

Wildlife Program

Week of March 4-10, 2013

WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION

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

WildWatchcams – Ospreycam: Coordinator James Chandler assisted Chuck Gibilisco to install an osprey camera in Gig Harbor. Gibilisco worked with Gig Harbor private landowners, contractors from Canopy Conservation, and CritterZoom.com to design and install a new osprey camera. Ospreys generally return to this nest site in mid-late March. Several area neighbors drove by to express their excitement and appreciation for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) support of the unique wildlife camera website and program.

On Sunday, February 17 Wildlife Program Volunteer



Citizen Science Monitoring on WDFW lands - Recruitment for the May 4 Ecological Integrity Monitoring (EIM) Workshop at Scatter Creek Wildlife Area was initiated, and interested individuals are responding. Targeted invitations and discussions for EIM involvement were initiated with the Black Hills Audubon Society, South Sound Native Plants, Centralia Community College, and the Chehalis Basin Educations Consortium.

Chuck Gibilisco, Wildlife Outreach, and WDFW Volunteer Manager Christine Redmond participated in the monthly EIM to share a possible new approach that will be used to train, retain, and re-train citizen volunteers who work with WDFW scientists on EIM projects.

The new approach would shift from presenting complex skills and concepts in an intensive one-day workshop to an online series of unit presentations. The EIM Citizen Science project would serve as a prototype to test online education that would permit a person to advance at their own speed and go back to a basic unit for review if necessary.

The concept is similar to what is currently being considered for the overall WDFW volunteer program. The training units will cover topics such as project overview, orientation, and essential project knowledge and skills. Content would be in the form of short video clips and narrated

PowerPoint presentations, with self-testing quizzes to reinforce concepts, skills and build confidence.

Additional learning links, extra resources, and fun and challenging surveys and quizzes would permit certain individuals to gain deeper understanding and skill levels that might identify a person as a potential volunteer mentor. Such mentors with demonstrated interest and skills could offer additional tutoring and refresher training for volunteers and for those projects that experience seasonal downtime. Mentors could help certify a person as 'project ready' to collect and submit data.

A version of the online training will be tested prior to or as a part of the May 4 Scatter Creek EIM project meeting. Participants may receive online training and information on the project objective and project related skills like the use of GPS, digital cameras and phone apps to record ecological data. Overviews on data forms and data upload procedures to an ArcGIS website will be tested with the new learning approach. The new approach should eventually result in improved project comprehension and mastering many of the required skills and concepts for effective project work with reduced actual time from WDFW research and resource staff.

Western Wildlife Outreach (WVO)/Grizzly Bear Outreach Project (GBOP) Products: WVO has printed the first run of the new Cougar Brochure, revised a version for WDFW's use on their website, and reprinted/revised the wolf brochures and posters. WVO has developed pieces of Project WOLFF curriculum material for grades K-4 consisting of children's wildlife masks and a tracking booklet.

WVO also continues to work on a four-carnivore species coloring book, selecting artists, and refining design and drawings. The group continues to edit the four-carnivore species brochure and cougar brochure, along with editing and updating bear brochures and reprinting wolf brochures and posters. New brochures will be updated with current information and the WVO name change.

Media: Production is underway for updating wolf PowerPoint presentations, expected to premier mid-March at the Traveling Burke Museum Wolf Exhibit at the State Library in Olympia.

Brochure Distribution: Outreach joined in an Enforcement conference call with Bruce Bjork to come up with a plan to distribute cougar door hangers and will continue distribution of newly printed brochures at events and to partnering agencies and organizations.

Website/Facebook: Outreach continues to provide daily postings on Facebook and Twitter. Website revisions include adding a calendar reservation page for the Bear Education Trailer to better utilize it at events.

Other: Work is underway on a new coordinated project with the "Predator Friendly Certification" organization.

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

Wolf/Livestock manual - A letter was received from the Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development Agency granting WDFW permission to use the text and images from the Rancher's Guide to Predator Attacks on Livestock. The publication contains accurate and high quality depictions of key identification predator livestock attack markings. The Guide is often used outside of the province for this purpose. A password free copy of the publication accompanied the letter and the guide may be used by WDFW in the near future as a training and instructional tool.

Volunteerism - James Chandler assisted Pierce County Water Access Manager Ross Calvert with several of his water access sites to brainstorm ideas on how we may be able to use volunteers to help accomplish some of his tasks. Chandler assisted wildlife staff with posting a couple of new volunteer opportunities. James Chandler, Chuck Gibilisco, John Pierce and Matt Vander Haegen met with Audubon members to discuss potential EIM partnership.

Chandler also spent several hours with Water Access Manager Brian Mitchell working on project development. Brian Mitchell and James Chandler visited Black Creek, White Bridge, Wynoochee, Thornburg, Satsop River Double Bridge, and West Fort water access sites to identify potential volunteer opportunities. They identified several water access sites to be adopted and these sites will be posted on the Community Event Registration and Volunteer Information System (CERVIS). James will work with the Adopt an Access manager to get an Adopt an Access available sign posted at each available site.

James Chandler continues to provide CERVIS support to wildlife staff as needed. On average James received five to seven calls and emails a week from wildlife staff requesting assistance with CERVIS projects.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1: Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed Smackout wolf issues with a Spirit Junction rancher and pro-active non-lethal methods with a rancher in the Huckleberry wolf pack territory and scheduled a visit to his property. Conflict Specialist Shepherd also discussed wolf issues and Smackout wolf territory access with the U.S. Air Force Survival School. Shepherd delivered a report with a map of last field seasons remote camera and wolf detection effort to Wolf Biologist Scott Becker. Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed a weekend snowmobile trip into the Ruby Creek area with Officer Erickson as three wolves were observed above the Pend Oreille River near several ranches and calving operations. The trip was not confirmed at the time of this report.

Conflict Specialist Shepherd resupplied a depredation investigation kit, purchased electric fence equipment, and organized the wolf-livestock response equipment trailer. Conflict Specialist

Shepherd discussed wolf issues and possible duties with Technician Bendixen who will be assisting with wolf issues this year.

Region 1 Wildlife Program Staff (Base, Shepherd, McCanna, and Robinette) participated in a staff meeting led by Carnivore Section Manager Donny Martorello and attended by other agency staff at the Regional Office in Spokane Valley. The meeting was “Part 3” of the wolf management debrief from last year’s field season activities. General agenda items covered included roles, responsibilities, communication, livestock depredation response protocols, and planning/preparing for the 2013 field season. Covered in greater detail were situations necessitating lethal removal of wolves, methodology to employ, and processes/procedures to follow.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

District 2 Golden Eagle Surveys: Biologists Ferguson and Atamian completed the first phase of the Golden Eagle Surveys for District 2 including a helicopter flight on the Spokane River. Four active eagle nests were found in the District and one active nest on the Colville (CCT) tribal lands. One more nest had two adults present, but no nest was found. Biologist Atamian also checked the Rattlesnake, DeLong, Blumenshein, and Cherry Cove historic nest sites. The first three were all active. The Rattlesnake site moved 1.2 kilometers west from the historic cliff site to a Ponderosa Pine tree. There were no Golden Eagles at or around Cherry Cove and the nest was unrepaired. Biologist Ferguson checked two nest sites in southwestern Whitman County and found one occupied and the other with no sign of eagles and no obvious suitable habitat.



Golden Eagle nest observed during the District 2 aerial survey.

Blue Mountains Elk and bighorn surveys: District Biologist Wik and Assistant District Biologist Vekasy continued aerial elk surveys through the week. Game Management Units (GMUs) 154-175 were completed through Saturday. The group was unable to fly on Wednesday due to poor weather conditions.



A mature bull (above) along with three rams from the Tucannon herd (below) observed during the aerial surveys.





One of the seven cougars observed in three different groups during this week's aerial survey.

Wildlife Areas

Chief Joseph Wildlife Area – 4-O controlled burning: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice and Biologist David Woodall burned approximately 25 acres of agricultural fields near the Grande Ronde River. Some dead blackberries choking out some small trees were also burned. The burn occurred on Thursday and was approved and permitted by the Department of Ecology. The next step will be to spray emerging cheatgrass and noxious weeds prior to seeding to a suitable cover crop such as spring wheat.



Old blackberry vines choking some small trees were burned on the 4-O.



Approximately 25 acres of agricultural fields burned on the 4-O near the Grande Ronde River.

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

Wildlife Areas

Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex - Access program: Terry Folkins has been spending the majority of his time on access sites on the Wooten Wildlife Area and along the Grande Ronde River. Steelhead fishing activity on the Grande Ronde has been high. Quite a few campers and fishermen have been using the Wooten Wildlife Area.



Steelhead fishermen on the Grande Ronde River utilize the area across from the mouth of Cottonwood Creek.

Private Lands/Access

Wildlife Control: Biologist Rasley received a call from an Asotin County Cloverland farmer. The farmer said, “400 plus elk have returned to his farm” and requested a meeting on their farm. Rasley and the farmer toured the fields and could clearly see where the elk had been. After the farmer signed a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) contract, Officer Nelson and Rasley issued the farmer a DP elk permit to assist them with their hazing efforts.

Lower Walla Walla Team Meeting (LLWRRS): Davis attended the Lower Walla Walla Team meeting to discuss restoration strategies for the Lower Walla Walla River. A recent assessment found that there are over 160 unstable sites in the 27 mile long reach from the Lowden-Gardena Bridge to the mouth of the Lower Walla Walla River at the Columbia River. Recently, the LLWRRS received contributions from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) to hire a geomorphologist. The group came together to discuss goals for restoration efforts and identified sites within each of the four reaches of the Lower Walla Walla River to target efforts. The LLWRRS will be accepting proposals to do the geomorphology work on the entire lower river; however, the focus will be to obtain a 30% design for the first reach.

Priority Projects Group (PPG): Davis attended the PPG meeting in Walla Walla. The PPG is a local group made up of representatives from WDFW, the Blue Mountain Land Trust, Tri-State Steelheaders, CTUIR, and the Walla Walla Conservation District (WWCD). Members were provided with updates on several proposed conservation easements to be developed in Walla Walla County. These include a perpetual conservation easement on seasonal wetlands and a permanent conservation easement on 40 acres of private lands enrolled in CP25. The CP25 practice is used for the restoration of prairie and sagebrush-grass steppe using native cool season grasses with wildflowers and shrubs to increase plant diversity and provide habitat for declining wildlife species. In addition, the WWCD was approached by a group of landowners with more than 47,000 acres of private land in northern Walla Walla County. The landowners are interested in re-introducing pronghorn antelope on their property. If the animals could be re-established the landowners would agree to a 30,000 acre permanent conservation easement.

Private lands access provided/PVPA: Private Lands Biologist Dawn Davis coordinated with Biologist Scott Rasley to develop a cooperative agreement under the PVPA program on Lewis Peak. Davis spoke with the Walla Walla County producer who is interested in signing up approximately 975 acres into the Feel Free to Hunt (FFTH) program and requested Davis send additional information about the various private lands access programs so he can determine whether the program will fit his needs. Davis will continue to work with this landowner to develop a cooperative agreement under WDFW’s private lands access programs. In addition, Davis will be contacting adjoining landowners to inquire about their interest in enrolling properties in the PVPA program.

PVPA: Biologist Lewis conducted a site visit with a landowner interested in the VPA-Hunt by Reservation program. Property is located along the Palouse River and would provide access on approximately 370 acres. Landowner is also interested in developing a riparian buffer along the

river. Property would provide a unique opportunity for the public to hunt high quality riparian habitat in Whitman County.



Potential access property on Palouse River would provide 370 acres of high quality riparian habitat to hunt in Whitman County.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Private Lands/Access

Upland Bird Buffer Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)/Wetlands training: Region 1 Private Lands Biologists attended the upland bird buffer/wetlands training in Ephrata. The group was provided an update on the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and was given an overview of how to implement CP33 practices and the use of field borders to provide habitat for upland birds.

REGION 2

Wolves

March 11: Biologist Heinlen assisted WDFW Enforcement Officers McCormick and Day investigate a reported wolf attack on a domestic dog near Twisp. The reporting party advised that at about 1:30 a.m. his husky/wolf hybrid male dog inside the residence started barking and jumping at the glass door. The reporting party ran out to see his female husky/wolf hybrid dog pinned down by what appeared to be a wolf. The male hybrid then chased the offending animal

off into the night returning in the morning. The offending animal was described as being much larger than the 100 pound male hybrid. A search of the area located a single set of larger canine tracks measuring 4.5 inches between the widest points. Both domestic dogs had smaller tracks. The area is within the Lookout pack's range. The female hybrid will require medical treatment, but the injuries did not appear life threatening.

March 2: Biologist Heinlen investigated a cluster of locations from WA-17M radio collar on the WDFW Similkameen-Chopaka Unit. Two cattle carcasses were found dumped at the location with evidence of scavenging. The livestock owner was contacted who promptly buried both carcasses removing the attractant from the area.

Wildlife Management

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Washington ground squirrels: Biologist Finger participated in a Washington ground squirrel status review and data gathering meeting at McNary National Wildlife Refuge. The meeting generated great discussion with regards to ground squirrel ecology, data gaps, known distribution, etc. The species has been a federal candidate since 2000 but has been designated as 'warranted but precluded.' August 2013 is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) deadline for a decision, but 'warranted but precluded' is no longer an option due to a lawsuit by Western Watersheds and the Center for Biological Diversity.



Enclosure entered by badger.

Finger entered data from last week's Washington ground squirrel translocation and visited the site with Columbia National Wildlife Refuge Biologist Gordon Warrick early in the week to

assess the status of the soft-release enclosures. Most of the squirrel pairs were still confined within the enclosures and evidence of burrowing adjacent to enclosures suggests that those that have breached are remaining in the vicinity. An additional visit on Friday however revealed widespread evidence of badger hunting and considerably less evidence of squirrel activity.

We also found that some of the squirrels (particularly those that were not burrowing within their enclosures) had begun to chew on the plastic barrier and were able to escape by creating a rough surface to climb out. The main problem with escapes over the top is that they are not likely to return to their enclosures (like they do when they tunnel out) where nest boxes are available to them and it is feared that these individuals are highly vulnerable.

Eagle Management: Biologist Heinlen took possession of three juvenile bald eagles recovered under a power line by Officer McCormick. All were in good physical condition except for discoloration and small wounds on the feet of two. With the assistance of WDFW veterinary staff and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, WI the marks on the feet were determined to be definitive burn marks confirming electrocution as the cause of death. The USFWS has been notified who will contact the Public Utility District (PUD) to retrofit the pole with eagle guards to protect eagles from electrocution.



Juvenile bald eagles (left) recovered under a power line by Officer McCormick. All were in good physical condition except for discoloration and small wounds on the feet of two (right).

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

Wildlife Areas

Habitat Development: Natural Resource Technician Will Carpenter finished the annual drawdown of the moist soil management cells in the Frenchman Ponds Regulated Access Area (FRAA). Will continued cutting and removing Russian olives from the shorelines of the wetland cells.

In preparation for a spring wheat food plot to be planted on the Winchester Regulated Access Area (WRAA), Will sprayed non-selective herbicide on the annual weeds and prepared the new

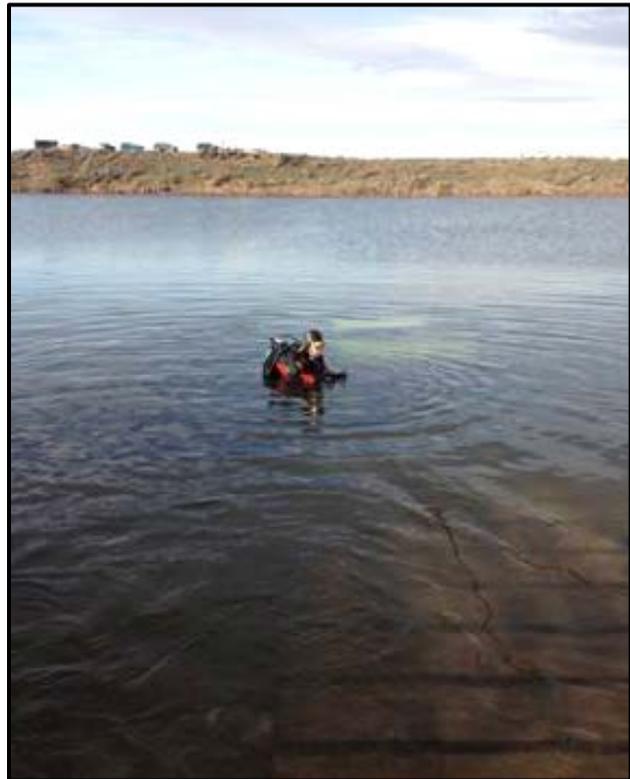
seed drill for use. When Will and Assistant Manager Brian Cole loaded the seed drill on the trailer for transporting to the WRAA, the drill broke through the decking on the trailer. Will ended up with yet another chore to address before he can proceed with the food plot planting.

Private Lands/Access

Landowner Hunting Program (LHP): Biologist Finger participated in an annual meeting with BuckRun representatives to discuss surveys, harvest, enforcement, and boundary issues associated with this LHP. Enforcement was extremely helpful and informative and gave considerable comfort to BuckRun that penalties will fit the crime, particularly given the recent implementation of the new Washington Administrative Code (WAC) that eliminates hunting privileges for two-years following a trespass conviction. This penalty is honored by many states, not just Washington.

Other

March 1 Opener: Access Manager Josh Harmon and Access Assistant Nick McAlavy serviced the access sites and repaired the south gate into the Quincy Lakes Wildlife Area. Josh assisted Wildlife Enforcement Officer Will Smith and the Grant County Sherriff's Office with removal of a pickup and boat trailer that went a little too far down the boat launch on Burke Lake. Access Manager Joe Graves scrubbed the algae off the boat launch later in the week.



The Burke Lake access area (left) and the Burke Lake boat launch (right).

REGION 3

None

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Golden Eagle Survey: Biologist DeBruyn visited the three sites in District 14 that are designated “red” in the survey protocol. Given that the areas around the sites are still four feet deep in snow, using a helicopter was necessary. At two of the sites the nests were completely gone, at the third an old nest was found but no birds or sign of activity were observed. The sites will be visited again in 30 days.



Old Golden Eagle Nest on a cliff near North Cascades National Park.

Assistant District Biologist Cyra began exploratory work on priority Golden Eagle sites in District 13. Nest sites on Lopez Island were observed and searched for, resulting in a Great Horned Owl in one nest, and no nest located at the priority site. No Golden Eagles were observed on the island. A priority historic site near Index was observed following established protocols

with no nest or birds observed. No nest or birds have been seen at this site during more than a decade of Peregrine Falcon observations.

Band-tailed Pigeon study: Biologist DeBruyn crafted two back pack transmitters to try on domestic homing pigeons in anticipation of a project this spring and summer to locate more mineral springs the band-tails use during the breeding season. Surveys at the springs are used to assess population levels. The homing pigeons will be released back into their flocks to test the back pack/harness design.

Oregon Spotted Frog Survey Project: Seasonal Biologists Johnson and Bauman continued with landowner contacts to get permission to conduct Oregon spotted frog (OSF) surveys, prepare field survey maps, and conduct spot checks of sites with a recent history of known OSF occupancy. The informal surveys conducted by Johnson and Bauman have indicated that it is yet a bit early for the initiation of OSF breeding as water temperatures are still quite low within the project limits and only red legged frog egg masses are present thus far.

This is the third year that District 14 personnel have conducted OSF surveys in Skagit and Whatcom counties. The objective of the project, funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is to further delineate the geographic range of this sensitive species to assist this agency in conducting a status review of OSF in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA).



Oregon Spotted Frog.

Peregrine Falcon Nesting Closure at Wallace Falls State Park: One of District 13's golden eagle nest survey site is located near the active ledge of a peregrine eyrie. WDFW has an

agreement with the landowner, Washington State Parks, to close the rock face to climbing during the breeding season, beginning March 1. Assistant District 13 Biologist Cyra went to the site to conduct a golden eagle survey and observed a climber on the closed rock face and notified Biologist Milner that the falcons were back in the area and the climbing activity was a definite conflict. Milner followed up with staff at Wallace Falls State Park and will be continuing to work with them in the coming week to assure that climbers stay off the eyrie site.

Swan Mortality Study: This week WDFW Technician Anderson responded to calls of sick, injured and dead swans in Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties. A total of five trumpeter swans were collected this week, all are believed to have resulted from collisions with power lines. This was the fourth consecutive week during the 2012-2013 seasons in which carcass collection numbers declined.

Note that of the swans reported this week, three were from Wolf Hollow wildlife rehabilitation center in San Juan Island and delivered to WDFW this week. Of the two fatalities this week both are from Skagit County. WDFW personnel also assisted private wildlife rehabilitation with the banding and release of a tundra swan on Lake 16 in Skagit County.

	Skagit	Snohomish	Whatcom	Sumas	TOTAL
Power line suspect	32	5	27		64
Lead suspect	26	1	13	4	44
Trauma*	6		7	6	19
Unknown	15		3		18
Feather Pile	8		4	6	18
TOTAL	87	6	54	16	163

Sea Duck Joint Venture (SDJV) Marine Waterfowl Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra concluded transcribing data from three weeks' worth of aerial surveys in marine waters of British Columbia (BC). These surveys are a continuation of Sea Duck Joint Venture (SDJV) funded structured waterfowl surveys along the Pacific coast of North America. Similar surveys are taking place along the Atlantic coast.

In previous years, surveys were flown along the outer coasts of Oregon and Washington. These baseline surveys are the first complete look at wintering locations and concentrations for most of these marine areas and will lead to further analysis to determine the best way to sample these species. Additional information is available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/psamp/> and <http://seaduckjv.org/>

Urban Elk Management Assistance – Enumclaw area: Biologist Anderson met with local citizens, members of Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group, and Muckleshoot Tribal Biologists to discuss collaborative efforts in elk management. The group mainly discussed working with WDFW to assist locally in tracking where property owners were actually having damage problems in the Enumclaw-Buckley area (as opposed to perceived problems). Community outreach efforts were also discussed. Future surveys may be initiated – but further examination and discussion will determine if planning for such efforts is necessary.

Human effects to urban wildlife – concern about “smart meters” in Renton: Biologist Anderson was asked if WDFW had a stance on new “smart meters” being put in Renton to monitor power consumption. These devices put out an electromagnetic field. Some wildlife research has showed correlative evidence of effects to certain wildlife regarding electromagnetic fields, not smart meters specifically. There is currently not enough documented direct evidence from findings outlining that such devices are a causative factor regarding effects to wildlife.

Urban Great Blue Heron Colony Management Assistance: Biologist Anderson issued a management plan for a Seattle construction applicant. Seattle building code requires that an applicant adhere to Seattle Director’s Rule on Great Blue Herons – which outlines no construction within 500 feet of Seattle Great Blue Heron colonies. The alternative is to seek a project-specific plan from WDFW. Most applicants go with the latter.

Wildlife Areas

Cherry Valley Fish Passage Project: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with WDFW staff Jenni Dykstra to discuss site prep and planting plans scheduled for April. Planting native vegetation is the final component to the Fish Passage Project that was implemented last summer, where multiple bridges and culverts were installed, and existing drainage channels were cleared of silt and debris. Over 7,000 plants will be installed to improve riparian habitat and add vegetative complexity to the mostly reed canary grass site.

Cherry Valley Waterwheel Creek Project: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with project partners Wild Fish Conservancy and Stewardship Partners to begin planting along Waterwheel Creek on March 9, 2013. A volunteer planting event was held on Saturday to kick-off a week’s worth of effort. Approximately 30 volunteers from the Wilderness Awareness School in Duvall installed over 400 Sitka spruce and Western red cedar trees on raised hummocks near the newly-created stream channel.

Port of Bellingham Tennant Lake Wetland Enhancement Project: Manager Kessler coordinated with the Port of Bellingham managers on the wetland enhancement project. Construction markers have now been removed and trail markers reinstalled.

Lake Terrell Waterfowl Nesting: Manager Kessler and Private Lands Technician Deyo installed the "No Trespassing" signs on Lake Terrell to close the island areas to protect nesting waterfowl.

Private Lands

Spring Bear Damage Hunts: Biologist Roozen continued with hunt preparations for the North Skagit and Monroe units. Roozen continued drafting landowner agreements and contacting land managers and landowners, updated hunter access passes, data forms, and unit maps, and discussed hunt dynamics with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and WDFW staff. Planning and coordination for the Skagit and Monroe bear hunts will continue over the following weeks.

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

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Elk Herd Management: Biologist Danilson conferred with Wildlife Program Manager Link and Section Manager Nelson regarding various aspects of elk management. Topics included recent press and political input regarding elk-related agricultural conflict, the draft herd plan, upcoming aerial surveys, and various other monitoring/research initiatives.

Mountain Goat Augmentation Meeting: Biologists Milner and Danilson attended the second mountain goat augmentation meeting at Mill Creek which included most of the partners who have been following this project for several years. Topics discussed included an update of plans by Olympic National Park, a review of potential influences to goat habitat, including the type of geology a patch might contain, and a review and discussion of decision points that will influence which areas are selected to receive goats at some point.



Mountain goat moves on a snow field.

North Cascades Elk Herd Clover Trapping Project: Biologist DeBruyn and Technician Anderson each conducted trap checks during the week. The primary objective of this work is to maintain a broad distribution of radio collared elk in the population as part of the “mark-resight” methods used to estimate the population during late winter aerial surveys. It is a cooperative project between WDFW the Upper Skagit, Swinomish and Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribes. Danilson also fielded calls from tribal representatives currently working on a separate elk trapping project and is working with other project partners to discuss the merits of pooling resources on elk capture efforts for the remaining three weeks of the capture season, which terminates March 31.

Brant Photo Survey: Biologist DeBruyn assisted waterfowl specialist Evenson in testing a system designed to take aerial photos of Padilla and Samish Bays to count brant wintering in the area. Brant counts in January are done to determine if there are enough birds in the Western High Arctic Population to justify a hunting season.

Wildlife Areas

Samish River - Welts Property Wetland Enhancement Project: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw completed a draft State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) checklist and spending plans for the project. Wildlife Area Manager Rotton is working to finalize details on the parking area and culvert that is proposed for installation on the property.

Stillwater Revetment Removal Project: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm, Watershed Steward Hennick, and project proponents held another public meeting to present the proposed project to the public and to answer questions. Approximately 15 people attended the meeting. The most common questions were related to whether or not the project will affect recreation access. Comments can be submitted to Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov, and if received by March 15, will be reviewed and addressed by WDFW staff and partners.

Leque Island: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has assigned a staff geohydrologist to review the groundwater report and comments from the project groundwater technical review team. EPA will release a schedule this week that will include the target date for the final determination.

Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP): Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw scheduled a meeting among project proponents to discuss the current status of the project on Telegraph Slough included in the PSNERP conceptual design report. That meeting is scheduled for March 13.

Skagit Agricultural Enhancement and Lease Program: Manager Belinda Rotton and Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis met with four local farmers to discuss potential lease arrangements for the Leque Island, Samish, South Padilla Bay and DeBay Slough Units. None of the lease arrangements have been finalized at this point.

Headquarter Unit: Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) Meis and Natural Resource Technician (NRT) Curran Cosgrove dismantled one of the old foot bridges from the Headquarters Unit that had floated out of place. The materials will be utilized for blind building and other foot bridges on the Wildlife Area.

Samish Unit: Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove constructed two new duck blinds at the Samish Unit. There is a proposal to construct four additional blinds before the next hunting season.

South Padilla Bay: Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove evaluated the standing corn on the Hulbert parcel and determined the corn that did not over-winter would provide limited food resources.

Leque Island: Natural Resource Specialist Meis installed the new Western Hemisphere Shorebird Network Sign on the Leque Island Site. Additional signs will be installed at Headquarters and Big Ditch along the Skagit Bay Estuary.

Fir Island Farm: Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove removed blackberries from the parking area, dike and viewing area on the site to provide better viewing opportunity and access.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk: Manager Kessler monitored the water level at Tennant Lake. He hiked in and adjusted the beaver dams and deceiver pipes. The lake water level is slowly dropping, but is still too high for the boardwalk to be opened to the public.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Technician Deyo standardized surveys used to monitor unit use, and organized the data for potential analysis. Technician Otto organized supplies from hunt units and sorted materials from the Program. Biologist Roozen and Technician Otto met with some partner landowners to confirm public access for the 2013-14 waterfowl season.



Garbage collected during unit removal.

Bow Hill Road Pheasant Release Site: Biologist Roozen completed the Bow Hill Pheasant Site survey for surrounding neighbor residents. Technician Deyo expanded on a previous neighbor resident mailing list and Mill Creek staff sent out the survey.

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

Wildlife Management

Whidbey Audubon Society Talk: Biologist Milner worked on an upcoming talk for Whidbey Audubon Society. The topic will cover various controversies on Whidbey regarding nuisance wildlife and potential solutions to some growing conflicts.

Hydropower projects and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensing consultation: Biologist Anderson worked with Biologist Applegate regarding ongoing wildlife management and habitat mitigation needs for various hydropower projects proposed in King County. Applegate requested wildlife consultation regarding an ongoing project.

Wildlife Areas

Wiley Slough Working Group: Manager Rotton facilitated a Wiley Working group meeting. This meeting focused on the development of an agreement on a working water surface elevation for the winter and early spring agricultural season. In addition, the group continued to work

towards a design for repair of tide gate infrastructure and final design aspects of the new pump station.

Fir Island Farm: Natural Resource Specialist Meis began reviewing the Fir Island Farms Reserve Agreement and the Hayton Family Farms agricultural lease for upcoming discussion and renewal of the Reserve agreement.

Private Lands/Access

Game Management Advisory Committee: Biologists Danilson and Roozen worked together to develop a PowerPoint presentation about the Region 4 Private Lands Program for the March 9 Game Management Advisory Committee (GMAC) meeting. Danilson attended this meeting in Ellensburg and gave the presentation on behalf of the region.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Area Plan Updates: Manager Rotton attended the Wildlife Area Plan Update meeting in Ellensburg. The working group is developing an outline for the plan revision. A strong focus of this planning cycle is to utilize improvements in technology to create a user friendly document that is easy to update.

New Staff: Anderson offered the District 12 Assistant District Biologist position to the top candidate. The candidate accepted. Anderson is working with Human Resources to bring the new employee on-board.

Radio Communications and Technical Support: Assistant District Biologist Cyra provided required radio communications training to agency staff and assisted District 14 in effectively utilizing transcription equipment.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Hoof Deformity: A high quality team from Region 5 Wildlife Program, Enforcement, and veterinary staff from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Oregon State University (OSU), and WDFW participated in the collection of elk calves to provide samples for analysis in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the cause of the hoof deformity problem in elk in southwest Washington. Elk were collected in GMUs 530, 550, and 522 from private agricultural lands, industrial forestlands, and WDFW ownership. All the elk were taken in areas where elk have been observed limping or displaying some evidence of hoof disease. Samples were taken from the elk for extensive analysis in a very comprehensive examination. We want to

express our appreciation for all the help received in conducting this complex project. We are expectant that this effort will provide further information and insight to the issue of hoof disease in southwest Washington and guide future management efforts. We await the results from this effort to share with the public and sportspeople alike who are very concerned about the limping elk they see. Individuals interested in learning more about the hoof disease condition in western Washington elk, or reporting cases of elk with the condition, should visit <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/>



Elk hooves collected for sampling.

Wildlife Areas

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Mount St. Helens Tree Planting: Technician Sample continues to work on planting young alder trees in areas cleared of scotch broom on the Mount St Helens Wildlife Area. Technician Sample is also working to pull tree tubes from previously planted conifers that have died. Tree tubes are being replaced by larger wire cages for those conifers that are outgrowing their tree tube and need more space to grow while still being protected from elk.



Alder tree plantings on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area.

Cedar Creek Pigeon Spring Maintenance: Technician Sample continues to remove brush and vegetation from the mineral spring at the Cedar Creek Wildlife Area, where she noticed several species of songbirds using the opened up spring almost immediately as a place to forage. Species

included winter wren, Swainson's thrush, chestnut-backed chickadee, and golden crowned kinglet.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Oregon Spotted Frogs: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven checked for spotted frog breeding activity in the East Marsh area of Trout Lake. Conditions were excellent. It is about a week earlier than the normal onset of oviposition and the frogs have not yet started at Trout Lake. While out in the field, Manager Van Leuven observed that the bluebirds have returned to Klickitat County; their vivid blue flashes of color are once again brightening the roadsides in the Goldendale area, and large flocks of robins are moving through as well.



The East Marsh area of Trout Lake was checked for spotted frog breeding activity.

Other

District 10 & Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: February temperatures and precipitation were both below average for the month. Snowfall for the month was minimal with little to no accumulation for the month on the valley floor on the Mudflow Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area.

Short-Term Forecast: The 6-10 day forecast is for below normal temperatures and normal precipitation and the 8-14 day forecast is for below normal temperatures and precipitation.

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

Habitat: Forage is available at lower elevations, and elk appear to have fed heavily on willows and cottonwoods in the Mudflow Unit. Most areas above 3,000 feet currently have some snow cover, and areas above 3,500 feet have significant snow cover. Most south facing slopes are

snow free to higher elevations. Green up has started in the lower elevations, but more than likely still a couple of weeks away for areas above 1,000 feet in elevation.

Snow Depths: See attached table for detailed information.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations of elk noted to date. On March 1, 2013, a total of 180 elk were present on the Mudflow Unit monitoring area.

Animal Condition: The majority of animals observed to date appear to be in fair condition. Several were observed with rough pelage and in poor conditions in the Region this past week during the elk collection effort.

Mortality: No mortalities were observed this week.

Public Contacts: None to report related to winter conditions.

The public is reminded that the Mudflow Unit of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30 to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Mild winter conditions continue to dominate District 9. Snow fell on Wednesday at mid and high elevations in the western and central parts of the District. Most of the snow melted the following day.

Winter Severity: The Klickitat Wildlife Area continues to be mostly free of snow and eastern Klickitat County is snow free and early green up has started. In the southern Cascades, snow levels were stable this week.

Forecast: Mild conditions will continue.

Habitat: Habitat continues to be open below 2,000 feet throughout the Region.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations have been reported for big game this past week.

Animal Condition: Deer and elk appear to be in very good condition and no winter stress/mortality has been reported this week. Animals appear to be healthy and several deer have been seen with last year's fawns.

Mortality: Mostly road kill, not attributed to winter conditions.

Public Contacts: None.

MOUNT SAINT HELENS ELK HERD
 2012/2013 WINTER CONDITIONS - SNO-PARK SNOW DEPTH,
 NRCS SNOTEL DATA, AND SNOWPACK

From web page <http://www.fs.usda.gov/activity/giffordpinchot/recreation/wintersports/?recid=31178&actid=91>
http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/sno_narr3.pl
<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snotel/Washington/washington.html>

SNOWPARKS:		12/07/2012	12/14/2012	12/21/2012	12/28/2012	01/04/2013	01/11/2013	01/18/2013	01/25/2013	02/01/2013	02/08/2013	02/15/2013
Name	Elevation											
TRAIL OF TWO FORESTS	2,200'	No report	Trace of new snow	2ft of snow	More than 2ft of snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	No new report	10" new and 2 ft base	No new snow. 2ft total.	No new snow
MARBLE MT	2,700'	No new report	5" new snow	4ft of snow	More than 4ft of snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	No new snow. 72 inch base.	14" new and 80" base	No new snow. 84" base.	No new report
WAKEPISH	2,800'	No snow	5" new snow	42" of snow at the sno-park	More than 42" of snow	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	No new report	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	No new report	No new report

SNOWTEL STATIONS:		Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25	1/26-2/1	2/2-2/8	2/9-2/15
Name	Elevation												
JUNE LAKE	3,340'	Avg Snow											
		Depth (inches)	12.3	26.8	68.8	103.3	101.6	97.3	93.3	88.4	103.1	98.2	98.4
		Min Temp (F)	30.9	27.5	25.7	27.5	18.7	23.7	17.2	28.6	29.3	26.2	24.6
		Max Temp (F)	43.9	37.8	35.2	34.5	35.1	40.3	47.1	63	39	49.6	42.4
		Avg Temp (F)	36.6	32.7	29.9	31.1	27	33	28.8	44.9	33.8	36.4	33.1
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	68	72	82.9	84.6	85.9	86.3	98.6	97.2	106.3	109.3	109.8
SPIRIT LAKE	3,520'	Avg Snow											
		Depth (inches)	1.1	9.6	19.1	27.8	26.1	19.7	20.1	18.1	25.9	24.7	25.3
		Min Temp (F)	31.5	19	19	22.3	20.3	25.3	9.9	27.7	28.6	12.7	23.2
		Max Temp (F)	48.4	41.9	44.4	35.6	41.7	46	54.4	54.3	42.1	48.2	43
		Avg Temp (F)	37.9	32.7	30.2	31.6	29.2	34.5	28.2	39.1	34.4	35.9	33.5

		Year to date precipitation (inches)	34.4	37.6	42.2	45.2	45.6	47.7	47.8	48.4	56.2	57.2	58.1
Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25	1/26-2/1	2/2-2/8	2/9-2/15
PEPPER CREEK	2,140'	Avg Snow											
		Depth (inches)	0	0.17	14.7	24	24.6	23.8	22.8	23	28.9	25.4	23.3
		Min Temp (F)	32.4	30.4	30	30.4	21.6	27	12.9	23.9	33.1	28.4	23.7
		Max Temp (F)	48	43.2	36.9	36.9	39	41.4	43.5	55.2	43.7	53.8	45.9
		Avg Temp (F)	40.2	35.4	33	33.8	28	33.3	26.5	33.4	35.4	36.2	35.5
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	22.2	23.7	29.9	31	31.3	33.8	33.8	34.3	37.3	38	38.2

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25	1/26-2/1	2/2-2/8	2/9-2/15
SHEEP CANYON	3,990'	Avg Snow											
		Depth (inches)	12.6	25.7	61.3	96.3	93.6	88.4	84.7	81.4	102.7	102.5	103.4
		Min Temp (F)	29.1	21.9	23.4	25.5	20.5	23.7	14.5	25.5	28.2	24.1	23.9
		Max Temp (F)	42.6	36.5	33.8	33.6	39.9	39.4	54.4	58.5	37.8	52.5	39.2
		Avg Temp (F)	35	30.7	28.2	30.2	28.4	32.3	29.1	43.6	32.3	35.3	31.7
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	60.4	63.8	69.6	77.3	81.7	86.3	86.3	87	95.9	98.3	98.9

Name	Elevation	Stats	12/1-12/7	12/8-12/14	12/15-12/21	12/22-12/28	12/29-1/4	1/5-1/11	1/12-1/18	1/19-1/25	1/26-2/1	2/2-2/8	2/9-2/15
CALAMITY	2500'	Avg Snow											
		Depth (inches)	0	0	13	22	18.7	17.7	15.3	15	15.9	14.2	11.2
		Min Temp (F)	33.8	32.5	29.1	31.3	23.7	28	21.2	32.5	32.4	31.3	30
		Max Temp (F)	47.7	41.2	40.3	36.3	36.1	43.5	56.7	62.1	43.2	48	42.3
		Avg Temp (F)	40.2	35.6	32.8	33.4	29.1	36	32.2	47.2	36.3	39.2	35.8
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	42.1	44.5	52.2	54.6	54.8	59.2	59.4	60.1	66.4	67.5	68

Snowpack % of Avg Snow Water Equivalent	12/07/2012	12/14/2012	12/21/2012	12/28/2012	01/04/2013	01/11/2013	01/18/2013	01/25/2013	02/01/2013	02/08/2013	02/15/2013
JUNE LAKE	no data	no data	180%	134%	no data	no data	147%	139%	149%	no data	140%
SPIRIT LAKE	no data	200%	410%	134%	447%	371%	350%	286%	414%	535%	486%
SHEEP CANYON	86%	91%	151%	165%	170%	184%	169%	145%	164%	173%	160%

02/22/2013 03/01/2013 03/08/2013

No new report	No new report	No new snow. 3ft total.
No new report	15" new snow and 90" base	9" new and 84" base
Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	No new report	No new report

2/16-2/22 2/23-3/1 3/2-3/8

96.1	122.4	116
25.7	27.1	27
51.4	41.5	43
33.3	32.4	34.3

111.5 119.1 122.5

2/16-2/22 2/23-3/1 3/2-3/8

24.1	32	26
21.7	20.1	19
48.9	44.4	44
33.5	33	33.5

59.2 62.2 63.9

2/16-2/22 2/23-3/1 3/2-3/8

21.6 30.7 27
24.8 31.3 26
56.8 41.5 50
34.9 35.2 35.3

38.9 42.9 44

2/16-2/22 2/23-3/1 3/2-3/8

100.5 123 115.1
24.4 23.2 21
52.3 41.4 41
31.5 30.7 32.7

100.3 106.5 109.1

2/16-2/22 2/23-3/1 3/2-3/8

9.4 15.7 11.6
30.6 31.3 31
50.5 46 47
36.3 35.5 36.8

69.2 74 75.2

02/22/2013 03/01/2013 03/08/2013

130% 140% no data
398% 371% 344%

159% 153% 148%

REGION 6

Wildlife Management

Taylor's Checkerspot Reintroduction: Biologist Linders led two teams of hard-working staff and volunteers in conducting the largest release of Taylor's checkerspot larvae to date. Thirteen people assisted in releasing over 6,600 larvae between two South Puget Sound prairies this past week. A broad base of support from a diverse set of individuals and institutions is what has made this project so successful. Special thanks are due to staffs at the Oregon Zoo and Mission Creek for rearing a record number of larvae to the post-diapause stage.

About 200 larvae were released onto the native Golden paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*) as a pilot study conducted in association with the University of Washington-Seattle and the Center for Natural Lands Management to learn more about the relationship between these two rare species. It has long been suspected that checkerspots used this federally threatened plant, but no solid historical evidence existed. An equal number of larvae were released on non-native English plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) in the vicinity of the main release area to provide a comparison. Recent work at Mission Creek captive rearing lab led by a graduate student from The Evergreen State College showed that checkerspots preferred to oviposit on both golden paintbrush and harsh paintbrush (*Castilleja hispida*) over the non-native English plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*).

Follow-up surveys five to seven days post-release revealed good numbers of larva at both reintroduction sites. Larvae released onto golden paintbrush as part of the study were observed in good numbers that appeared to exceed those observed on English plantain.



Taylor's checkerspot larvae await release into the field.



Kyle Guzlas (WDFW) and Rod Gilbert (JBLM) in the foreground and Regina Johnson (WDFW) and Cheryl Fimbel (CNLM) release Taylor's checkerspot larvae (above). Taylor's checkerspot larvae found on the federally-threatened native plant golden paintbrush (below).



Peter Danwidde

Oregon Spotted Frogs: Biologists Tirhi and Schmidt continued with state endangered Oregon spotted frog surveys for the 2013 field season in Thurston County. The survey protocol requires three visits to occupied sites, spaced 7 to 10 days apart, to account for all egg masses. Tirhi conducted the second of three surveys at two occupied sites and located additional egg masses at both. Water levels had risen slightly at both sites and all egg masses were in standing water (e.g. none susceptible to stranding and desiccation). Tirhi also continued searches on properties in the vicinity of occupied sites in order to locate new breeding locations. All potential properties surrounding Fish Pond Creek, Thurston County have been inventoried and Tirhi is now focused on properties surrounding Salmon Creek. Tirhi has also cooperated with Tacoma MetroParks to hire a seasonal employee to survey historic locations in the Kapowsin/Graham vicinity of Pierce County and potential sites in Roy and McKenna. A list of potential sites (containing wetlands and ponds) was developed and Tirhi contacted each property owner seeking access permission. Approximately 50% of the properties allowed access and surveys are underway. Tirhi and MetroParks also developed an information sheet that was mailed and/or hand delivered to all properties that explain the project.

Western Snowy Plover (WSP): Biologist Hoenes worked with representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to develop a cooperative agreement between WDFW and USACE to complete WSP surveys at the site of USACE's Shoalwater Bay Shoreline Erosion Project. Shoreline erosion problems in Shoalwater Bay near Tokeland, WA have been increasing in recent years and USACE began constructing a dike in 2012 to prevent further losses. They were not able to complete the project during the 2012 season and will have to continue during 2013. The area where the project is occurring is immediately adjacent to an area designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as critical WSP habitat. Consequently, weekly surveys must be conducted to ensure WSPs are not nesting in the active construction site. If WSPs are observed in the vicinity, USACE is notified and construction activities modified to avoid disturbing nesting WSPs. This scenario occurred during the 2012 season when a pair of nesting WSPs was detected and construction activities were modified to limit disturbance. The approach was successful as evident by the fact that the nest was successful and fledged three WSP chicks.

Black-tailed Deer: Biologist Hoenes and Research Scientist Rice investigated a mortality event in the Capitol Forest cluster. The deer that died was an adult doe that had been captured and fitted with a radio-collar in February. There were very few parts of the carcass left. It was obvious that coyotes were involved in consuming the deer as evidenced by the amount of coyote scat in the area and the condition of the carcass, but with so few remains biologists could not identify a definitive cause of death. Biologist Hoenes also retrieved three collars that had "dropped." The collars being used in this project are designed to break away after two years. When that happens, biologists retrieve them and are able to download all the location data that is collected by the internal GPS. With the one mortality event and three collars that "dropped," five collared deer remain in the Capitol Forest Cluster.

Biologist Schmidt investigated the first mortality event of collared does at Vail this week. The radio collar and VIT were located at the carcass that appeared to be depredated by cougar and scavenged by coyote and eagles. Collar data reflects 15 minutes of high activity followed by several hours of no activity. This scenario is indicative of a cougar kill. Two adult eagles circled

overhead when the biologist arrived and tracks of cougar and coyote were at the carcass as well as whitewash from the eagles. Seven collars remain in the Vail unit.

Purple Martin: Biologist Tirhi trained 10 Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium staff and volunteers on conducting Purple Martin (*Progne subis arboricola*) monitoring. Purple Martins are the largest native swallow in Washington and experienced significant population declines last century due to destruction of habitat (snags) and introduction of non-native birds (house sparrows and starlings). Martins are a colonial nester meaning they nest collectively in groups. Following the tradition of the east coast, volunteers and “martin enthusiasts” in Washington and British Columbia began to erect nesting boxes in the 1960s through the early 2000s which essentially resulted in a population increase.

According to Breeding Bird Survey data, Purple Martin population has been stable across North America for the years 1966-2006 due largely to volunteers maintaining artificial housing. However, the drawback to this system is that martins are almost completely dependent on human maintenance of artificial housing; populations would most definitely decline should artificial housing be removed.

Martins are currently listed as a state candidate species in Washington and as such receive very little staff time. Thus, Tirhi is hoping to train volunteers to monitor colonies and maintain artificial housing, beginning with the program provided by the Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium Education Department. This first volunteer group has adopted two martin colonies in the Tacoma vicinity, Titlow Park (2013) and Ruston Way (2014). They began with a work day at Titlow Park to inspect each of the boxes, repair any as needed, paint and number each box for monitoring, and installed new plastic gourds purchased from the Purple Martin Conservation Association

Tirhi provided PowerPoint training on martin biology, identification by sex and age, and monitoring and data collection. Volunteers will then take turns monitoring on a weekly schedule and submit all data forms to Tirhi at the end of the season for QA prior to submission to the state database. Biologists Tirhi, Schmidt and Blatz also continue to work cooperatively on a system of sending season monitoring packets to other site managers across Washington in an effort to keep the state Purple Martin database current.

The Western Purple Martin Working Group, formed in 1998, includes representatives from state and federal agencies, universities and conservation organizations, as well as unaffiliated individuals interested in Purple Martins. The group meets once a year and collaboratively works to recover the martin population across its western range.

Wildlife Areas

Lynch Cove – Mason County: Region 6 wildlife area staff cleaned up two large dump sites at our access areas at Lynch Cove in Mason County. More than 50 tires were removed, a new kiosk was installed and one was repainted, and additional rock was also added and graded at the parking areas.



More than 50 tires were removed (above), and additional rock was added and graded at the parking areas (below) of two large dump sites at Lynch Cove access areas.

