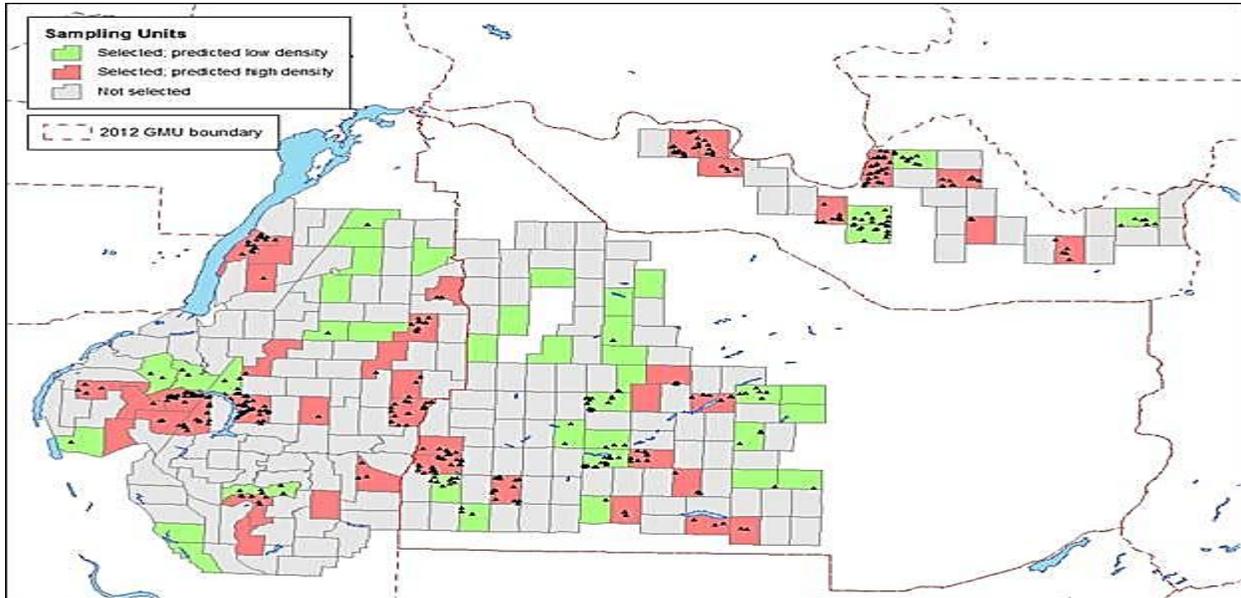
**Obanion fish habitat project:** With dewatering and fish removal complete, the Obanion project is well underway. Contractors are moving having completed the first few instream structures and started several others.



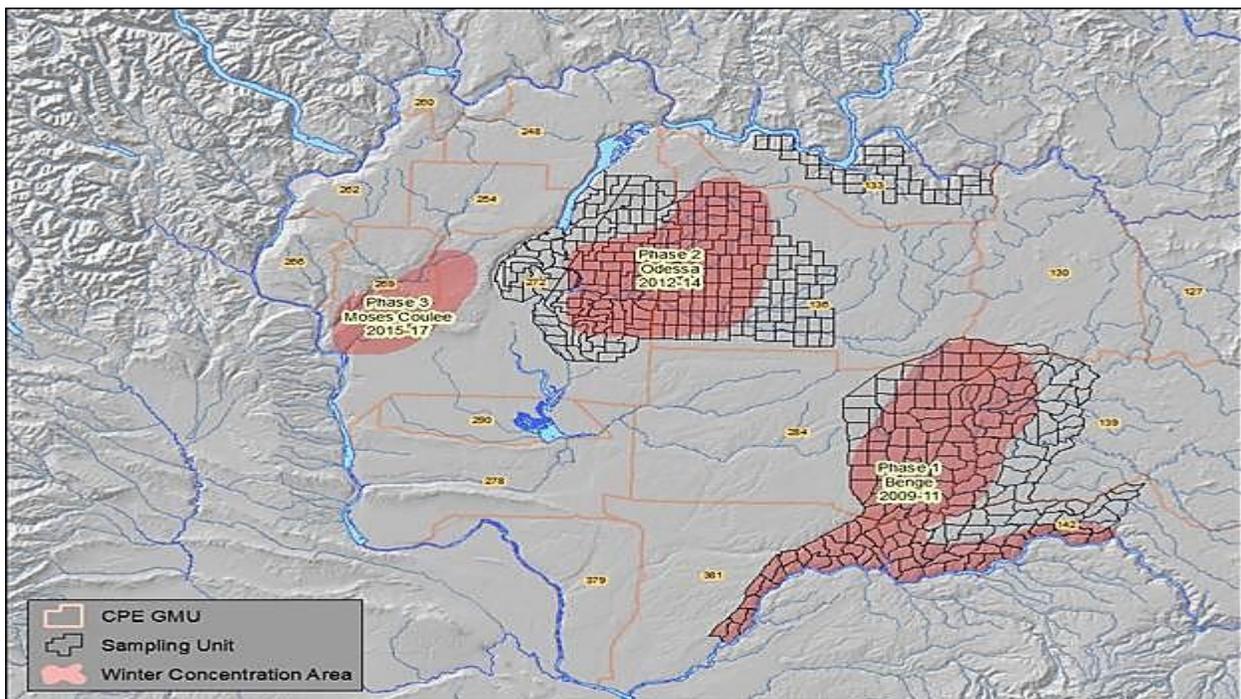
**GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES**

**Wildlife Management**

**Mule Deer:** Biologist Finger continued writing a summary report for phase 2 of the Columbia Plateau Cooperative Mule Deer Surveys. Phase 2 covers a migratory mule deer herd that occurs primarily in Lincoln and northern Grant counties. Biologist Duvuvuei began familiarizing himself with the Phase 2 Mule Deer Survey report.



*Above: Columbia Plateau Ecoregion mule deer survey effort, Phase 2 sampling units and mule deer group observations (black triangles). Below: Columbia Plateau Ecoregion mule deer survey effort.*



## Wildlife Areas

**Buzzard Lake Access Improvement:** Spent a day at Buzzard Lake with a volunteer from Okanogan fly club. They ordered three loads of gravel. DFW donated a tractor from the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area and the access program donated rental of a small excavator for moving barrier rock and leveling the parking area. The access program also donated 10 yards of gravel; we leveled the road with the excavator and tractor in prep for the gravel being delivered and spread over roadway bed. We moved barrier rock to delineate the parking area and roads that are off limits to the public. This project provided the road and boat launch parking area with much needed upgrades that will benefit public use.

**Bear Creek Campground Access Renovation:** Spent two days at Bear Creek campground #1 tearing down old fiberglass toilets. We borrowed a backhoe from the wildlife area to excavate holes and cave in the old vault. The backhoe was a little underpowered for breaking up concrete vaults which caused the job to take longer than necessary. A newer backhoe with increased power would be beneficial for increasing efficiency in jobs of this nature. In total, three fiberglass toilets were taken to the landfill, vaults were caved in and 20 yards of gravel was delivered to fill any voids on the landscape. These toilets have needed dismantling for years but were not due to a lack of resources. There is still one cement vault toilet left in the campground, which should suffice as most campers have self-contained units.

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

## Wildlife Areas

**Interesting Wildlife Observation:** On Monday morning Natural Resource Technician Hastings saw this fellow making his way across the wheat field a quarter-mile south of the Sagebrush Flat Unit:



*Photo by Angel Hastings*

**Okanogan Highlands Alliance field trip:** On Saturday, July 20 Tom and Gina McCoy gave a watershed and stream processes, and riparian ecology presentation to the Okanogan Highlands Alliance. Attendance was better than expected given temperatures in the high 90s. Considering that the tour was planned for three hours, but at the request of the group lasted in excess of five hours, we believe the presentation was very well received. This was an engaged and enthusiastic group, and given the weather, real troopers.



## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Dove Banding:** Biologist Bernatowicz banded doves for three days in District 8. The total for the season is 243 (211 HY, 32 AHY) doves banded. The capture rate is above average, but few adults have been encountered. Dove numbers dropped off dramatically mid-week and many were already banded, so traps were pulled. No tally was made, but over 50 Eurasian collared doves have been caught.

Biologist Gregory continued trapping mourning doves in District 4 at the Ringold Hatchery. So far, 71 birds have been banded in five days of trapping. Approximately one-third of the birds have been adults.



*Six of the 50+ Eurasian collared doves caught in 2013.*

### Wildlife Areas

**Colockum Tarps Fire:** A wildland fire started Saturday morning on private land near the junction of Tarpiscan and Colockum Pass roads. Approximately 10 hours later, the fire descended upon the Colockum Wildlife Area headquarters burning the barn and all of its contents. Materials lost from the fire include the Wildlife area's entire cache of herbicide, signage, and wooden fence posts. As of Sunday morning the fire had grown to 3,500 acres, fed by gusty winds from the north. The fire was reported to be at Cape Horn and was expected to reach West Bar by Sunday evening.



*Colockum Wildlife Area headquarters during the Colockum Tarps Fire on July 27, 2013.*



*Colockum Wildlife Area headquarters during the Colockum Tarps Fire on July 27, 2013.*

## **REGION 4**

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

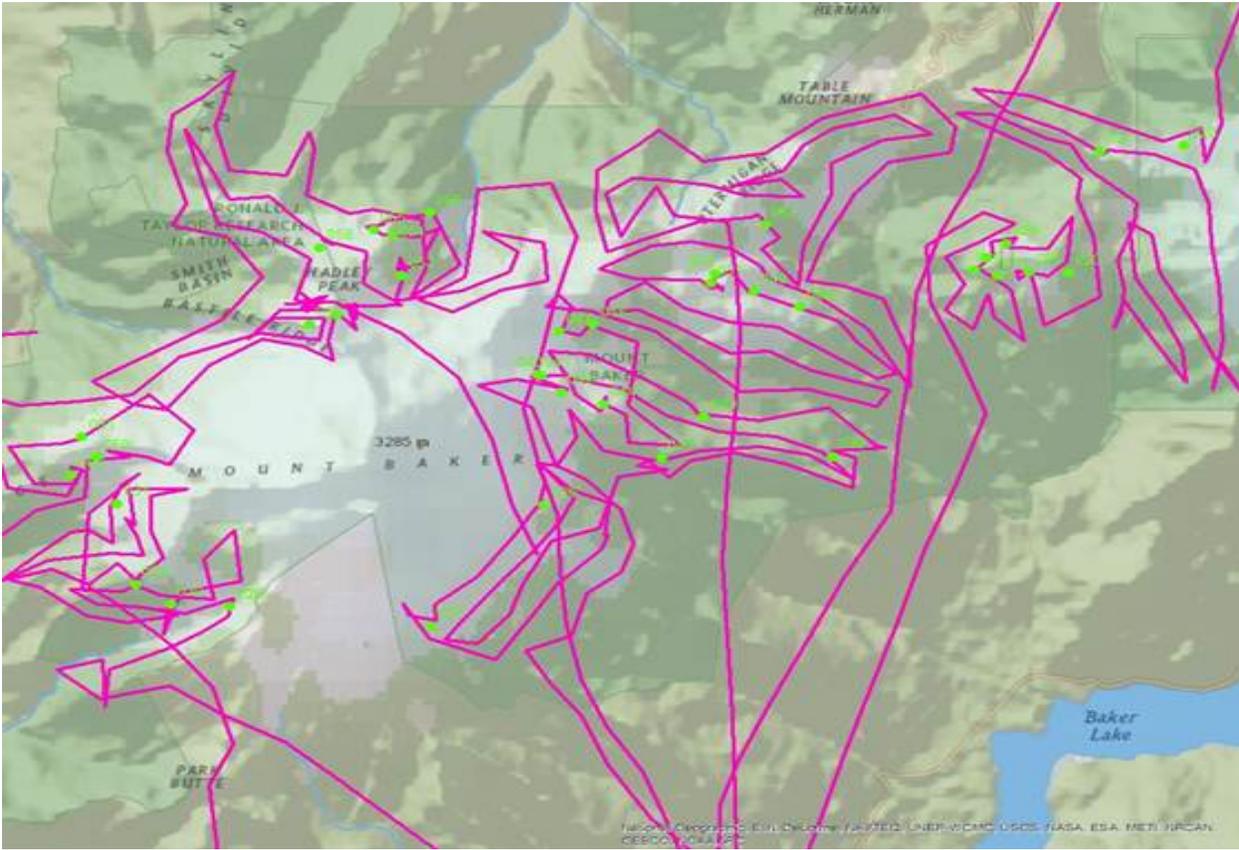
#### **Wildlife Management**

**Darrington Ranger District Mountain goat Surveys:** Biologists Milner and Cyra completed two days of helicopter surveys to count Mountain Goats in the Darrington Ranger District of the Mount Baker/Snoqualmie National Forest. Flights were flown by pilot Jess Hagerman of Northwest Helicopter Service. On day one, WDFW Section Lead Rich Harris joined the survey, and on day two, Sauk Suiattle tribal Biologist Emily Wirtz completed the team. Data summaries will take place soon.

**Mount Baker Mountain Goat Surveys:** Biologist Danilson, Section Manager Harris, and representatives from the Point Elliott Treaty Tribes conducted mountain goat surveys in the Mount Baker area from July 23-24. In addition to the standard Mount Baker survey units, additional surveys were conducted north of Mount Baker including Church Mountain, Tommyhoi Peak, Mount Larrabee, American Border Peak, and Mount Sefrit. Additionally, a brief survey of the Twin Sisters Ranger, to the west of Mount Baker was also conducted. A total of 370 goats were observed during the two mornings of flying. The greatest concentration of goats was observed on north side of Mount Baker in Chowder Ridge, Coleman Pinnacle and Lava Divide survey units. 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.



*Above: A group of mountain goats counted during the Mount Baker goat survey. Below: The flight track log and locations of mountain goat groups observed in the Mount Baker area.*



**State Listed Common Loon Efforts:** Biologist Smith checked on the active loon territory at Calligan Lake. No chick was seen, however, the adult pair continues to exhibit behavior indicative of care for chicks. The chick (if present) is estimated to be about 4 weeks old. Further efforts will be required to confirm suspected chick.



*View of the loon platform nest at Calligan Lake with the remnants of one hatched egg (foreground) and one non-viable egg (back).*

**Snoqualmie Valley Bat Survey:** Biologist Smith participated in a bat survey conducted by Bats Northwest at the Cherry Valley Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. The agency provided a couple of new detectors for the group to test.

**Band-tailed Pigeon Study/Survey:** Biologist S. Anderson continued to track breeding band-tailed pigeons. Anderson is mapping breeding territories and beginning to search for new mineral spring sites. Biologist Milner completed the annual band-tailed pigeon survey at Warm Beach. Sixty birds were counted at the site. Data have been submitted to Olympia.

**Avian Mortality:** Biologist DeBruyn dealt with a die-off of Canada Geese at a local refinery. The geese are in a catchment basin in accumulated rainwater. At least four geese have died and several others appeared sick. Four carcasses were retrieved for shipment to the avian health center in Madison, Wisconsin for necropsy.

**Highway 20 Elk Crossing Group:** Biologist DeBruyn worked at putting together a group of people interested in issues related to elk crossing Highway 20 in the Skagit Valley. So far representatives of three tribes, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Washington State Patrol (WSP) and members of the public have expressed interest. The group will work under the auspices of a larger work group on elk issues that are being formed.

**American Pika Lowland Survey:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra completed the third survey for American Pika at a low-elevation naval installation. This survey concentrated on more natural talus associated with a road cut, and a single Pika was heard and observed. Navy staff had observed and photographed an American Pika at the valley bottom at an anthropomorphic site in 2009, 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. The latest observation is about 1,000 feet higher in elevation. Listening stations have been established and surveyed for in appropriate habitat, and ground searches for evidence of American Pika sign were completed in the historic following established national survey guidelines. While the USFWS declined to list the American Pika under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), 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 has been seen, heard, nor sign observed near the 2009 sighting on two previous visits. Additional surveys to remaining habitat patches will continue.



*American Pika Survey: Location of original 2009 sighting.*



*American Pika Survey: A single Pika was observed in a new, separate location.*

## **Wildlife Areas**

### **Skagit Agricultural Enhancement and Lease Program**

**Island Unit:** Natural Resources Specialist (NRS) Greg Meis and Natural Resource Tech (NRT) Curran Cosgrove completed planting the Island Unit. NRT Cosgrove continued to monitor field drainage conditions. Wildlife Area staff and volunteers ferried equipment and supplies to the Island this week in preparation for mowing of dikes and fields.

**Samish Unit:** Natural Resource Tech Cosgrove mowed problem weed areas on the Samish Unit to improve habitat and hunter access conditions.

**Lake Terrell Dam Adjustment:** Manager Kessler coordinated with the Whatcom Conservation District on the Lake Terrell Dam. New measurements were taken to determine the cubic feet per second of water passing through the bypass valve. The water being passed will keep Terrell Creek charged throughout the summer. Natural Resource Tech Deyo worked with the Conservation District biologist to clear debris from the bypass valve.

**Nooksack Coordination Meeting:** Manager Kessler attended a coordination meeting with other DFW managers working on the Lower Nooksack Project. This project works to accomplish long term goals of restoring the lower Nooksack River estuary.

**Ebey Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm completed parking lot maintenance at the East lot under the trestle. Manager Boehm noticed graffiti on the newly placed Discover Pass Required sign and will replace the sign. The recently planted barley fields have grown in nicely despite the lack of rainfall in July.

**Cherry Valley Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with representatives from the NW Retriever Club to discuss the newly issued permit for dog trials planned for August 2-4. The recently mowed fields have grown in with new grass and are in “great shape” for the event. The Club is excited to return to Cherry Valley and continues to offer volunteer support to keep the area in good condition for dog training and other public-use activities.

**Stillwater Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued mowing at the Stillwater Unit this week with support from volunteers. A 20-acre field that was grown over by blackberry, reed canary grass and alder was targeted for extensive mowing. Approximately 100 acres of fields will receive various mowing treatments as well as the parking lots and access roads.

**Spencer Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm conducted trail maintenance at the Spencer Island Unit this week. The trail is now cleared for walking and viewing wildlife all the way to the breach in the dike. Manager Boehm noted that the City of Everett has a construction project near the site, limiting public access to the unit.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Spring Bear Follow Up Meeting:** Biologist Danilson and Technician Otto met with foresters from Washington Department of Natural Resources to deliver copies of key agreement for a hunter who lost a DNR gate key during the bear hunt last spring. Potential changes to administering the keys for this hunt were discussed.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**North Cascades Elk Management Group:** The facilitation committee emailed invitations for the first North Cascades Elk Management Work Group meeting on August 22. The Work Group will consist of local volunteers and organization representatives who will work on important issues identified at the June 26 public meeting related to the elk herd. The facilitation committee also sent an answer sheet to the questions submitted at the June 26 meeting, as well as a sheet of all recorded suggestions and comments.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Intalco Unit 3D Archery Target Event:** The Custer Sportsmen’s Club held a weekend 3D Archery Target event on the Intalco Unit.

**Tennant Lake Beaver Deceiver Pipe:** Natural Resource Tech Deyo checked the new beaver deceiver pipe on the Tennant Lake Unit. The pipe was working exactly as planned, and the beavers have not yet done anything to it.

**British Petroleum (BP) Safety Zone:** Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo surveyed onsite and planned out the new Safety Zone extension on the BP Unit. BP is building a new railroad offloading loop south of Grandview Rd. Due to the new loop the Safety Zone along Grandview Road will be extended to the eastern edge of the property.

**Lake Terrell & Intalco Units Mowing:** Natural Resource Tech Deyo mowed paths in fields at the Lake Terrell and Intalco units.

**Leque Island Groundwater Study Review:** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) posted three additional documents on their project webpage regarding the review of the Leque Island groundwater study, including 1) the EPA review of the PGG Project evaluation, 2) an EPA response to comments received on the Project, and 3) the PGG report including supplemental model runs for the Project in response to issues raised by EPA and other stakeholders. All of these documents can be found at: [http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/water.nsf/Sole+Source+Aquifers/camano\\_island](http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/water.nsf/Sole+Source+Aquifers/camano_island).

Projects Coordinator Brokaw sent an update email to the “Leque Island Stakeholders and Interested Parties email list” to direct subscribers to EPA’s webpage. To be added to the email list, please contact [Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov).

**Stillwater Revetment Removal Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Lands Agent Iris gathered final materials from Wild Fish Conservancy to execute the Right of Entry permit to work on WDFW lands. Mobilization and site prep work are scheduled to begin on the week of July 29.

**Samish W-90 and Welts Restoration Projects:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Wildlife Area Manager Rotton met to discuss outreach needs for potential future wetland restoration projects at the two Samish Units in the Skagit Wildlife Area. WDFW will host an Open House style meeting for the Welts project on August 28 at the Padilla Bay Center and will begin advertising and sending out invites this week.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Landowner Meetings:** Natural Resource Tech (NRT) Otto met with multiple landowners going over a variety of topics involving the upcoming waterfowl season. All that were contacted to date are willing to go back into agreement for this season. Otto continued inventory of WQH sites checking field and crop conditions and anticipated harvest times.

**DNR Meeting:** NRT Otto and Biologist Danilson met with foresters from the Sedro Wooley DNR office to go over issues from the 2013 spring bear hunt and bounce ideas off each other for next year’s hunt. Future discussions will be had as each agency gets directives from their senior management groups.

**Samish Lake Access Redevelopment Project:** The Samish Lake Access Redevelopment Project was originally funded through a competitive process through Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) Boating Facilities Program in 2008. Funding was redirected to State Parks for that category due to the fiscal crisis at that time. The Samish Lake Project proposal was redesigned, resubmitted and funded in 2011. The project included renovation of the existing primitive facility by bringing the site up to expected standards. It replaces a failing boat ramp with an expanded solid construction ramp along with providing a new ADA accessible boarding ramp, restroom and disabled parking. The entire site is now paved, and designated parking will be established to provide greater efficiency for boaters. Major construction is now completed and the site is open to the public for use after August 1, 2013.



*The newly completed Samish Lake Access Site includes an expanded solid construction boat ramp along with new ADA accessible boarding ramp, restroom and disabled parking.*



**Bow Hill Pheasant Parking:** Natural Resource Tech Otto contacted the land tenant where last year's parking was. They are willing to allow the site parking again this year. Otto and Biologist Milner will follow up with a CAPS agreement with the landowner this week. Otto surveyed the parking site and will schedule time for maintenance and installation of signage, reader boards, and parking stalls. While driving the entire site, Otto observed six different signs posted alongside the road opposing this site as a pheasant release area.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Addressing Agricultural Damage by Elk:** Biologist Danilson and Sergeant Phillips met with several landowners in the Skagit River Valley to discuss ongoing elk damage to agricultural crops. Landowner permits were issued to several landowners and arrangements were made to assign master hunters to these properties. Biologist Danilson met with the volunteer master hunter coordinator to discuss logistics for the upcoming season. Several landowners that have had elk overwintering on the property are requesting assistance. By the end of the weekend, several master hunters had been assigned to private properties throughout the Skagit River Valley and one in the Acme area.

**Private Lands/Access**

**Install Reader Board:** Tech Otto installed a reader board in the La Conner private lands space. This board will be used as a daily work plan to help new staff understand the work loads and the time frames needed to accomplish such tasks. It was soon apparent that the one ordered was too small and filled up quickly; another one is on order.

**Wildlife Areas**

**Headquarter Unit:** Manager Rotton had a field visit with Safety Office Coordinator Katherine Waldrop. Katherine reviewed a number of administrative tools available to outline and monitor safety protocols for the Agency. It was a helpful and productive meeting. Katherine will provide a summary of the meeting to follow-up the visit.

**Pheasant Release Program:** Manager Link and Wildlife Program Staff attended the annual Western Washington Pheasant Release program meeting. Wildlife Program Staff provided updates regarding the program releases and replacement land efforts in the Region.

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers, WDFW and various restoration professionals at the Spencer Island Wildlife Area. The team visited various Snohomish estuary sites to view the estuary, dikes and other infrastructure currently in place. Various entities and agencies are coordinating efforts to improve estuary conditions.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Effective Facilitation Training for Wildlife Area Staff:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw, and Wildlife Area Managers Rotton and Kessler joined other statewide Wildlife Area staff to participate in a workshop designed to improve meeting facilitation skills. The workshop primarily focused on how to effectively facilitate meetings with stakeholders and the public.

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

**REGION 5**

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

**Wildlife Management**



**Western Pond Turtle Management:** Biologists Anderson and Holman made preparations for next week's pond turtle habitat enhancement work by Skamania Forest Youth Success crews. The crews will be working to construct and install turtle basking habitat, remove invasive plants, remove unneeded fencing, and participate in the release of some of this year's head-start pond turtles.

***Crew constructs turtle basking platforms during 2012.***

**Hunting Prospects Reports:** Biologists Anderson, Holman, Stephens, Miller, and Bergh worked on the hunting prospects documents for Districts 9 and 10. These documents contain general information about each district, specific information on each game species in terms of previous years' harvest and the upcoming harvest, resources and information for hunting on both

public and private lands, and other hunting-related items of note. Look for these on the department's website in late August.

**Region 5 Status and Trend Reports:** Regional wildlife biologists worked to complete the annual Big Game Status and Trend Reports. Biologist Anderson worked on the bear report, Biologists Miller, Bergh, and Holman worked on the elk report, Biologists Bergh and Holman completed the mountain goat report, and Biologist Holman completed work on this year's report for deer management in Region 5. The annual reports feature sections on 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 located at: <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01451/>.

**Black-tailed Deer Research Project:** Fawn searches associated with the Region 5 portion of the black-tailed deer research project have been discontinued. Study does are still being monitored by a combination of remote (satellite) and field (VHF) methods. The does are located in two study clusters concentrated within the Washougal (568) and Coweeman (550) Game Management Units (GMUs). During 2013, six fawns have been captured in the Washougal cluster. Fawn monitoring is currently being conducted. To date, four 2013 fawns remain alive in the Washougal study cluster and two remain alive in the Coweeman cluster.

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

**Private Lands/Access**

**Olequa Creek:** Access staff Spangler and Rhodes hauled 9,000 pounds of gravel and spread it around the restroom. Spangler and Rhodes also winched a boulder out of the way to make an ADA parking spot alongside the restroom.



*Olequa Creek*

**Kress Lake:** The contractor work has been completed at the Kress Lake access site. The parking lot and site, including the ADA walkway, have been upgraded.



*Kress Lake upgrade*

## **REGION 6**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Western Snowy Plovers:** Biologists Sundstrom and Michaelis conducted weekly monitoring of snowy plover nesting activity at Midway Beach. Four nests remain active and there were no new broods discovered this week. Unfortunately, biologists did not observe any of the broods known to be at Midway Beach. Difficult weather conditions (fog, high winds, blowing sand) were a limiting factor in detection as it is still believed there might be two separate broods at that location. On Friday, Biologist Michaelis reported to Sundstrom that one chick had hatched from Nest #12, but one egg still remained in the nest. Sundstrom checked on the nest on Saturday afternoon after the Graveyard Spit monitoring. The remaining single egg was still being incubated and no hatched chick was found. Both the status of the hatched chick and remaining egg will be monitored next week.

Cooperative working agreements between WDFW, the Shoalwater Bay Tribe, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for monitoring snowy plovers at Graveyard Spit were conducted on Monday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Two broods were monitored while construction continues on the dune barrier. A separated chick from the five chick brood was reunited with its brood mates and tending adult with help from Biologist Sundstrom and Environmental Specialist Pflieger (see photo). The separation of the chick from its brood was believed to have been caused by a series of events not involving the contractor or the construction process. Both broods were accounted for and monitored while a pipe barrier (see photo) was completed to prevent the chicks from entering the construction zone on Saturday morning.



*Rescued chick*



*Pipe barrier*

Lastly, the first naturally seeded Pink Sand Verbena plant was discovered at Graveyard Spit. Other than Leadbetter, this is the only other known location in Washington State that the plant has been found (see photo).

*Pink Sand Verbena plant and flower*



*Fisher Sampling Hex assigned to District 16 Team. Pink is approximate zone not suitable for station location due to roads.*

**Fisher Surveys -- First Fisher Sampling Hex:** The District 16 team was provided a list of several sampling hexes, listed in the order that they need to be sampled. The first hex is located in the McDonald Creek watershed. Locating suitable station locations is complicated because the forested habitats are fragmented and there is a high density of roads, trails and developments. Stations must be 100 meters from roads, and 50-100 meters from trails.

Biologist McMillan created several maps using ArcMAP to specify where stations meet protocol regarding roads, trails and forest canopy. These maps were shared with Biologists Ament and Cullinan for their use to field check and establish station locations. Biologist McMillan will generate maps for the second hex and then begin assisting with station placement and starting the surveys.

Biologist Ament retrieved two cameras, along with photos cards, from Biologist Cullinan last week and provided them to Biologist McMillan. Biologist Ament will be producing a notebook for her use containing all relevant information for the project. This week Biologist Ament will review survey protocol information and maps produced by Biologist McMillan that show possible locations to install monitoring stations. Biologist Ament will be assisting with determining habitat suitability, installing stations, and monitoring stations in upcoming weeks.

**Mazama pocket gophers:** District staff visited the Ridge Racetrack in Mason County, two years after it was cleared. Mazama pocket gophers were found at numerous locations across the property and are expected to expand once the prescribed plantings take hold.

### Wildlife Areas

**Scatter Creek Wildlife Area:** On Sunday, July 28 the red barn at the north unit of Scatter Creek Wildlife Area was destroyed by fire. Beyond the building, a total of 1.5 acres was burned. Nothing was stored in the barn at the time. The cause of the fire is under investigation. In the end, the barn will no longer be an attractive nuisance to vandals.



*Above: Scatter Creek red barn on fire.  
Left: Remaining foundation of red barn  
at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area.*