

Wildlife Program

Week of March 25-31, 2013

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Nongame Technical Committee – Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan attended the March meeting of the Nongame Migratory Bird Technical Committee. Three products were completed and subsequently submitted to the Pacific Flyway Council: Monitoring strategies for Double-crested Cormorant and American White Pelican and a document describing and presenting examples of potential take levels.

Two Recommendations – involving the two monitoring strategies – were presented to Council. Further, three Information Notes – involving Peregrine Falcon take for falconry, an update on Golden Eagle management activities, and presentation of the potential take levels model – were presented to Council.

Butterfly Conservation Information Outreach – Biologist Ann Potter attended the 84th Annual Meeting of the Northwest Science Association with the Cascadia Prairie-Oak Partnership in Portland, Oregon. During the meeting, Ann delivered a presentation on upcoming Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) work to monitor Species of Greatest Conservation Need butterflies in prairie-oak restoration units, a component of the State Wildlife Grant Prairie-Oak project.

Interagency Collaboration – Division Manager Eric Gardner attended the North American Wildlife Conference in Arlington, VA. In addition to the plenary session and attending workshops on Landscape Level Conservation in North America and The National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy, he vice-chaired the Amphibian and Reptile Subcommittee and attended and represented Washington at the Bird Conservation, teaming with Wildlife, and Threatened and Endangered Species committees.

Conference attendance from federal agencies was significantly diminished due to federal sequestration, although high level U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) personnel such as Dan Ashe, Gary Fazer and Hannibal Bolton were present throughout the conference.

Pocket Gopher Mound Characteristics – Analyses were completed for substrate collected from definite Mazama pocket gopher mounds at 48 sites in Mason, Pierce, and Thurston counties during surveys in 2012. Analytical work was coordinated by Section Manager Bruce Thompson and performed primarily through a citizen science arrangement with a student and teacher at New Market Skills Center in Tumwater. Analysis of texture of the collected material indicated all were sandy loam or loamy sand, consistent with past information about soil types associated with pocket gopher habitat.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1

Public Meeting on Wolves and Big Game: District Wildlife Biologist Dana Base teamed with Wildlife Program Managers Dave Ware, Jerry Nelson, Kevin Robinette, and other agency staff in facilitating a public meeting in Colville on Wednesday evening March 27. Retired Superior Court Judge Larry Kristianson from Chewelah, WA graciously served as Moderator to the meeting.



The purpose of the meeting was to present information on the status and trends of gray wolf and big game (especially deer, elk, and moose) populations, especially focusing on northeastern Washington. Hunter harvest summaries and analyses for big game animals were presented in great detail and correlated to current and potential future impact by wolves.

Using radio-telemetry to look for the Salmo pack near the Canadian border. The border is the long sloping white strip.

Following this presentation, about an equal amount of time was spent fielding questions from the audience along with general comments and complaints about wolf repopulation in Washington. Moderator Larry Kristianson played a vital role in keeping this segment of the meeting civil and orderly. The meeting was held at the Ag Trade Building on the NE Washington Fairgrounds, a facility with a capacity of 270. The event appeared to host close to that number as the building nearly filled up with people and included television and newspaper media correspondents.

Conflict Specialist Shepherd was on a flight with Officer Taylor which flew all non-tribal wolf packs in northeast Washington wolf territories to find and or look for collared wolves. The Huckleberry pack area was flown to look in the areas where pups were discovered last year. Possible wolf sign was observed.

Conflict Specialist Shepherd attended the Wolf-Ungulate public meeting in Colville and discussed mainly livestock but also ungulate issues with several ranchers and sportsmen. Conflict Specialist Shepherd assisted a local rancher with a presentation to the Colville High School concerning his operation. Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed the non-lethal proactive methods that have been used in the Smackout wolf territory as well as other places. Conflict

Specialist Shepherd was a member of a conference call concerning a dead cow discovered near Wenatchee with wolves observed in the vicinity.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Project: Biologists Atamian, Schroeder, Gregory, Davis, Lowe (Bureau of Land Management-BLM), Lewis (BLM), Anthony (BLM), Stonehouse (Washington State University), Thorburn (volunteer), Wilson (volunteer), and Pineo (volunteer) traveled to southern Oregon to capture sage grouse for translocation back to Lincoln County. A total of 10 males and 7 females were captured in this first effort.



Mike Atamian with volunteer Kim Thorburn and Washington State University student Kourtney Stonehouse work up a newly captured grouse.

Mountain Quail: District Biologist Wik and two volunteers worked at different times throughout the week in preparing for and implementing the transplanting of mountain quail into the North Fork of Asotin Creek. Forty-nine birds were captured at the holding facility and 25 were fitted with necklace style radio transmitters. The birds were captured from the holding facility on Friday afternoon and released Saturday morning. Wik is still working to get a technician on the ground to radio-track the newly released birds. Unfortunately, we are likely to miss the first couple weeks of survival prior to a technician starting.



Biologist Wik displays a collared mountain quail prior to release.



A recently released mountain quail perched in a tree.

Private Lands/Access

Potential site development – On Wednesday, Access Manager Young drove Wildlife Area Manager Anderson and Lands Agent Brian Trickel up to the property the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) owns in the town of Orient, on the Kettle River. He placed a small metal sign on the property, showing that the parcel was purchased with Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) funds. The three agreed that the parcel is suitable for day use, primarily for picnicking and rafter put-in/take-out. Rough estimate for improvements is \$175,000, and would be requested through an RCO grant. This includes installing a U-shaped gravel drive on the upper flat, adding a vault toilet, hacking out a narrow trail to the river, adding a couple campfire rings on the rocky flat along the water, and installing chain-link fence around the parcel (there are residences on either side of the parcel).



WDFW property at Orient observed from the opposite side of the Kettle River. Property extends uphill to the street (above). Access Manager Young posted the “RCO-purchased” sign on the Orient property (below).





Boggan Access Site, Grande Ronde River: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice assisted Terry Folkins on Friday by hauling 10 yards of gravel to the Boggan Access Site and spreading gravel on the entrance driveway. Dice and Folkins filled in ruts and smoothed out the surface using rakes and shovels.

Terry Folkins helped enhance the Boggan Access Site along the Grande Ronde River.

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

Private Lands/Access

Whitman Conservation Youth Event: Private Lands Biologist Lewis attended a tree planting event with the 5th grade classes from Colfax Elementary School. Lewis used the educational totes from the Spokane regional office to teach the kids about predator/prey relationships, physical adaptations of the species discussed, and wildlife sign. Lewis also assisted the 35 students with planting 500 trees and shrubs.



Fifth graders from Colfax Elementary School helped plant 500 trees and shrubs.

REGION 2

None

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Burrowing Owls: Biologist Gregory toured the newly installed owl burrows. Owls have been observed at several of the burrows since their installation earlier this month. Burrow locations were marked to add to the GIS database.



A burrowing owl attended one of the recently installed artificial burrows outside of Pasco.

Deer Survey: Biologist Moore planned and performed the Population Management Unit (PMU) 32 deer survey. A complete population estimate will result from these data. We successfully flew 70% of the spring range by sampling 14 of 20 units. Qualitatively, the units to the west appear to be doing well, while the units to the east still seem to be depressed.

Golden Eagles: Biologist Moore checked golden eagle territories during the deer flight.

- **Lookout Mountain:** This nest was reported by a consultant and was suspected to be active in 2011. The cavity and nesting material seems to be small and whitewash was minimal so it is difficult to tell exactly what created this nest.
- **Quilomene:** This nest remains unrepaired.
- **Colockum HQ:** This nest has been repaired, but no eagles were present during the fly by.
- **Naneum:** In 2004 and 2005 this territory was inactive with all nests being unrepaired and no eagles present. This year on the fly by, nest 61-2 had an adult golden on the nest incubating, so a territory once thought to be abandoned is once again active.



Suspected Golden Eagle nest located near Lookout Mountain by Cle Elum, WA.

Wildlife Areas

Rattlesnake Slope: Sunnyside/Snake River Manager Bjornstrom met on Rattlesnake Slope with Adam Fyall representing Benton County, Enforcement Officer Chad McGary, Dan Chappell representing Rattlesnake Ridge Riders, District Biologist Gregory, and Assistant Manager Buser. The group discussed options for dealing with a site that has become an unofficial access site and shooting area. User group conflicts have arisen in the past as well as health and human safety

issues. Signs were posted at the site the following day to help provide Enforcement the means to cite folks for the improper use of the area.



Assistant Manager Buser posted signs at Rattlesnake Slope to control improper use at the site.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Oregon Spotted Frog (OSF) Survey Project: Biologists Bauman and Johnson continued surveying potential Oregon spotted frog habitat. They have found 298 egg masses so far at a combination of known breeding sites and two new sites. Other amphibians they have encountered this week are northwestern salamanders, red legged frogs, American bullfrogs, pacific tree frogs and western toads. Biologist Danilson met with representatives from Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group and the Samish Indian Tribe at one of the sites occupied by OSF. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how to implement a funded fisheries restoration project in a way that does not adversely impact OSF breeding habitat. Danilson followed with USFWS representatives to facilitate their input.

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 USFWS, 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.



Female Oregon spotted frog sunning on an algae mat.



An Oregon spotted frog egg mass on a grass mat.

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Project: This week WDFW Technician Anderson closed down the swan operation for the year. No new mortalities were reported and no sick or dead swans were collected. Biologist DeBruyn transported all swan tissue samples to British Columbia and turned them over to The Canadian Wildlife Service for analysis.

	Skagit	Snohomish	Whatcom	Sumas	TOTAL
Power line suspect	35	5	30		70
Lead suspect	26	1	13	4	44
Trauma*	6		7	6	19
Unknown	16		3		19
Feather Pile	8		4	6	18
TOTAL	91	6	57	16	170

Golden Eagle Nest Monitoring: Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued work on the 2013 Golden Eagle survey, this week following up on second priority nests located on San Juan Island. These nests consisted of sites that were last occupied in the late 1990s. None of the nests or trees was located and no Golden Eagles were seen. In addition, very few Bald Eagles were observed as well. Aerial surveys may be used as time and funds allow checking on other appropriate habitat. Golden Eagle tracking forms used by Forest and Surveys biologists to track the progress of the Golden Eagle survey statewide were updated.

Common Loon Banding Efforts: Biologist Anderson worked with Hancock Timber Management biologists and Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) to outline collaborative banding efforts for the 2013 season. BRI has provided a proposal to renew similar efforts and collaboration with Hancock and WDFW in King County.

Heron Colony Management: Biologist Anderson provided for site-specific heron management plans regarding Seattle area heron colonies and land use proposals. Anderson is working with the applicants to provide appropriate management recommendations.

Annual WDFW – US Army Corp – Tacoma Water Meeting: Biologist Anderson met with US Army Corp of Engineers (USACOE) and Tacoma Water (TW) to discuss collaborative management needs, including loon monitoring and management. Anderson and ACOE will be examining installation of a ground based pan-tilt-zoom camera near the North Fork Green River end of the Howard Hanson Reservoir where loons now regularly nest.

This will provide for movement of the nest and also for opportunity to zoom in on a nearby Osprey nest. Anderson met with Tacoma Water technicians to examine frog breeding in the Maywood Field area. The area has a population of Cascades frog that will be used for a DNA bank for comparison to Oregon spotted frog. The effort was in collaboration with Habitat Research Scientist Marc Hayes.

Island Marble Butterfly at San Juan National Park: District Biologist Milner met with National Parks staff, WDFW Biologist Ann Potter and USFWS staff to discuss work plans at the park revolving around the Island Marble Butterfly. Various strategies for establishing enclosures

to keep deer from eating plants containing butterfly eggs and larva were discussed and the group toured the Park to decide on the best places to place the enclosures.

Private Lands/Access

Spring Bear Damage Hunts: Region 4 staff continued with hunt preparations for the North Skagit and Monroe units. Planning and coordination for the Skagit and Monroe bear hunts will continue over the following weeks.

Skagit Wildlife Area Agreements: Biologist Roozen assisted Skagit Wildlife Area staff with agricultural leases on WDFW lands in the Region. Roozen and Manager Rotton met with local growers regarding agricultural plans as well as public access as they relate to the agreements.

Wildlife Areas

Cherry Valley Fish Passage Project: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with WDFW Noxious Weed staff Tom Wampler to continue site prep at the Fish Passage Project restoration site. A unique all-terrain vehicle called a “Marsh Master” will be used, as well as mowing, rototilling and applying herbicide to combat the reed canary grass prior to planting in April. Planting is scheduled to begin the week of April 8.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continues to work at the barn to improve security at the facility and general cleanup of the area. Additionally, several planning meetings were held to prepare for the creation of the new native plant nursery that is planned for the site. Mill Creek’s Boy Scout Troop 327 will be conducting the ground prep and potting native plants the first week of April. The plants will be used at Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Units to replace invasive weeds that have been eradicated.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Ebey Island lease holder Everett Alexander to continue discussions on a fencing plan for the Unit. This includes fencing to protect aquatic resources such as wetlands, and controlling the movement of cattle on the Unit. Additionally, a location was selected for a 20 acre barley field to be planted for forage and cover for pheasants and waterfowl on the West Lobe of the Unit near the parking area.

Spencer Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm visited the Unit to monitor trail conditions and signage. The access road to the trail received a new layer of gravel to cover up the pot holes that formed over the winter.

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

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Elk Herd Clover Trapping Project: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn and Technician Anderson conducted trap checks, removed traps, and assisted in the capture and

release of a young cow elk that was outfitted with a GPS collar. The project came to a close last week and the traps have been removed from the field. A total of eight elk were captured and safely released. Of these, six cow elk were radio collared (including one GPS collar), while a spike and a young bull were safely released.

This project is a cooperative effort between WDFW, the Swinomish, Upper Skagit and Sauk-Suiattle Tribes. The objective of the project is to maintain a subpopulation of radio collared elk in the North Cascades elk herd to help estimate the population size and composition using the “mark-resight” methodology established over the past several years.

North Cascades Elk Herd Annual Population Surveys: Biologist Danilson worked with tribal biologists to enter, review and clean-up data from the first round of population surveys and prepare for the second week. Tasks included dealing with billing, mapping GPS waypoints and tracklogs, revising data sheets, obtaining permission from landowners for helicopter operations, etc.

North Cascades Co-management Technical Committee Meeting: Biologist Danilson and Manager Link met with the Section Manager Simek and Sergeant Phillips to provide Simek with an overview of nuisance wildlife issues in District 14. This meeting and field tour was focused primarily on elk issues, but also included bear damage on private industrial tree farms.

Band-tailed Pigeon Study: Biologist DeBruyn purchased supplies and began building traps for a study to begin this spring. He contacted landowners where trapping will be done and tested radio transmitters. DeBruyn submitted a request to the bird banding lab to approve color marking protocols for the pigeon study. He began work on Human Resources forms to hire a temporary biologist to work on the study.

Big Game Stat Review: Biologists reviewed preliminary stats for the 2012 hunting season before they are released to the public.

Outreach – Brier Habitat Project: Biologist Anderson provided an hour presentation to a group of citizens regarding the value and management of snags or “wildlife trees.” Anderson also covered basic urban ecology and resources for citizens regarding enhancement of habitat and conflict reduction.

Special Permit Hunts in Game Management Unit (GMU) 485 – Green River: Biologist Anderson worked with Deer and Elk Section Manager Nelson to finalize dates for special permit hunts in the Green as well as any hunt changes.

Private Lands/Access

Bow Hill Road Pheasant Release Site: Biologist Roozen assisted Managers Link and Calkins finish pheasant hunter survey and prepare survey for distribution. Roozen also arranged for repairs and improvements at the private parking area for the site.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Technicians Deyo and Otto removed leftover materials and blinds on select private lands enrolled in the Program. Otto and Deyo also installed a semi-permanent foot bridge on landowner's property to assist public access this fall.



Blind installed at Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program unit.

Private Timberlands Hunter Access: Staff reviewed potential locations for hunter access. Region 4 private lands staff will review ownership maps, aerial photos, and site visits to evaluate potential hunting opportunities. Staff have met preliminarily with local timber companies, and gained access to their property in order to better survey land.

Private Land Wildlife Viewing: Technician Deyo continued preparation for an access site on Whidbey Island. Deyo and Biologist Roozen visited the site and discussed limitations and timeline for use. Private lands staff will complete preparations soon and make arrangements to develop additional viewing of the site south of Stanwood. Staff plans to have locations available for the public this spring.

Wildlife Areas

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with members from Washington Waterfowl Association (WWA) and a private landowner. The landowner is interested in expanding the wood duck box project at the Stillwater Unit to his adjoining property. A number of potential locations were identified and the WWA members will build and install the boxes in April.

Samish River - Welts Property Wetland Enhancement Project: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton coordinated with the Capital and

Asset Management Program (CAMP) on a timeline for going out to bid on the project and roles and responsibilities between CAMP and regional staff.

Stillwater Revetment Removal Project: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw completed a draft of an Adaptive Management Plan for the project site, which will be reviewed and edited over the next few weeks. The goal of the plan is to document how the project partners will respond to managing the project area as conditions change when the revetment is removed. Maintaining or improving recreation access is addressed in the plan.

The private property owners adjacent to the Stillwater Unit signed a document granting permission to access the project area through their property during construction and to remove a portion of the revetment on their property.

Leque Island: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw sent a project status update to the stakeholder email list. Environmental Protection Agency headquarters has provided a senior hydrologist from their Office of Research to review a groundwater report to determine whether or not the study and analysis were consistent with originally outlined protocols. The target date for the determination is April 30.

Samish Unit: Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resource Technician Curran Cosgrove installed a new duck blind and staged materials for a WWA work party scheduled for April 13. A Washington Waterfowl Association volunteer assisted with the installation and will coordinate the work party.

Tennant Lake Bass Fishing: Manager Kessler met with a volunteer who worked to clear the channel to Tennant Lake for car top boat use.

Lake Terrell Bass Fishing Tournament: The Borderline Basin Contenders held a Bass Fishing Tournament at Lake Terrell that was very well attended.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk: Manager Kessler coordinated with the Whatcom County Parks Manager on the Tennant Lake boardwalk. The water level at Tennant Lake has finally fallen enough to open the boardwalk to the public.

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

Wildlife Management

Seattle City Light Wildlife Research Program Grant committee: Biologist DeBruyn met with representatives of Seattle City Light, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), USFWS, University of Washington, and the National Park Service to award about \$90 thousand dollars in wildlife grants for projects in the Skagit River watershed.

Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant application review: Biologist Milner continued reviewing and scoring grant applications for ALEA funds.

Wildlife Areas

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm attended the Snohomish County Sustainable Land Strategy (SLS) meeting on March 29, 2013. An announcement was made to the Executive Council that Brian Boehm has been appointed the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager and that he would like to continue collaborative relations with the SLS concerning restoration and agricultural efforts on Ebey Island.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with two members of the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) to discuss habitat improvements for pheasant hunting at the Cherry Valley and Crescent Lake units.

Skagit Wildlife Area: Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis and Natural Resource Technician Curran Cosgrove treated poison hemlock on Padilla Bay, Fir Island Farms, Samish, and Leque Island units.

Leque Island Unit: Natural Resource Specialist Cosgrove began brush hogging some of the decadent grass and blackberry on the west side of the Unit. Snow geese have been utilizing the site for most of the week feeding in the corn stubble and newly mowed grass areas.



Snow geese have utilized the Leque Island and Fir Island Farm properties this week.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Recruitment: Biologists Kessler and Roozen completed the process and selected a candidate for hire which will be shared between the Whatcom Wildlife Area and the Private Lands program. Chad Deyo accepted the position and will start this week. Biologist Anderson continued to work to get an Assistant District Biologist for District 12. Anderson is looking forward to renewed team efforts in District 12.

Wildlife Program Radio Training: Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued to provide radio communications training and support to Wildlife Program Staff.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Cackling Canada Goose Mark-Resight Survey: The cackling goose is the smallest subspecies of Canada goose and is one of seven subspecies of Canada geese that winters in southwestern Washington. Historically, this goose migrated to the central valley of California during the winter months, however, in the early 1990s the population substantially shifted to northwest Oregon and southwest Washington during the fall and winter. For several decades, aerial surveys conducted in California's Klamath Basin during the fall showed a steady decline of this subspecies from about 400,000 birds in the late 1960's to a low of 26,000 by 1984. This decline was likely a result of spring subsistence hunting in Alaska combined with fall harvests primarily in California.

By 1984, a broad based conservation program for cackling Canada geese was developed through the combined efforts of management agencies, conservation groups, and hunters from Alaska to California. Consistent, cooperative conservation efforts among these stakeholders resulted in a population increase to approximately 200,000 cackling geese by 1999. Estimation methods have recently been adjusted; however, the Pacific Flyway Management Plan for cackling Canada geese has listed a population goal of 250,000 birds as measured by a three year average index of combined estimates. According to the 2012 U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) Waterfowl Status Report, the population of cacklers is estimated at 202,300 ($\pm 25,000$) geese.

In cooperation with the USFWS, California Department of Fish and Game, Canadian Wildlife Service, and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), WDFW participated in cackling Canada goose surveys during the weeks of March 18-22 and March 25-29. Biologists Holman, Bergh George and Scientific Technician Doorly surveyed multiple areas throughout Region 5. Thousands of cacklers were examined for neck collars displaying unique characters that identify individual geese. A total of 20 collars were observed by WDFW staff during both survey periods. These results will be combined with other observations reported to the USFWS and will aid in estimating the abundance of cackling geese and contribute to assessing survival rates and movement patterns. Gaining this information will ultimately be used to guide management actions to provide optimal aesthetic, educational, and hunting uses throughout the cackling goose range while helping to address current depredation issues being faced in Washington and Oregon.

Mount St. Helens Elk Herd Surveys: Biologists Miller, Stephens, Holman, and Bergh along with Deer and Elk Specialist McCorquodale conducted elk surveys for the Mount St. Helens elk herd this week. Over 400 groups of elk were located and classified from the air during four days of surveying in Game Management Units (GMUs) 520, 522, 524, 550 and 556. IT Specialist

Duff simplified the survey tool, GPS and computer, which made data recording much smoother. This is the last round of surveys that are part of the effort to establish a sightability model for use in elk herd population monitoring. Thank you to Jess Haggerman, pilot at Northwest Helicopters, for his safe and efficient flying during the week.



A new survey tool (left) made data recording of the Mount St. Helens Elk Herd much smoother. Bull Elk (right) observed in the south Toutle Survey Unit.

Spotted Frog Egg Mass Survey: WDFW Biologists Hallock, Anderson, and Van Leuven participated in the annual spotted frog surveys at Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve, along with a group of USFWS and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff. The purpose of the count is to estimate the population of adult Oregon spotted frogs at Trout Lake Marsh. Trout Lake is one of only a few locations where Oregon spotted frogs are persisting in Washington State. One of the characteristic behaviors of this species is a tendency for many frogs to deposit eggs in large clusters at a single location. This can make accurate counting of individual egg masses somewhat challenging, where several surveyors are comparing their estimates at the site of a very large cluster. Preliminary results indicate that this year's egg mass counts represent one of the highest counts in the last 17 years of surveys. This is good news considering the current endangered status of this rare Washington native frog.



Trout Lake Spotted Frog Egg Mass Surveys Count

Pierce National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Review: Biologist Anderson participated in a site review of proposed fishery habitat improvement projects at Pierce NWR. The site visit was conducted with representatives from the Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group, USFWS, and WDFW. The primary intent of the site visit was to discuss how proposed habitat changes to the refuge might improve or impact a variety of wildlife species including the western pond turtle and western toad. WDFW Wildlife Management appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to these proposed fishery projects in the planning phase.



Pierce National Wildlife Refuge Review

Forest Practices - Sandhill Cranes: Biologist Anderson assisted Habitat Division staff with review of a forest practice application associated with sandhill crane habitat at Conboy Refuge. The applicant contested restrictions to their forest practice application and Biologist Anderson agreed that their operations would have no effect to breeding sandhill cranes. Recommendations were made to Olympia staff to approve the application for timber harvest to begin immediately.

Wildlife Areas

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area



Cedar Creek Pigeon Spring Maintenance: Technician Sample finished clearing vegetation from the mineral spring at the Cedar Creek Wildlife Area allowing pigeons easier access to the mineral rich water that seeps out of the hillside. Sample observed three band-tailed pigeons fly out of the trees near the spring while beginning work on removing scotch broom from the open meadow adjacent to the forested spring.

The Cedar Creek Pigeon Spring

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Golden Eagles: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven visited a golden eagle territory in the lower Klickitat River drainage to see if the nest was occupied. An adult eagle flew off the nest and then made a couple of flights nearby while Van Leuven was in the area. The eagle monitored her departure as Van Leuven hiked away through an oak-woodland.

In the course of Manager Van Leuven's field work, she found that several species of wildflowers are blooming in the lower Klickitat Canyon. In an oak-woodland there were three species of pink/purple flowers sharing the same space: Douglas'



Golden Eagle in Lower Canyon

grass widows, oak toothwort, and prairie stars appear in picture below. Western buttercups and glacier lilies were also blooming nearby.



Shades of pink on the Klickitat Wildlife Area featured Douglas' grass widows, oak toothwort, and prairie stars.

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

Private Lands/Access



Oneida Access Site: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes repaired the nonslip surface that was installed. While on site, Rhodes was able to take pictures of a group of deer that walked across the property and swam across the river.

Oneida Deer Crossing

Langsdorf Landing: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes filled holes on the lower ramp with gravel and removed some rebar that posed a hazard to boat trailers. In addition, they packed the planks and sides of boat ramp with gravel.



Langsdorf Landing Repack

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

Assistance to Fisheries Management: Biologist Holman assisted Fisheries Management Staff with the removal of a beaver that had become trapped in a fish collection facility on the Wind River. The 30-35 pound beaver was trapped inside of a roughly 10' tall x 15' wide x 15' long concrete enclosure used to collect steelhead. The River velocity and steepness of the sides of the structure prevented its escape. Fish collection nets were used to capture the animal and move it to the riverbank.

Other

District 10 and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: March temperatures and precipitation were both below average for the month. Snowfall for the month was minimal with light accumulations on the valley floor of the Mudflow Unit. Snow levels dropped to under 1,500 feet the end of last week but have since risen; melting lower and middle elevation snow.

Short-Term Forecast: The 6-10 and the 8-14 day forecasts are for above 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 precipitation.

Habitat: Forage is available at lower elevations, and elk appear to have fed heavily on willows and cottonwoods in the Mudflow Unit, while 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 and has slowly started on the Mudflow Unit.

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: A majority of animals observed to date appear to be in fair condition, although there are some with rough pelage and are in poor condition.

Mortality: The Wildlife Area Manager observed five mortalities this past week while conducting other work on the Mudflow Unit.

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: March temperatures have moderated and precipitation and snowfall are below normal averages. Warm weather has increased green up at all lower elevations.

Habitat: Forage is available at lower elevations. The Klickitat Wildlife Area is free of snow with significant green up throughout all elevations below 3,000 feet.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations of deer or elk reported.

Animal Condition: The majority of animals observed to date, appear to be in good condition.

Mortality: Two elk mortalities were reported in the Trout Lake area this week.

Public Contacts: One contact was made regarding a winter kill elk in Trout Lake.

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:

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
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	03/15/2013	03/22/2013	03/29/2013
No new report	No new report	No new snow. 3ft total.	No new snow and 2ft base	No new report	No new snow and 2ft base
No new report	15" new snow and 90" base	9" new and 84" base	No new snow and 6ft base	No new report	No new snow and 6ft base
Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	Sno-park inaccessible due to heavy snow	No new report

2/16-2/22	2/23-3/1	3/2-3/8	3/9-3/15	3/16-3/22	3/23-3/29
96.1	122.4	116	116.1	114	114.1
25.7	27.1	27	32	25	24
51.4	41.5	43	50	41	50
33.3	32.4	34.3	39.3	32.5	38.3
111.5	119.1	122.5	123.5	129.3	129.7
2/16-2/22	2/23-3/1	3/2-3/8	3/9-3/15	3/16-3/22	3/23-3/29
24.1	32	26	25	22.1	23.8
21.7	20.1	19	12	26	18
48.9	44.4	44	47	47	53
33.5	33	33.5	37.3	32.5	36.6

59.2	62.2	63.9	64	68.6	70.5
2/16-2/22	2/23-3/1	3/2-3/8	3/9-3/15	3/16-3/22	3/23-3/29
21.6	30.7	27	24.1	21.1	19.6
24.8	31.3	26	27	30	29
56.8	41.5	50	56	44	58
34.9	35.2	35.3	39.8	35.7	39.1
38.9	42.9	44	44.4	46.8	46.9
2/16-2/22	2/23-3/1	3/2-3/8	3/9-3/15	3/16-3/22	3/23-3/29
100.5	123	115.1	114.7	113.8	115.6
24.4	23.2	21	27	24	22
52.3	41.4	41	47	40	48
31.5	30.7	32.7	37.8	30.3	35.7
100.3	106.5	109.1	109.7	115.4	116
2/16-2/22	2/23-3/1	3/2-3/8	3/9-3/15	3/16-3/22	3/23-3/29
9.4	15.7	11.6	9	2.2	2.4
30.6	31.3	31	35	30	29
50.5	46	47	53	45	53
36.3	35.5	36.8	43.8	35.7	41
69.2	74	75.2	75.4	79.6	79.8
02/22/2013	03/01/2013	03/08/2013	03/15/2013	03/22/2013	03/29/2013
130%	140%	no data	142%	2225%	155%
398%	371%	344%	no data	no data	no data
159%	153%	148%	139%	136%	140%

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Oregon Spotted Frog: Biologist Tirhi organized a habitat focused meeting on Oregon Spotted Frog. Participants included spotted frog egg laying site managers from USFWS, WDFW, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), WDNR, and Port Blakely. The goal of the meeting was to review habitat conditions and habitat management efforts at each of the oviposition sites and establish two habitat improvement tasks for each site for the next two to three years.

The meeting was very well received with some excellent presentations from site managers. Potential enhancement funding opportunities were initiated between USFWS Black River Refuge and NRCS as well as a potential Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) grant to fund conservation easements on interested private properties.

New Bald Eagle Nest: WDFW Fish Biologist Chris O'Donnell contacted Biologist Ament last week to report that he observed a bald eagle carrying a stick and building a nest between Clallam Bay and Sekiu. Apparently the nest tree was fairly close to the road. The documented Middle Point Territory is located in the area, but Ament reviewed maps and confirmed that this would actually be a new nest. She requested that Chris provide her with a nest location and description.

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

Private Lands/Access

GMU 648 Access: Weyerhaeuser closed the Upper Donovan "A" line to motorized access. They are in the process of replacing several culverts. They tried to keep it open for river access and because it is popular for wildlife viewing during this process. Unfortunately vandalism was the issue. Apparently rolling the culverts off the side of the road and down the bank and messing with equipment seemed like a good idea to some of the users of the area.

Biologist Harris hopes that it will be open for motorized access next hunting season; however, this area has ongoing issues with dumping and other public abuses. Unfortunately, this likely affected a few fishermen who were trying to get at some steelhead before the river closed for the season.

GMU 648 Cooperative Road Closures: Biologist Harris took Eye in the Woods (EITW) President Kyle Winton on a tour of the Cooperative Road closures in GMU 648. In addition to the road closures he was shown some elk forage areas created on private lands many years ago. He will look at ways they help WDFW keep these productive for elk. There are still several old camps that need to be cleaned up and maintenance to signs that need to be done in these areas. EITW will help Biologist Harris maintain these areas. One of the road closures contains the

Wynoochee mitigation fields. Kyle had never seen the fields so they made a quick visit. As usual the field looked great and elk were observed taking advantage of it.

During the trip they also passed several forage fields in the Wishkah drainage. He was impressed with the amount of elk forage that WDWF provides. Several grouse, deer, and 150 plus elk were seen on this short trip. Roughly 30–40 bulls were observed. Most had lost their antlers. Body size and pedicles indicated that many were branch antlered bulls including a few that were definitely mature bulls.