

# Wildlife Program

Week of June 17-23, 2013

## **REGION 1**

### **Wolf Management**

**District 1:** Assistant District Wildlife Biologist (ADWB) Annemarie Prince worked with a retired Colville National Forest employee in deploying self-activated cameras within the Ruby Creek area of Game Management Unit (GMU) 117 to document wolves in the area. Documentation of new wolf packs is a priority in the District and cameras have been deployed in other areas with reported wolf activity, but unconfirmed wolf packs. Cameras will be checked on a regular basis and all species captured with photos will be recorded.

ADWB Prince and District Wildlife Biologist Dana Base checked self-activated cameras deployed within GMU 105. The cameras were set out last week in an effort to document wolves and/or grizzly bears in the area. Animals “captured” on the cameras included a red squirrel, coyote, white-tailed deer, and bobcat. Cameras were reset and left in the field.

Conflict Specialists Shepherd and Rasley participated in the Wood River Wolf Project Workshop and Field Demonstration in Ketchum, Idaho. The agenda included forensics, guard dogs, carcass disposal, adaptive management, an overview of predator deterrents, and a field demonstration session.

Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed patrolling the Wedge with Technician Bendixen who spent time looking for sign of wolves and injured cattle in the Churchill and Hope grazing allotment on the Colville National Forest. Bendixen and Shepherd talked about the need to monitor an area in northern Stevens County where a livestock owner was concerned about his cattle that are grazing in an adjoining leased allotment to his property. His concern is that he has heard wolves howling mostly at night in the vicinity of his cattle. He also stated that his cattle are bunching up at lower elevations near the corrals and not going up to graze in the mountain meadows.

Bendixen spent two days canvassing the roads and trails using an electronic howler and looking for wolf signs (tracks or scat), but was unable to locate any although he did find signs of bear and cougar. On the first day Bendixen came across several groups of cows within two miles of the corrals then on the second day the groups had moved a couple miles further away from the corrals and a thousand feet higher in elevation. Bendixen reported his findings to Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jay Shepherd, and Scott Becker will continue monitoring the area with cameras.

Specialist Shepherd received a call from a cattle producer in the Smackout wolf territory concerning a dead yearling. Specialist Shepherd called Sargent Taylor and she and Officers Anderson and Parkert determined the yearling had in fact not died from predation of any kind

which is what the producer also had determined before he contacted WDFW. The yearling was surrounded with fladry until the carcass could be removed.

Specialist Shepherd produced maps of Smackout wolf locations and discussed them with officers, a range rider, and a rancher throughout the week.

Specialist Shepherd discussed the Wedge wolf situation and the Churchill grazing allotment with Regional Director Pozzanghera. Conflict Specialist Shepherd communicated with allotment holders in the Wedge.

**District 3:** No wolf news to report.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Golden Eagle Survey:** Biologist Ferguson with Biologist Ella Rowan conducted Golden Eagle productivity aerial survey and found only one 4½ week old nestling out of what appeared to be four occupied nests in February.



***Young 4 ½ week old Golden Eagle nestling observed in Lincoln County.***

**Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep Initiative:** District Biologist (DB) Wik and ADB Vekasy attended the HCI meeting in Lewiston to discuss issues with Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep herds and future directions of research and management actions. Numerous graduate students and Washington State University (WSU) staff presented recent research findings on bighorn sheep movements, connectivity of herds, and disease issues. A follow-up meeting was scheduled for

July to continue discussing future objectives of the project and how to better disseminate all of the important research findings to date.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Grouse tracking at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA):** Volunteer Dr. Kim Thorburn and seasonal WDFW Tracker Nancy Williams were each busy this week at SLWA and vicinity. They both slogged through the very rainy period early in the week, with wet ground and vegetation, and unseasonably low temperatures. On June 18, Thorburn and Williams conducted a 50-day brood flush on a collared sage hen, and found her with three chicks, one a bit larger than the other two. This is the first sage hen with a live radio to pull off two consecutive years of a brood at 50 days. She seems to have hit on a successful recipe: nesting in the same general area both years and then moving the broods after hatching in pretty much the same directions.

**Asotin, WA – Silene Surveys:** Biologist Woodall assisted WSU technicians by providing them with a vehicle for accessing the Smoothing Iron Area this week to conduct the first of two visits to monitor the federally threatened plant species Spalding’s catchfly (Silene). The two- student survey team utilized the Smoothing Iron Ranch House for cooking and sleeping as well. The survey team has offered to assist next week with a trip to the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area Grouse Flats Unit for another look for any possible rare plant species.

## **REGION 2**

### **Wolves**

**Lookout Wolves:** The trapping effort to deploy radio collars in the Lookout Pack wrapped up last week with no captures. Biologist Fitkin conducted a very limited howling in an attempt to verify pups, but received no responses. A more extensive howling effort will be undertaken in the next couple of weeks, and a possible additional trapping attempt is scheduled for later in the summer. In the meantime, we continue to get wolves on remote cameras.



**Depredation Response:** Biologist Fitkin and Enforcement Officers Treser and Day responded to a possible depredation of a small calf on a ranch between Twisp and Carlton in the Methow Valley. Our investigation of the half-eaten carcass concluded that a predator was responsible for the mortality; however, tracking conditions were very poor and we found no sign of wild carnivores in the vicinity of the kill. In addition, the limited amount of diagnostic trauma on the carcass precluded a definitive determination of the species responsible, but what evidence did exist was most consistent with cougar predation.

In an unrelated case, Biologist Heinlen assisted Officer Christensen with a reported wolf depredation. The reporting party stated one wolf was observed depredating one chicken. A group of feathers and multiple small (2.5" x 3") canine tracks were the only evidence found on site. These tracks are smaller than the range of a wolf. No other sightings or incidences have been reported.

**Wenatchee Wolves:** No significant wolf activity to report. Observations of wolves in the Wenatchee area have dropped off with the movements of deer and elk onto calving areas. Biologist Volsen is working with Section Manager Simek to extend the agreement with the Hurd Ranch LLC to include a range rider program.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Golden Eagle Management:** WDFW Biologists Heinlen, Fitkin and Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT) Biologist Piccinini conducted a joint helicopter survey for Golden Eagle productivity throughout the Okanogan Valley and the western portion of the Colville Confederated Tribes. Seven Golden Eagle juveniles, from 4 weeks to 8 weeks of age, were observed during this flight. To date, WDFW and the CCT surveys have documented 14 juvenile golden eagles as part of the state-wide comprehensive golden eagle monitoring effort.



***Golden Eagle chicks – Photo by Jeff Heinlen***

**Common Loon Management:** Biologist Heinlen monitored the Lost, Bonaparte, and Crawfish Lakes as they are the lakes with Common Loons nesting this year. Lost Lake was found to have produced two chicks, Bonaparte produced one chick and no chicks were observed on Crawfish Lake.



*Common Loons on Bonaparte Lake (left) and Lost Lake (right) – Photos by Jeff Heinlen*

**Methow Wetland/Beaver Restoration Project:** This week Biologist Fitkin assisted the seasonal crew and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) staff with the second beaver release of the season in a very promising site in Upper Falls Creek. We placed an unrelated, male-female adult pair in a new home in a previously unoccupied sub-drainage. Project staff will continue to monitor this site for establishment into the fall.



*Beaver transplant – Photo by Scott Fitkin*

## Private Lands/Access

**Jackrabbit Surveys:** Biologist Dougherty spent time contacting landowners to allow access in order to conduct jackrabbit surveys. Biologist Dougherty called approximately eight landowners and was successful getting in touch with four, all of which allowed WDFW access to the property after discussing the purpose of the project. All landowners have stated that they haven't seen jackrabbits in over 30 years, but WDFW was welcome to conduct pellet surveys. Additionally, Biologist Dougherty assisted Biologist Duvuvuei with conducting some jackrabbit surveys in Adams County.

**Pygmy Rabbit Safe Harbor Agreements:** Biologist Wisniewski contacted landowners in the vicinity of the Beezley Hills release site and discussed Safe Harbor Agreements for Columbia Basin Pygmy Rabbits and set-up meetings. Have confirmed one landowner's cooperation and hopefully will have the largest landowner adjacent to the release site signed up by next week.

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

### Wildlife Management

**Canada Goose:** Biologists Gallie and Volsen assisted the waterfowl team with the annual goose banding at Rock Island Golf Course and Walla Walla Park, along the Columbia River within and to the south of Wenatchee. Banding efforts provide information on dispersal, harvest rate, and migratory behavior of what is considered local resident geese (however, previous year's bands have been harvested throughout the Pacific Flyway). We were aided by numerous volunteers from the Wenatchee Sportsman's Association, local Ducks Unlimited, and the Kayak and Paddle Club. Unfortunately, the geese were uncooperative and proved difficult to round up, probably due to many of the adults having been through this before. We captured a total of 132 geese, with 94 being newly banded. This is about one-third of the usual productivity. Plans were discussed to select different locations for future captures.



**Moose:** An injured moose was euthanized early in June and placed on the Methow Wildlife Area with a trail camera to document scavenging. Thus far we have had a bear, coyotes, ravens and vultures in the carcass.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Environmental Education:** Biologist Fitkin participated as a guest lecturer in Dr. Dan Beck's (Central WA University) field course on wildlife techniques conducted in part in the Methow Valley. For this portion of the course, topics included bear and wolf trapping, bear hair-snagging and wolf surveying via howling transect. The session culminated in an evening group howl that likely confused/alarmed anything within earshot, although nearby campers took it in stride and provided the only verifiable response.



*Central Washington University field techniques class – Photo by Dan Beck*

**Wildlife Areas**

**Frenchmen Ponds Alternative Tern Feeding Project:** Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei conducted point count surveys to monitor water bird and songbird use of the Frenchmen Ponds Project. They recorded the presence of all avian species at each survey point and noted all duck broods that were sighted. They also sampled for fish and aquatic invertebrates to document species presence in various ponds. The west cells (cells 1, 2, and 3) are continually occupied by about 10 white pelicans, about 20 common egrets, and a dozen forester's terns. The occasional Caspian tern and a few black terns are also regular visitors to this area where rainbow trout fry have been planted.



*American white pelicans and common egrets observed at the Frenchmen Ponds Project.*

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Tieton Bighorn Sheep:** Biologist Bernatowicz continued checking cameras and looking for bighorn sheep in the Tieton herd area. No animals or sign have been found in over three weeks. Posters requesting information on any bighorn sheep sightings in the area have been placed in U.S. Forest Service (USFS) campgrounds and on the Wildlife Area.

Biologist Bernatowicz also checked Cleman Mountain for any signs of pneumonia in lambs. All Cleman Mountain sheep appeared healthy. The historic lamb/nursery area in Waterworks Canyon was surveyed first. It seems that the bighorns had been spending little time in Waterworks, possibly due to fairly heavy hiking traffic. The hiking trails were well used and maintained. Over 100 sheep were found concentrated in Sanford Canyon.

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP):** It was a busy RMAP week on the LT Murray Wildlife Area. The Yakima Capital and Asset Management Program (CAMP) crew continued road maintenance work on Hutchins and Murray Roads, as well as preparations for the culvert removal and installation work which will be completed next week. Biologist Wayne Hunt, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Don Hand, and two members of the Department of Natural Resource's (DNR) Blasting Crew went into a remote portion of the Shadow Creek area in the northwest corner of the LT Murray Wildlife Area on Wednesday. They blasted out an old plugged culvert with explosives, clearing an obstacle in a large tributary to Shadow Creek.



*Before: Concrete-bridge on Manastash Creek (looking north).*



*After: Bridge removed and debris added (looking south).*



*North Fork Manastash after Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP) work.*

**Toothacker Fire:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Don Hand inspected the Army Corps of Engineers Toothacker Habitat Management Unit after a fire started by a freight train went through the area. This site is one of our local pheasant release areas. An alternate site will need to be established for this upcoming season as the whole area was destroyed by the fire.



*The Toothacker pheasant release site was destroyed by a recent fire.*

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Region 2/Region 4 Black Bear Project:** The east-west bear project began in early June and staff has been systematically trapping bears in both the Snoqualmie and Lake Wenatchee areas (two weeks in each region so far). As of June 20, we have captured 17 bears (including several officer assisted captures) and 15 were collared (2 were too small). We have eight bears (six male, two female) on the air in Snoqualmie and seven bears (four male, three female) at Lake Wenatchee, so things are progressing nicely.



***Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Mike Smith with a collared black bear.***

**Bald Eagle Data Management Support:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued work with Biologist Stinson of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) about specifics of a number of Bald Eagle nest and roost locations. While no longer a state or federally listed species, WDFW is responsible for the management of the Bald Eagle site data that USFWS uses in their management of the species in Washington State.

**American Pika:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra completed necessary paperwork for access to naval facilities and continued a GIS habitat survey for American Pika in preparation for beginning a contract from the U.S. Navy for surveys at a low-elevation naval installation. While

the USFWS declined to list the American Pika, it was found that climate change was the leading likely cause of Pika population reductions. With increasing temperatures, low elevation populations while rare, may be at increased risk in the future.

## **Wildlife Areas**

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

**Island Unit:** Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) Greg Meis and Natural Resources Technician (NRT) Curran Cosgrove disked and cultipacked more agricultural fields on the Island Unit. In all there is approximately 66 acres that have been worked up this season.

#### **Headquarters Unit:**

Manager Rotton, NRS Greg Meis and NRT Curran Cosgrove moved the old barge to a new temporary moorage spot in the river south of Headquarters Unit boat launch.



#### **Leque and Samish**

**Units:** NRS Meis and NRT Cosgrove monitored agricultural fields just planted at Leque Unit and the Samish Unit.

**Ebey Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm delivered enough fencing supplies to construct two miles of dual-strand electric fence. Posts were sunk to delineate the fence location. Construction of the fence for the middle section of the Unit will resume next week. Additionally, the lessee completed field preparation for two fields of barley planned for the Unit. Approximately 40 acres of barley is scheduled to be planted next week. Barley will be planted in two locations this year and be retained for wildlife forage and cover.

**Crescent Lake Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm and the Sky Valley Tractor Club continue to mow a portion of their field to provide access for dog training, and have harvested the hay on approximately five acres of the field. They have also begun soil preparation for weed control and planting a new field of wheat to be retained for wildlife.

**Corson Wildlife Preserve:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with long-term volunteers to plant six acres of barley, millet barley and millet for wildlife forage. Additionally, repairs were started on the boardwalk and walking trails, utilizing the posts, planking and gravel that were delivered last week. Nature lovers and bird watchers utilize the trails to gain access to the many habitat features within the Unit.

**Cherry Valley Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with WDFW staff to discuss the final stages of the Fish Passage Project located in the southeast corner of the Unit. Seven raptor perch poles were erected and placed throughout the project area. Additionally, bridge and culvert approaches were examined for placement of the final gravel layer that is planned for next week. The planting areas were treated with herbicide the previous week by staff from WDFW Noxious Weed Program.

**British Petroleum Barley Plantings:** The barley fields at the British Petroleum unit have now been planted by a local farmer. Twenty acres have been planted this year and all will be left for winter wildlife feeding.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**North Cascades Elk Herd Management:** Biologist Danilson spent much of the week preparing for an upcoming public meeting regarding the North Cascades elk herd. Preparations included an internal planning meeting, developing a PowerPoint presentation, and talking to some of the individuals likely to attend the meeting. The public meeting is intended to be a “kick off” for a stakeholder driven process that will help guide future management of the North Cascades elk herd as the department finalizes the herd plan update. The meeting will be held on June 26 in Sedro Woolley.

Biologist Danilson also met Central Washington University graduate student Anna Yost to discuss her Master’s thesis project and make plans for the upcoming field season. Ms. Yost is using newly developed elk habitat models in conjunction with locations from GPS collared elk to model and examine new habitat scenarios which could help resolve some of the agricultural conflict issues currently being experienced in the Skagit River and Acme areas.

Biologist DeBruyn finished assembling new clover traps for elk and arranged for cooperating members of the Sauk-Suiattle Tribe to install webbing on them.

**Band-tailed Pigeon Study:** Biologist DeBruyn finished the trapping component of the study and installed three more transmitters on birds in the Skagit Valley. This brings the number of radioed birds to 10 (5 in Whatcom and 5 in Skagit). Tracking of the birds back to nesting areas and hopefully mineral springs will begin in earnest next week.

**Waterfowl Surveys:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra worked with Waterfowl Survey and Sea Duck Specialist Evenson to resolve data discrepancies in winter and spring survey data.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Leque Island:** Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw sent an update email to the WDFW’s Leque Island Stakeholder email list. The email included information about the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) new timeline for making their determination on the groundwater

study, which has been delayed until July 31. EPA has also created a webpage where they will post the determination when it is ready, as well as other documents relevant to the groundwater study 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). To be added to the Leque Island Stakeholder email list, please email [Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov).

**Island Unit Ditch Maintenance:** Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton completed a draft Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application (JARPA) to submit to jurisdictions that may need to issue permits for the project. The permitting agencies will use information in the JARPA to either issue required permits or determine which additional permit applications will need to be completed.

**Stillwater Revetment Removal Project:** Lands Agent Iris drafted a Right of Entry permit for Ducks Unlimited to complete native riparian plantings in the fall following the revetment removal project to be completed by Wild Fish Conservancy this summer.

**Fir Island Farm Restoration Design Project:** Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw assisted the project consultant with installation of seven surface water monitoring level loggers in Dry, No Name, and Brown's Sloughs. The level loggers measure temperature, conductivity (salinity), and pressure (water level) in 15 minute increments. This data will help WDFW better understand current conditions of surface waters in the Fir Island Farm Unit.



*Above: Computer hooked up to download data from the level logger in the pipe. Right: Level logger in water, connected to a cable protected in the pipe, leading up the hill to the data download location.*



**Skins, Skulls, Bugs and Birds Event at Tennant Lake:** The non-profit group Friends of Tennant Lake and Hovander Park held an event for the public at Tennant Lake entitled Skins, Skulls, Bugs and Birds. One member led a birding tour on the Tennant Lake boardwalk, one led a pond dipping for insects on the lake, and Manager Kessler showed wildlife skins and skulls. The event was very well attended, with many positive comments from the public.

**Intalco Unit Archery Course:** Natural Resource Technician Deyo sprayed herbicides around all 30 targets of the Archery Range to keep the vegetation down around them. Manager Kessler designed, printed and laminated a new sign for the Archery Range that warned the public from crossing archery shooting lanes.

**Safety Zone Signs and Posts:** Natural Resource Technician Deyo replaced faded Safety Zone signs and metal posts with new signs and wood posts on the Lake Terrell Unit.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Pier 86:** Access manager Derek Hacker visited Pier 86 in Seattle with Anthony Sanich from the Capital and Asset Management Program (CAMP). The visit was conducted to check on the fishing Pier's structural integrity and maintenance needs. Assistance with the tour of the Pier from the water came from WDFW Marine Enforcement Officers Hwa Kim and Mike Apple.



*Above: New boat ramp at Lake Samish installed during spring 2013. Below: New ADA restrooms at Lake Samish installed during the week of June 21, 2013. Parking lot paving and striping will occur in July of 2013.*



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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) member Paul Gilmore and volunteer Bob Dahlheim to advance plans for reopening the Cherry Valley Unit for dog training and trials. Paul reported that local clubs are enthusiastic about providing volunteer labor, equipment and even financial donations to help support the effort. Manager Boehm is working on the plan which will detail areas that will be mowed, volunteer registration and tracking procedures, frequency and timeframe of events, and other related details.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Cherry Valley Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Boy Scout Troop 327 (Mill Creek) members Marc Strickland (Scout Master) and Eagle Scout Project Managers Shane Strickland and Quinton Shubert to finalize the nursery project they had been working on. Shane completed and delivered two potting tables and Quinton presented the project highlights at the Sky Valley Tractor Club's monthly meeting. The Sky Valley Tractor Club sponsored the project by providing the soil used for potting over 2,500 native trees and shrubs. Now that the project is completed, both scouts will receive the rank of Eagle Scout, which is the highest rank available to scouts.



***One of two potting benches donated to the Cherry Valley Nursery by Eagle Scout candidate Shane Strickland.***

**Conflict Specialist Recruitment:**

Biologist Danilson participated in a conference call with other biologists and managers regarding the ongoing recruitment process for four conflict specialist positions throughout the state.

Since Regions 1 and 2 had arranged their interviews for this week, Danilson scrambled to make arrangements for some of those candidates to also be interviewed by Region 4 personnel.

Danilson, Biologist Milner, and Manager Link commuted to North Bend on Friday to conduct a second interview of two candidates for the Conflict Specialist position in La Conner.

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Areas:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with volunteer Mark Ryder to solve a number of mechanical issues with the Unit's aging tractor. The tractor's hydraulic system was not raising or lowering implements properly. After a number of attempts at diagnosing system problems and removing stuck hardware, the hydraulic system was returned to working order. Other problems still exist, and will be investigated this coming week.

**Equipment maintenance:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued work on upgrading the electronics on the District Whaler. This 30 year old vessel continues to be the backbone of the regional wildlife fleet as a number of its systems are showing their age.

**Employee Relations:** Biologist Milner and Assistant District Biologist Cyra attended Professional Association Job Representative training in Olympia.

## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Peregrine Falcons:** Biologist Anderson received a call from Burlington Northern Railroad (BNR) about a proposed maintenance project in eastern Klickitat County associated with a peregrine falcon nest site. Peregrine falcons have been seen in this general region of the Columbia River in the past but until this week, WDFW did not know of any known nest sites in the area. Biologist Anderson conducted a site visit to an area only accessible by a high rail truck capable of driving highways and on the rail-line. The BNR crew took Biologist Anderson



***Peregrine falcon site visit by a Burlington Northern Railroad high rail truck that is capable of driving highways and on the rail-line.***

to the peregrine nest site and one adult and two juveniles were observed on the cliff. After discussion with the BNR crew, it was decided that the maintenance project below the nest would be postponed until the beginning of August. WDFW appreciates the notification by BNR about the nest site and the willingness to work in the area on a later date.

**Golden Eagles:** Biologist Anderson completed productivity surveys for the remaining known active golden eagle nest in Klickitat County. The nest site along the Columbia River had two juvenile birds on the nest very close to fledging. Overall golden eagle occupancy and success of known sites in Klickitat County this year is very poor and raises concerns about the current health of the population in this part of the state.

**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. Islands surveyed included Rice, Miller Sands, Pillar Rock, Welch, Brown, Wallace, Crims, and Sandy. 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. These birds are currently proposed to be listed as Threatened by the USFWS. They nest on bare ground in sparsely vegetated sites like the dredge spoil islands in the Lower Columbia.

**Black-tailed Deer Research Project:** Fawn searches associated with the Region 5 portion of the black-tailed deer research project were continued. Study does are 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). To date, six fawns have been captured in the Washougal cluster and two fawns in the Coweeman cluster during 2013. Fawn monitoring is currently being conducted as well. To date, four 2013 fawns remain alive in the Washougal study cluster and the two remain alive in the Coweeman cluster.



*Black-tailed fawn captures*

**Western Pond Turtle Management - Shell Disease Investigation:** Trapping for western pond turtles was initiated at the Beacon Rock site. Biologists George, Stephens, and Holman all participated in the effort. A total of 12 traps were deployed in the State Park's most significant water body. The focus of this year's pond turtle work is to investigate the extent and severity of the shell disease condition in the Columbia River Gorge pond turtle populations. During the initial four days of the trapping effort, a total of 14 individual pond turtles were encountered. Additionally, 44 western painted turtles were located.

**Western Pond Turtle Management - Release of Head-start turtles:** Biologists Stephens and Holman released 27 western pond turtles into portions of their historic range within the Columbia River Gorge. The turtles were part of the head-start program for re-establishment of this State Endangered species. Thanks to the Oregon Zoo for their nine-months of care for the 27 juvenile turtles.



**New Bald Eagle Nest:** Biologist Bergh met with a landowner on the Cowlitz River who reported a new bald eagle nest. The landowner had watched the eagle pair build the nest this winter and had recently observed young in the nest. It was verified that the nest indeed had two eaglets and they looked to be about 4 weeks old. Thank you to the landowner for reporting the new nest. It will be entered into our database and monitored for activity in the future.

*Eaglets viewed through a spotting scope.*

### Wildlife Areas

**Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area -- Cedar Creek Weed Control:** Technician Sample began work this week identifying and spraying areas of meadow knapweed on the Pigeon Springs Wildlife Area along Cedar Creek. Band-tailed pigeons were seen flying away from the mineral spring area and a pair of red-breasted sapsuckers had nested in a snag and were noticed bringing food to noisy hatchlings. Sample also began work this week sawing down a large patch of Scotch broom and painting the 'stumps' with an herbicide to kill the root system.



*Scotch broom removal*

## **Klickitat Wildlife Area**

**Soda Springs Grazing Permit:** Manager Van Leuven worked with Range Ecologist Burnham to collect samples of herb layer information at the two enclosure sites on the grazing permit area on the Klickitat Wildlife Area. All the cattle are now off the WDFW pasture as of last weekend. Manager Van Leuven inspected the area and found no major problems. Van Leuven documented normal infrastructure wear and tear that will need to be repaired before next grazing season.

**Western Gray Squirrel Survey:** Manager Van Leuven conducted western gray squirrel surveys on four forest fuels reduction project sites to assist Habitat Program in developing recommendations for habitat retention. Survey forms were sent to Habitat Program Biologist Bell, with copies going to the operator so the workers can easily locate the nest trees.



*Exclosure sampling occurred on the grazing permit area on the Klickitat Wildlife Area.*

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

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Vancouver Lake Access Site:** Access staff Spangler and Rhodes faced continued vandalism and garbage dumping at Vancouver Lake. Spangler and Rhodes repainted over graffiti on the entrance sign as well as graffiti found again on the outside restroom wall only two days after repainting. They also used the blower and repainted white traffic lines around the entrance sign island.



*Vancouver Lake*

## **REGION 6**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

##### **Black Tailed Deer Mortality Study**

**Pysht:** Biologist McMillan downloaded all of the data on the PDA and the Handheld Terminal and updated the databases on the S Drive on June 23, 2013.

**Pysht -- Mortalities:** On Friday, June 21 Biologists McMillan and Loafman responded to a mortality alert. One of this year's fawns (370PYF), which was collared on May 31, was found dead and the collar was retrieved. This was non-predation mortality. The body was whole and there was no evidence of any wounds. The fawn was found dead in a resting curled up position, with no predator or scavenging sign.

**Pysht -- Separation Event:** On June 22 Biologists Loafman and McMillan responded to a separation event notice for a fawn (367PYF). Signal for this fawn, its sibling and doe were normal. All appear to be in the same general area. Data was downloaded off doe collar (296PYF). This downloaded data was provided to Research Scientist Rice to evaluate.

**Pysht -- Remaining Doe with VIT:** The remaining doe (293PYF), which has yet to have her fawns, was checked. Collar signal and VIT were slow (normal), but Biologists McMillan and Loafman were unable to collect sensor data off of the collar.

**Pysht -- Remaining Fawn from 2012:** Biologist Loafman checked on the signal status of the 2012 fawn at West Siebert (245PYF) whose signal was normal.



**Vail:** Biologist Tirhi and staff continued with fawn searches in the Vail study area last week associated with the mortality study. Tirhi and Rice located and collared one fawn whose doe had expelled her VIT the following day. This is the only VIT of four that resulted in the successful location of a fawn, and this fawn remains the only one collared in the Vail study area. One of the other three remaining does in the study produced only one dead fawn and her movements do not suggest more. The other two remaining does' movements also do not suggest fawns nor did visual observations of one. District 11 staff is done with fawn monitoring pending a request to do so by project lead Rice.

***Biologist Tirhi located and collared this captured fawn in the Vail study area.***

**Mason and Satsop:** Biologist Murphie spent the week monitoring collared does with the objective of capturing/collaring fawns in the Mason and Satsop Units. With help from volunteers, Biologist Murphie captured and collared three additional fawns in the Mason Unit. One doe is still carrying her VIT. Additional searches will continue this week.

**Western Pond Turtles -- South Puget Sound:** Biologist Tirhi, staff, and interns continue with monitoring nesting state endangered Western Pond Turtles at the Lakewood recovery site. Two females nested last week and eggs of one were transported to the Woodland Park Zoo for rearing. Monitoring will continue through mid-July.

**Western Pond Turtles -- Mason:** Last week saw several records broken for the Mason County turtle site. Six nests were located, one containing 13 eggs, for a total of 50 eggs recovered. All figures exceed totals from past years dating back to 2005. All eggs have been transported to the Woodland Park Zoo for incubation. Unfortunately, two dead juvenile turtles were found, one depredated by an eagle and another apparently killed by an otter. Monitoring of radio tagged females will continue for several more weeks.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Master Hunters Helping Landowners in GMU 667 (update):** From April 17 to May 4, seven WDFW Master Hunters set a schedule and kept a daily presence on a farm in the Skookumchuck area to reduce elk damage on three farms. They were very successful with the largest landowner reporting to Biologist Harris that this was the largest hay cutting he has taken in many years. He stated that while he had his doubts, the Master Hunters proved they could take care of the problem.

Adjacent landowners have also reported a reduction in elk damage. The Master Hunters utilized their skills as hunters when hazing and showed some extra initiative in reducing elk use through harassment. Understanding elk they realized that just being on the farm would not really address the issues, so they made a point to go into the surrounding timber and roust them from day time bedding areas to prevent nocturnal use of the fields. While doing this they would also use predator calls. The end result is the elk still have not returned, much to the surprise of everyone. Without a request from Biologist Harris, the Master Hunters' approached the landowner about helping fix some of his fences. While they were old and it was unknown how much of the damage was caused by elk, they stepped up to even further improve the landowner relations.

On Saturday, June 22 they had a work party to repair/replace approximately 3,700 feet of fencing. Being that this was a big job they reached out to the local Olympia chapter of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) for help. Twelve volunteers, a mixture of Master Hunters and RMEF members, removed old fencing, replaced fence poles, tightened fences, and began stringing wire. Unfortunately, a couple of the volunteers had to leave prior to the group picture,

but most of them were captured in photo below. If you look down the road you will see one of them still working! The group will be meeting again this coming Saturday to complete the task.

This area has faced continual problems with elk damage. The credit for this really goes to the Master Hunters. Once contacted, they quickly formed a team and set about working with the landowner to address the problem. The landowner also deserves a lot of credit for his willingness to work with the Master Hunters.

The Master Hunters are not through with their work as they are working with the landowner to seed a 90 acre clear cut to provide a little forage for elk. They plan to begin hazing again as soon as the elk return to the fields.



*Left: A mixture of Master Hunters and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation members volunteered to fix fencing on a private farm in Thurston County. Right: Volunteers string wire on the newly repaired fence.*