

Wildlife Program

Week of May 6-12, 2013

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

Oregon Spotted Frog Recovery Plan and Bat Conservation Plan – The Diversity Division released and is seeking public comments on a draft recovery plan for Washington’s native population of Oregon spotted frogs and on a separate plan to conserve the 15 species of bats in the state. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will accept written comments on the draft recovery plan for the Oregon spotted frog through August 9, and on the conservation plan for bats through June 10.

Both plans are posted on WDFW’s website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/species/>. Comments may be submitted via e-mail to TandEpubliccom@dfw.wa.gov, or by mail to Endangered Species Section, WDFW, 600 Capitol Way N., Olympia, WA 98501-1091.

Proposed Federal Listing of Wolverine Response – The Division collated input from the Habitat Program, Wildlife Science Division and the Diversity Division on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) proposed listing as Threatened of the contiguous U.S. Distinct Population Segment of wolverine as well as on a proposed special 4(d) rule. The issues being addressed by this proposed listing are significant. In particular, it raises the question of how emerging climate change science should be used to drive a federal listing, including making determinations based on a specific study while possibly not adequately considering other studies. There is also the question of when the threat of climate change should federalize management of a species if that is the predominant factor being considered for listing.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1

Conflict Specialist Shepherd attended the Newport Ranger District grazing allotment meeting to discuss wolf issues.

District 2

Potential Wolf sighting: Biologist Lewis met with a landowner/cooperator in the St. John office that came in to report a wolf sighting on his property outside of Ewan. Landowner reported seeing a pair of wolves watching their cattle and calves. Landowner stated that the wolves were not chasing or harassing the cattle, just observing the herd. The landowner scared the wolves away. Lewis will complete the online report for the sighting, as requested by landowner.

Second potential wolf sighting: Biologist McCanna was contacted Saturday by a landowner retrieving his cattle in the Ewan area that reported seeing three wolves (one black and two gray) within 100 yards on horseback. The landowner went back Sunday to search for a few missing cattle but McCanna has not heard back from them yet. This reporting is within a half-mile of the above report.

District 3

Wolf survey: Biologist Vekasy checked Blue Creek area for wolf sign after a hunter's report of seeing a wolf while bear hunting. Upper elevation of Blue Creek still has snow on shaded portions of road, so access was limited, but he did not find any wolf sign on accessible roads or trails. Vekasy also checked for sign along the Skyline Rd. and placed a trail camera in the Eckler Mountain area where we've had wolf activity in the past.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Golden Eagle Nesting Surveys – Colville District: District Wildlife Biologist Dana Base conducted the second occupancy check survey of four golden eagle nest territories within District 1 this week including Snag Cove (Record # 396), Flat Creek Mouth (Rec.# 407), Little Vulcan (Rec.# 488), and Sherman Creek (Record # 46). Only one of these four territories (# 407) is occupied by nesting golden eagles this season. This week's work represented a small part of a coordinated statewide survey effort being undertaken for nesting golden eagles this year.



Golden eagle perched on snag near nest tree at the new Rattlesnake nest site.

Golden Eagle Nesting Surveys – Spokane District: Biologist Atamian conducted second occupancy checks on the Hay and Cherry Cove nest sites and drove by other Whitman golden eagle nest sites where occupancy was already confirmed. There is no nest or activity in the Hay area, but plenty of mule deer and pheasants. Cherry Cove is occupied with two adult actively hunting and attending the nest. Rattlesnake and Blumenshein nest sites were still occupied as confirming earlier surveys. The Delong historic nest site did not show any signs of recent activity, though two eagles had been observed here in early March.

Golden Eagle Nesting Surveys – Blue Mountains District: While in the Blue Creek area looking for wolf sign, Biologist Vekasy checked on the Blue Creek golden eagle nest, and the pair has two young nestlings.

Wildlife Areas

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) project: Debby Flynn completed seeding nearly 400 acres to a blend of native grass seed this week. However, terraces throughout the fields still need to be seeded. Cuevas Winegeart sprayed the terraces on Thursday using an ATV sprayer. We will broadcast seed the terraces next week using ATV broadcast seeders and chain harrows. On Thursday, Bob Dice and Debby Flynn cleaned up the rental John Deere Drill and hauled it back to Chad Johnson’s farm in Cloverland.



Debby Flynn seeded Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grass at Smoothing Iron Ridge.

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

Private Lands/Access

PVPA Access Program: Biologist Lewis completed CAPS contracts for two new “Hunt by Reservation” properties in Whitman County. These two new properties will provide public hunting access on 2,339 acres in the Rock Creek area of Whitman County. The properties will provide hunting in scabland type cover and opportunities for upland birds and deer.



A recently added access property in NW Whitman County

Access Site Maintenance – Access Manager Scott Young visited access sites at Deer, Waitts, Jump Off Joe, Loon, Diamond, Sacheen, Davis, Eloika, Newman, Liberty, Williams, Badger, Silver, Clear, West Medical, North and South Audubon, Deep, Cedar, Black, Marshall, Horseshoe, Fan, and Fishtrap Lakes for general maintenance. Young had assistance from volunteer Jim Billbruck at the Deep Lake site this week. He also contacted a new adopt-an-access group for Silver Lake.



Volunteer Jim Billbruck helped repair the Deep Lake sign.

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

Wildlife Areas

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Big game forage plots: David Woodall spent about a day cultivating two fields in preparation for seeding to spring oats. David also sprayed two Clearfield Winter Wheat fields with Beyond herbicide. Bob Dice assisted by switching implements on the D4 Cat and hauling fuel to the Smoothing Iron area. We also had some problems switching tips on our sprayer which required a trip to AgPro in Lewiston. Naturally, the elk casually watched as we worked on the fields this week. They seem to be pretty happy eating Department wheat!



Elk graze winter wheat on Smoothing Iron Ridge. Private property crop fields in the Cloverland area are in the background.

REGION 2

Wolf Management

District 7

Members of the Wenatchee Wolf Pack continue to be infrequently observed and photographed on Hurd's Ranch, southwest of Wenatchee. No conflict with livestock reported.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Bighorn Sheep Management: Biologist Heinlen, Fitkin, and Special Species Manager Harris conducted a helicopter survey of the Sinlahekin Bighorn sheep herd and found only 17 individuals including one lamb of the year. In fall of 2011 we counted a minimum of 82 sheep in this herd. Despite multiple air and ground surveys since February 2013 our maximum count this year is 18 animals; however, no signs of a severe die-off have been observed or reported. We documented psoroptic mange in this herd in 2011 and suspect it has had a negative effect on lamb survival, although to what extent it accounts for the apparent population decline is still unknown.

Wildlife Areas

Big Valley South well: After considerable effort by numerous parties, installation of the irrigation well at Big Valley South is underway! We should know this week how well it yields and what adjustment need to be made. This well will provide water for two pivots covering 69 acres.



Silver Field Tour: With the snow melted from nearly

all of the wildlife area it's time to begin on-the-ground planning for a variety of projects. Methow staff met with members of the Cascade Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group and Gina McCoy of the Habitat Program to reach a strategic agreement on how to proceed with salmonid habitat projects at the Silver Side Channel site. We believe that by using a phased strategy will lead to tangible results without over taxing WDFW resources. Ground water monitoring is underway and a small revegetation project will be implemented this fall.

Grant County Weed Control: With recent warm weather, weeds are coming on strong. Weed control season is ramping up with all hands becoming busier responding to weed problems and complaints and recon for the spring aerial herbicide application.



Grant County Weed Control: The hot weather really started growth on the noxious weeds. Staff completed chemical control on the following: Scotch Creek Unit: 36 acres St. John's Wort, 16 acres Kocia, 28 acres Whitetop, and 4 acres Purple mustard. Eder Unit: 11.5 acres of Russian Knapweed and Hounds tongue. Similkameen – Chopaka Unit: 5 acres Hounds tongue, Common Tansy, Russian Knapweed and Dalmatian Toadflax. Chesaw Unit: 5 acres of St. John's Wort, Hounds tongue and Musk Thistle. The crew did an outstanding job this week controlling weeds

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

Wildlife Management

Range cleanup: Last Sunday a local 4H group spent several hours cleaning up the Methow shooting range! They did a spectacular job and we are deeply appreciative of their efforts, especially with the upcoming 49ers and Memorial Day weekends on the way.



REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Tieton Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz continued to monitor reports of bighorn sheep in the Tieton and forward the information to Enforcement. Biologist Bernatowicz also removed three ewes directly. Reports are consistent that there are at least three ewes and two rams remaining. A coordinated effort to remove the remaining sheep is planned for the end of the week.

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area Weed Control: Colockum Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky and volunteer Rodger Daggett boated to West Bar, and then used an ATV to travel up Tekison Creek and release bio-control insects (*Galerucella* spp.) on purple loosestrife along the creek. We have released insects here in the past, and this was an opportunity to supplement their numbers. The insects were provided by Washington State University (WSU) Cooperative Extension.



Colockum volunteer Rodger Daggett releases 250 Galerucella, a foliage-feeding beetle, on purple loosestrife in Tekison Creek.



Galerucella damage to purple loosestrife leaves, Colockum Wildlife Area.

Worrell Ranch Utilization

Monitoring: Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager Huffman met with Range Ecologist Burnham at the Worrell Ranch to begin monitoring the grazing utilization. Burnham explained the protocol and they performed a couple of sample surveys. Huffman will return next week to start the actual surveys.

The cows have been removed from the east pasture due to a lack of water. In addition, water is low in the west pasture with most ponds dry.

The permittees have opened the gates to their private property to the west to allow more access to water. Based on water levels, grazing on the west pasture will be limited this year.



Worrell Ranch with flowers still in bloom

Oak Creek Non-Commercial Thinning: Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager Huffman checked on progress of non-commercial thinning work that started in Oak Creek this past week. The contractor was not on site that day but work is progressing smoothly and is looking really good.

The focus right now is on north aspects and thinning away from large pine and larch trees. The attached pictures show some of the work completed to date. The work is being funded by a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) Production Advisory Committee (PAC) grant, Jobs Now, and a National Fire Plan grant. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is administering all the contracts. While in the



Culvert removal project on Oak Creek completed last fall.

area, Huffman guided the contractor to the site of a Road Maintenance Abandonment Plan (RMAP) project so she could complete the cultural survey and check a culvert removal completed last year. The culvert removal looks good (picture attached).



Non-commercial thinning work completed on the Oak Creek Project. Thinning around large pine and larch removing all DF and GF under 7" and girdling GF and DF from 7-10" or with dead tops.



Wild Horse Coordinated Reserve Management:

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Winegeart called permittee Russ Stingley to verify the number of livestock turned out on the Vantage pasture May 1. Russ turned out 160 pair, although he had to immediately start hauling water since most of the springs are already dry in this pasture. Stock will be moved off Vantage pasture and into the Whiskey Jim pasture on May 15.

Manager Winegeart and staff completed installation of electric fence on riparian and restoration exclosures in Parke Creek and Little Parke. All six Parke Creek hotwire fences are now up and charged.



Parke Creek riparian restoration project – one of six sites protected with electric fence.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Common Loon Efforts: Biologist Anderson and Smith monitored the Chester Morse and Tolt reservoirs this week in efforts to prepare for upcoming trapping and banding of territorial loons. Anderson and Smith had loons at Chester Morse, Tolt, and Lynch Lake. Anderson followed up late in the week at all Snoqualmie Tree Farm lakes (Lynch, Mud, Black, Calligan, Hancock, and Klaus). Anderson had a pair on Lynch, investigating nest sites; a bird on Black and Calligan; and the rest all without a loon.



A nesting common loon located in the Snoqualmie Tree Farm.



Two peregrine falcon chicks at Ballard Bridge. Photo by Martin Muller.

Heron Colony Management: Biologist Anderson received many calls regarding the Kiwanis Ravine heron colony. This is the largest heron colony in Seattle at 90+ nests. Anderson provided an interview with 88.5 KPLU Environmental Reporter Liam Moriarty regarding the interaction of herons and eagles and how this relates to the recent collapse of the Kiwanis Ravine colony. <http://www.kplu.org/post/eagles-return-drive-entire-colony-herons-out-kiwanis-ravine>

Breeding Snipe Surveys: Biologist Anderson continued surveys for Wilson's snipe on WDFW owned properties.

Golden Eagle Surveys: Biologist Milner updated the District 13 summary for surveys accomplished thus far, and working with Biologist Anderson set up a flight for this week to obtain the second activity survey for sites in King and Snohomish counties which are difficult or impossible to survey from the ground.

Wildlife Areas

Cherry Valley Fish Passage Project: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated a post-planting site visit with WDFW Managers Russell Link and Greg Schirato. The DFW Fish Passage Project and Wild Fish Conservancy's Waterwheel Creek Project were completed earlier this spring. The two project areas provide over 15 acres of riparian and wetland

restoration, including the planting of native grasses and over 15,000 native trees and shrubs. While on site, Manager Boehm shared the maintenance plan for the site which includes periodic mowing, herbicide application and irrigation.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to monitor the delivery of cattle on the Unit. DFW has a grazing lease that allows 400 cow and calf pairs on the Unit. Approximately 200 pair has been delivered so far.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm and Werkhoven Dairy finalized the planting plan for 2013. A number of changes to the existing lease were added including planting barley as a leave crop, providing a mix of corn and barley in all of the fields, and maintaining access paths for recreational users and DFW staff.

Lake Terrell Field Prep: Natural Resource Technician Deyo started disking the fields at Lake Terrell. He completed approximately 10 acres.

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

Wildlife Management

Band-tailed Pigeon Study: Biologist DeBruyn continued banding pigeons in Hamilton near the Skagit River and prepared to move the trapping effort to Whatcom County. DeBruyn has banded 25 pigeons with V.I.D. bands and equipped two of those with VHF transmitters as part of a study designed to investigate use of mineral spring by breeding pigeons.



Biologist DeBruyn with a banded Band-tailed Pigeon

Tukwila Backyard Wildlife Festival: Biologists Anderson and Smith provided WDFW outreach at the annual Tukwila Backyard Wildlife Festival, of which WDFW assisted in starting. WDFW is at the festival annually. There was a great turnout and many questions answered about local wildlife, urban wildlife, how to deal with conflicts, habitat enhancement techniques, and many other questions! More information available at <http://backyardwildlifefestival.org/>

Private Lands/Access

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

Wildlife Areas

Lake Terrell Fishing Pier Gravel Road: Manager Kessler coordinated with Whatcom County on repairing the gravel road to the fishing pier parking area.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk: Manager Kessler monitored the water level of Tennant Lake, and checked for new beaver dam activity.

Skagit Agricultural Enhancement and Lease Program: Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis and Natural Resources Technician (NRT) Curran Cosgrove monitored water levels and beaver deceiver structures on the Island Unit. Disking continued on the Island, river levels are on the rise as warmer temperatures begin snow melt.



Disked field on the Island Unit (Olie Thompson) was being prepared for millet planting.

Manager Belinda Rotton received final lease agreements for Samish, Leque Island and DeBay Slough. Lease agreement for South Padilla Bay was sent for approvals and another lease agreement for Samish Unit will be drafted this week to cover the corn planting.

Leque Island: Natural Resource Specialist Meis and NRT Cosgrove pre-treated corn planting sites on Leque Island that are being planted as part of share-crop lease.

Samish Unit: Cosgrove with the assistance of Tom Wampler from the North Sound Weed Crew was able to perform herbicide pre-treatment on weedy areas being brought into cultivation this season.

Skagit Headquarters Unit: Manager Rotton and Natural Resource Specialist Meis checked purple loosestrife for signs of beetle activity from previous release with Jennifer Andreas from Washington State University. Jennifer also provided additional beetles for release at two locations in the Headquarters/Wiley Slough Restoration. Purple loosestrife is expanding in the newly restored area and many techniques will be used to contain and control this invasive species on the site, from bio-control, herbicide and mechanical treatments. Another release will be set out later this spring and early summer.



Purple Loosestrife root boring beetles released in Skagit - Wiley Slough Restoration site.

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

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Unit: Natural Resource Specialist Meis continued to treat poison hemlock on the site.

Lake Terrell Farm Plan: Manager Kessler coordinated with the Whatcom Conservation District on updating the farm plan for the wildlife area.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm facilitated a meeting with DFW Noxious Weed staff, King County Noxious Weed Program and Sound Salmon Solutions to discuss weed management strategy for the Stillwater Wildlife Area for 2013. Each of these groups is involved with weed control during 2013, and Manager Boehm wants to develop a coordinated effort and strategy instead of each group working independently. A review of resources and methods was presented and Manager Boehm will develop a master plan in the coming weeks.

Leque Island: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set a meeting date of June 5 for the Groundwater Technical Review Team to convene to discuss the assessment of the groundwater study completed by their hydrogeologist.

Welts (Samish) Wetland Restoration Project: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw completed a draft public outreach plan and revised timeline for the project. WDFW and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) will begin advertising and planning for a public information meeting on the project to take place in mid/late-June.

Fir Island Farm Restoration Project Committee Meeting: The Fir Island Farm Restoration Project Steering Committee and Project Management Team met to initiate Phase 2 of the project, which includes pre-project monitoring, subsequent design phases, and project permitting.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Farming for Wildlife presentation: Skagit and Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Staff attended a “Farming for Wildlife” presentation conducted by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the WSU Research Center near Mount Vernon. The presentation focused on rotating farm land for wildlife habitat and for grazing or growing crops. The results of TNC's study concluded that allowing farm fields to remain flooded and fallow periodically increases productivity when the fields are later returned to raising crops. A site tour was also included which showed the methods implemented in the field. Manager Boehm was intrigued by the study and may use these techniques on Snoqualmie Valley units such as Ebey Island and Cherry Valley. Both of these units have a high water table and naturally flood each season.

CPR Training: Biologist Smith completed CPR training in Olympia.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Townsend's Big-Eared Bat: Biologist Anderson assisted on a forest practice review regarding logging in the area of a Townsend's big-eared bat cave near Trout Lake. The forester representing the small private landowner agreed to abandon a logging road near the bat cave to reduce access from the public to this area. In addition, an agreement was made to leave forest buffers around other cave entrances within the ownership. WDFW appreciates the cooperation shown by the landowner around these important caves near Trout Lake.

Streaked Horned Lark Surveys: Biologists Stephens and Miller assisted biologists from the Center for Natural Lands Management and USFWS with surveys for Streaked-horned larks on the dredge islands in the Columbia River. Larks were observed on Rice Island, White Island, Miller Sands Spit, and multiple other small islands that were surveyed. Streak-horned larks are a sub-species of the horned lark that is endemic to the Pacific Northwest. Their populations have been reduced due to loss of habitat and they are currently in the process of being listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Wildlife Areas

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Liming: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Technician Sample began spreading pelletized lime at the east end of Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area to promote soil enhancement and forage growth for the resident elk population. This extra source of soil enrichment will be beneficial to elk in the coming summer and fall as they bulk up fat reserves for the winter months. Also, while at the mountain on the way back up the hill, Technician Sample had a very close and persistent view of a blue grouse that has been displaying along the road for at least a week and a half.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Grazing Permit Areas: Manager Van Leuven took monitoring photo points on the Kayser/Davenport grazing permit area. Van Leuven also fixed fences around the livestock enclosure on the North Breaks grazing subunit, repaired a damaged fence corner near a pond, and finished rebuilding a fence corner on the Grayback grazing subunit. In addition, Manager Van



Blue Grouse displaying

Leuven activated the water line that goes to the cattle trough on the North Breaks grazing subunit, checked the other troughs, and all are in working order. It will be very important to monitor these and make sure they are working this year because the other natural water sources are drying up already.



Rebuilding fence corner on the Grayback Grazing subunit

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

Private Lands/Access

Langsdorf Landing and Mineral Lake: Access Staff Spangler and Rhodes painted over graffiti in restroom and the exterior of restroom door and frame. They used tractor to remove vegetation and graded gravel on ADA trailer parking. ADA parking paint was re-done at Mineral Lake.



Langsdorf Landing



Mineral Lake

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

Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account -- Cavity Nest Box Projects: Biologist Anderson conducted a site visit to evaluate the performance of a volunteer citizen project to construct nest boxes in select areas of western Klickitat County. A variety of bird boxes have been put up on state, federal, and private lands primarily targeting swallows, kestrels, wood ducks, and both mountain and western bluebirds. All boxes visited so far are of high quality construction and appear to be occupied by a variety of birds.



Nest Boxes in Western Klickitat County

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Wildlife Management

Tenth Biennial Western States and Provinces Deer and Elk Workshop: Biologist Holman along with WDFW Staff from Regions 1, 3, 4, 6, and Headquarters attended the 10th Western States Deer and Elk Conference in Missoula Montana. The conference featured presentations on a variety of research projects and findings throughout western North America, the status of deer and elk populations in many of the western states, and provided an opportunity to network with peers in the field of ungulate management. WDFW were well represented at the conference with presentations by Dr. Scott McCorquodale on the St. Helens elk herd, Biologist Hoenes on Columbia basin mule deer, Dr. Evelyn Merrill on the effects of herbicide on Mt. St. Helens elk nutrition, Dr. Lisa Shipley on the effects of cattle grazing on forage availability for mule deer in southeast Washington, Dr. Ken Warheit on the genetic structure of Washington State elk populations, and Dr. Jerry Nelson offering the Washington perspective during a panel discussion of game species populations within several western states. Thanks to all the coordinators and presenters at the conference.

REGION 6

None