

Wildlife Program

Week of November 11-17, 2013

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Sharp-tailed grouse: Biologist Stinson facilitated the annual sharp-tailed working group meeting which was held in Moses Lake on November 12. The meeting was attended by Region 1 and 2 district biologists, wildlife area managers and a private lands biologist along with staff from Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Washington Audubon, and the Colville Confederated Tribes. Plans were discussed for 2014 translocations, and updates were given on lek counts, monitoring of augmented populations, and habitat restoration work. Biologist Stinson worked on the draft progress report for the sharptail translocation project.

Sage-grouse: Biologist Stinson attended the annual sage-grouse working group meeting which was held in Moses Lake on November 13. Attendees included reps from Region 1 and 2 wildlife areas, a private lands biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), BLM, Washington Audubon, Yakima Training Center, and Puget Sound Energy. Plans were discussed for 2014 translocations, and updates were given on lek counts, monitoring of augmented populations, and habitat restoration work. Biologist Stinson worked on the draft progress report for the Lincoln County sage-grouse reintroduction project.

Taylor's checkerspot butterfly: Biologist Hays and Region 6 Biologist Shelly Ament worked with partners Olympic National Forest and Washington Department of Natural Resources to complete a month-long habitat enhancement project for Taylor's checkerspot. The project employed two Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crews to remove trees and shrubs encroaching checkerspot habitat at five occupied sites. The goal of the project is to reduce the potential for extirpation at each site. We first evaluated habitat condition and butterfly occupancy, and then selected key areas to enhance habitat. Butterfly and habitat monitoring in 2014 and 2015 is planned to determine the project benefits.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

Carcass Removal and Composting Meeting: Program Manager Robinette, Supervisor McCanna, and Conflict Specialists Shepherd and Bennett participated in the all-day Carcass Removal and Composting Meeting in Spokane which included a presentation by the Blackfoot Challenge project in Montana.

Carcass Removal Pilot Project Conference Call: Supervisor McCanna along with Conflict Specialists Shepherd and Bennett participated in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) conference call regarding the November 15 meeting.

Blackfoot Challenge: Specialist Shepherd attended the public presentation in Colville regarding the Blackfoot Challenge carcass removal and composting.



Extensively eaten calf carcass observed in the Wedge.

Wedge Calf Mortality: Specialist Shepherd discussed a calf mortality that occurred in the Wedge with the owner at the Colville District Office. No wolf tracks were observed at the site as it was a grass field. The carcass was significantly consumed and evidence did not indicate conclusively whether it was killed or scavenged, and which species consumed the carcass although it appeared it was a canid. Wolf tracks were observed in the general vicinity and three wolves (a black and two greys) were observed approximately five miles to the north of the site within the last two weeks.

Canid Attack on Dog: Specialist Shepherd discussed an alleged attack by four wolves on a small dog and the emergency rule with Pend Oreille County WDFW Officer Erickson. After a site visit, the culprits appeared to be coyotes. The dog was uninjured due to a broom wielding dog owner.

Contract Range Riding: Specialist Shepherd discussed work duties with a current contract range rider who received a contract extension.

Public Outreach: Conflict Specialist Bennett presented at Summit School about the relationship that wolves have with hunters and farmers.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

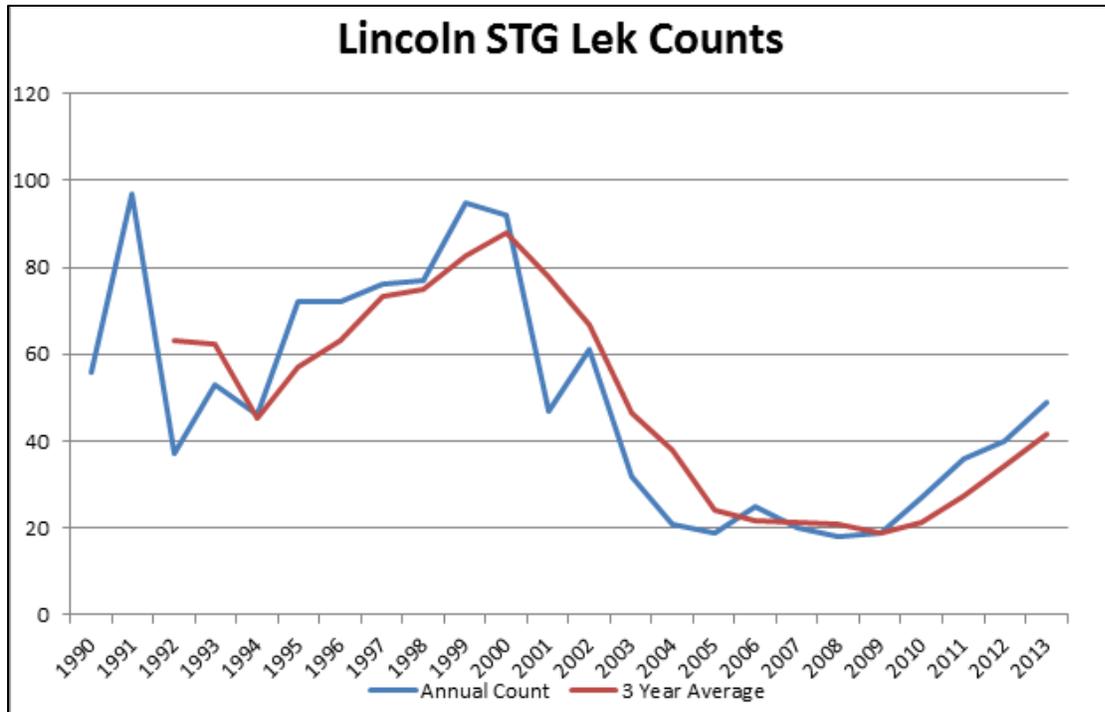
Wildlife Management

Grouse Working Groups: Biologists Robinette, Ferguson and Atamian attended the state working group meetings for sage grouse and sharp-tailed grouse. Biologist Atamian presented the annual update for both species in Lincoln County. The sage grouse reintroduction project is going well with the lek firmly established and male attendance growing. This year's high count pre-release was 12 males, 5 more than last year. Adult survival and nest success are both within the range observed for non-translocated birds. Though doing well this population is still below self-maintenance and we will be augmenting it again next spring, if donor state population allow. The sharptail augmentation project is also doing well and while lek counts have gone up (graph

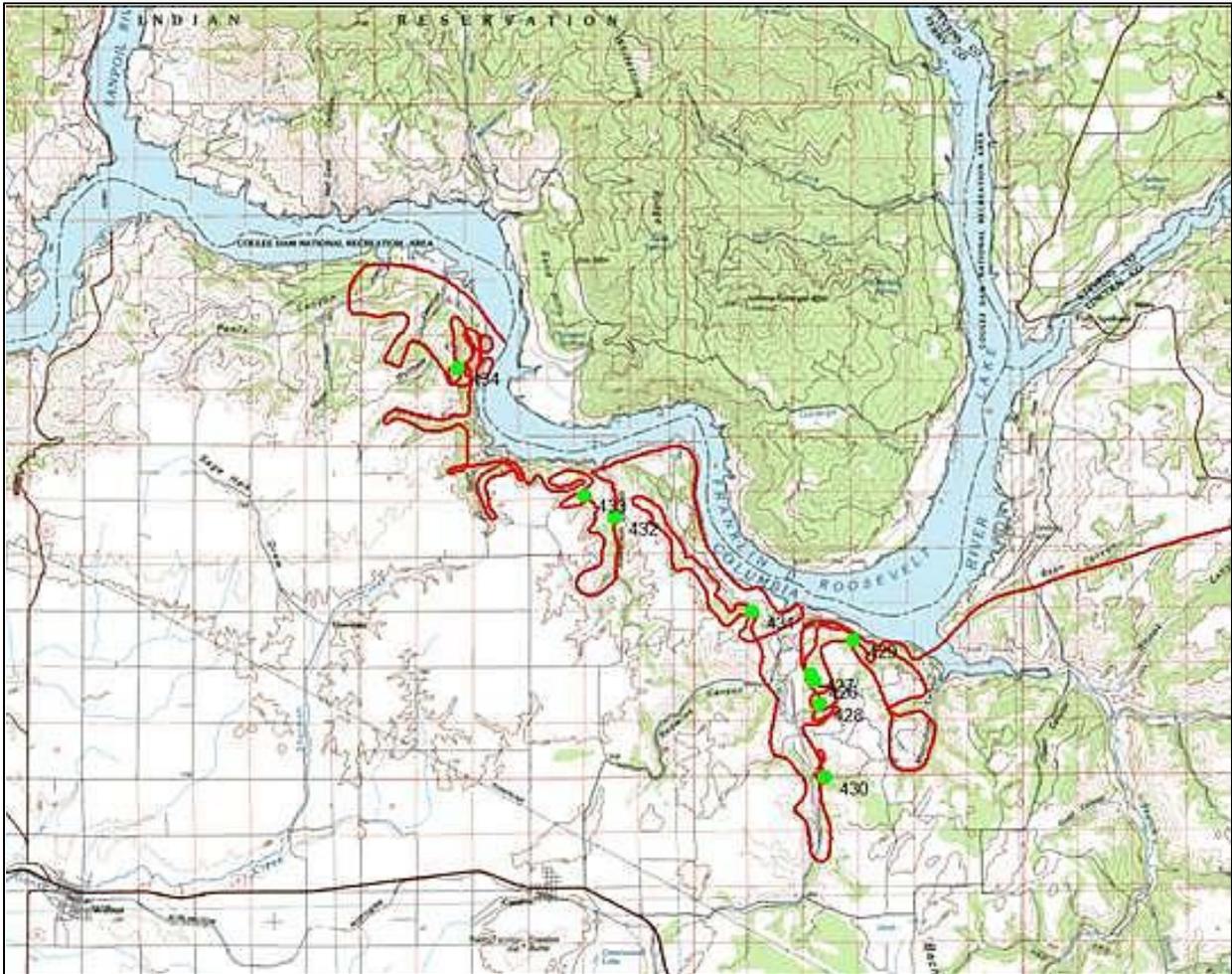
below), they have not done so as quickly or to the extent we would like. This population will not be augmented next year due to higher priority need in the Okanogan. Leks will continue to be monitored intensively for the next three years using citizen volunteers via an Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant adopt a lek project and department personnel. If the positive trend in lek attendance declines or reverses, further augmentations will be considered.



Sage Grouse Meeting – Moses Lake, November 13, 2013.



Lincoln Cliffs Bighorn Sheep Herd: Biologists Ferguson and Atamian flew the fall bighorn survey for the Lincoln Cliffs Herd. A total of 118 sheep were counted – 55 ewes, 31 lambs and 32 rams (12 – ¼ curl, 9 – ½ curl, 3 – ¾ curl and 8 – full curls). This count is the highest to date, by 28 animals, for fall or spring surveys. This was not driven by any one category since the ewe, ram and lamb counts are also the highest to date. Total count was split equitably between the main areas of Lincoln Cliffs (58; 27 ewes, 13 lambs and 18 rams) and Whitestone (56; 27 ewes, 17 lambs and 12 rams), with more rams counted in Lincoln Cliffs and more lambs in Whitestone. Of note, the Lincoln Cliffs sheep were found in two groups, one by the cliffs (427, map on next page) and the other near the mouth of Underwood Canyon (430, map), while the Whitestone sheep were found in one large group on the top of the cliffs (434, map). Two rams, one ewe and one lamb were seen in Sterling Cliffs area (431-433, map).



Above: Survey track (red) and sheep group locations (green) for the District 2 Bighorn Survey conducted on November 14, 2013. Below: Normal behavior of bighorn sheep during aerial survey at Whitestone Rock area north of Lincoln Cliffs, Lincoln County.





Left: Mature ram with ewes and rams at Lincoln Cliffs. Right: Bighorn Survey herd includes a red tagged ewe from the CCT herd across the Columbia River, November 14, 2013.

Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep: Biologists Wik and Vekasy spent three days learning how to set-up and use a dropnet provided by Idaho Fish and Game. Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) Biologist Jim Kuze travelled over from Salmon, Idaho to teach us how to use this tool along with Sci Tech 2 Lowe and IDFG Research Biologist Cassirer. Wik and Vekasy also spent most of one day attempting to ground dart sheep in the Asotin Creek drainage.



Dropnet set up for a test along the Grande Ronde River.

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

Wildlife Management

Northeast Washington Deer Hunter Check Stations: Regional Wildlife Program Staff conducted check stations at Chattaroy and Deer Park in Northeast Washington. Weather conditions for 2013 created great conditions for late season hunting over 2012. Participation at our check stations increased as well.

NE Washington Check Stations

	2012			2013		
<u>2nd Weekend Late Buck</u>	<u>Hunters</u>	<u>WTD</u>	<u>Success</u>	<u>Hunters</u>	<u>WTD</u>	<u>Success</u>
Chattaroy (Saturday)	48	7	0.145833	88	22	0.25
Chattaroy (Sunday)	83	21	0.253012	81	32	0.395062
<u>Deer Park (Sunday)</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>0.211765</u>	<u>134</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>0.223881</u>
Total	216	46	0.212963	303	84	0.277228

Wildlife Areas

W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area – Hunters: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager (AWAM) Dingman answered questions from hunters with the late white-tailed buck tag in the Blue Mountains. She also answered questions from hunters pursuing upland game birds on the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area. One of the hunters came back successful after AWAM Dingman gave him some suggestions on where to look for a “big” buck (see photo).



Left: Buck harvested in School Canyon area on W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area. Right: Future hunters pose with Grandpa’s buck that was harvested near Patrick Trail.

REGION 2

Wolf Management

Nothing to report.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

New Pygmy Rabbit Breeding Enclosure at Beezley Hills: The quality of the fencing used at the enclosure was more defective than we had originally thought. After two-and-a-half days of patching fence (there is still some patching left to be done on upper reaches) we are finally able to move on to the final tasks of: completing back-filling trench, rolling the top (weasel deterrent), putting in a few more artificial burrows, and attaching bird spikes to posts. We will begin moving rabbits from the small enclosure at Sagebrush Flats on Tuesday.

Wildlife Areas

Stream Bank Stabilization – With the assistance of a Community Involvement Work Crew from Coyote Ridge Corrections Center, Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei and new Assistant

Wildlife Area Manager Bechtel replaced 900 shrub plugs and about 800 willow and dogwood cuttings at the Spud Field as part of a stream bank stabilization project. The remaining cuttings will be planted next week with another crew from Coyote Ridge. The crew followed instructions well which will hopefully result in a higher survival rate of plants than we experienced last season.

Chelan Butte Fields Restoration: Natural Resource Technician Brad Zabreznik completed harrowing four fields on Chelan Butte using a skid-steer on loan from the Colockum Wildlife Area. These small steep fields totaling 45 acres were likely last farmed during the 1920s using horses. Over the past two years the fields have been sprayed with glyphosate herbicide to control the annual weeds that dominate the sites. JR Helicopter also completed the aerial seeding of the fields this week.

Grant County Noxious Weed Board Meeting: Assistant Managers Cole and Eidson attended the Grant County Noxious Weed Control Board quarterly meeting in Ephrata. This was a good opportunity for us to find out exactly what the weed board had planned for control of the newly listed Russian olive. They also discussed our weed control season, accomplishment from this past season and coordination for efforts next year.

Sharp-tailed Grouse Working Group: Jim attended the annual Sharp-tailed Grouse Working Group meeting in Moses Lake and updated the group on the status of Sharp-tails on the Scotch Creek and Chesaw units. The group decided the supplementation of birds next year should go to Okanogan, with the birds going to Scotch Creek and Tunk Valley. We are expecting anywhere from 40 to 80 birds depending on the source location.

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

Wildlife Management



Desert Unit Buck – Photo by O. Duvuvuei

Mule Deer – Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei conducted an aerial mule deer survey in the Desert Unit (Game Management Unit 290) with Ron Cline of Central Valley Helicopters out of Ellensburg. Fog conditions nearly kept us grounded, but we were able to complete the survey over two days. Ron was kind enough to park his helicopter near Ephrata, allowing us to get another partial day in of surveying without going over budget on shuttle expenses. Many rutting bucks were observed amongst the 235 deer classified during the effort. Preliminary herd composition estimates are 46B:100D:55F; 61% of the bucks were mature.



Desert Unit Buck keeps an eye on his doe – Photos by R. Finger.

Winchester Regulated Access Area (WRAA) – Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei checked pond water levels at the Winchester Regulated Access Area to determine whether the ditch cleaning activities made an impact. Water conditions throughout the lower portion of the project area were perfect, with water being right to the edge of one blind and only partially flooding the floor of another. Approximately 700 mallards were observed within the WRAA boundary during the visit, nearly all of which were in Pond A not far from the blind.



Birds-eye view of a recently constructed hunting blind located on the Winchester Regulated Access Area. Photo by R. Finger.

Private Lands/Access

Columbia Basin Cropland Hunting Access Initiative (CHAI): Biologist Dougherty began preparations for implementing CHAI (formerly known as the Corn Stubble Program). Biologist

Dougherty entered all information into the online hunter reservation system, and finalized all contracts. Biologist Dougherty spoke to a representative from the Moses Lake chapter of Ducks Unlimited (DU) and discussed the possibility of DU becoming more involved with the CHAI program. Additionally, DU might assist with building an ADA handicap waterfowl blind to be placed at CHAI sites.

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



Left: Dark-colored Mule Deer doe gets chased by buck in the rut. Right: Dipper at Forde Lake, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Photos by Justin Haug.



Left: Pair of Trumpeter Swans spotted at Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Right: Bald Eagle at Forde Lake, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Photos by Justin Haug.



Long-eared Owl near Sinlahekin Creek, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area – Photo by Justin Haug.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

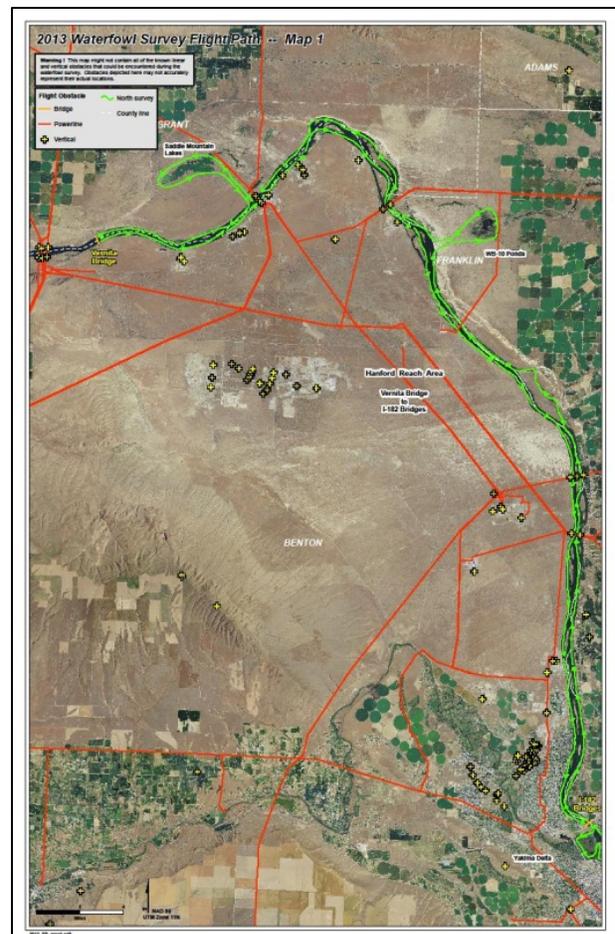
Wildlife Management

Waterfowl Surveys: District Wildlife Biologist Gregory compiled relevant shapefiles in anticipation of upcoming waterfowl surveys in the south Columbia Basin.

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Tarps Fire Restoration: Wildlife Area Managers Winegeart and Lopushinsky traveled to BFI Native Seeds in Warden and picked up 9,500 pounds of native grass, forb and shrub seed mix for planting in the burned draws on the Colockum and Quilomene Wildlife Areas. Seed was distributed on Wednesday, using two crews and two helicopters, staging out of Crescent Bar and the Wild Horse Wind Farm. A total of 660 acres

Upcoming waterfowl survey's schematic for a section of the flight route.



were seeded. Volunteers from the Wenatchee Sportsman's Association assisted in loading the seeder at Crescent Bar. Erik Ellis, wildlife Biologist with Wenatchee BLM, was also present and contributed 1,000 pounds of native seed and helped fund the helicopter costs.



Colockum Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hagan assists in loading the seed hopper.



Volunteers work on a helicopter reseeding project after the Colockum Tarps Fire. The golf course driving range at Crescent Bar Resort was used as a staging area, allowing the helicopter to fly west across the Columbia River to access the wildlife area.



Helicopter lands to pick up seed.



Central Valley Helicopter's Ron Cline lifts-off with a fully loaded seeder.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

State Wildlife Grant Reporting and Annual Work Plans: Biologists Anderson and Danilson prepared and submitted summaries of work conducted in District 14 under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife State Wildlife Grant work plan. Additionally, Danilson worked with District 14 staff to prepare draft work plans for the upcoming year.

Hozomeen Wolf Study: Biologist DeBruyn submitted documents to the National Park Service to continue the research permit he has for doing research in the North Cascades National Park.

Bald Eagle Response: Biologist DeBruyn responded to several cases of citizens complaining about development activities near Bald Eagle nests. DeBruyn forwarded pertinent information to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Waterfowl mortality event: Assistant District Biologist Cyra and Enforcement Officer Jorg investigated a report of sick and dead waterfowl in standing cornfields in the Snohomish River valley. Specimens were collected and sent to the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, WI which returned a preliminary diagnosis of aspergillosis. Aspergillosis is a non-contagious respiratory tract infection that often affects wintering waterfowl feeding on moldy or spoiled

grain. The birds found during the field visit (all mallards) were in flooded standing corn with plentiful cobs in the water that had been fed upon. By weeks end, additional reports totaled nearly 300 birds. For more information on aspergillosis, visit http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/publications/field_manual/chapter_13.pdf.

Trumpeter and Tundra Swan Issues: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn attended to several issues related to swans throughout the week. These included meeting with newly rehired Seasonal Swan Technician Sherman Anderson to go through supplies, create new data sheets, and outfit his field vehicle (Anderson begins work on November 18). DeBruyn and Anderson also met a rehabilitator and banded and released an adult trumpeter to Lake 16 in Skagit County.

Danilson and DeBruyn monitored the swan hotline and followed up on a couple of calls. Technician Otto responded to an injured swan (likely powerline strike) in Skagit County and made arrangements for the swan to be delivered to a rehabilitation facility. WDFW works with several partnering entities to monitor and recover injured, sick and dead swans. A recent news release prepared by Danilson (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/news/nov0813a/>) instructs citizens to call the WDFW hotline at (360) 466-4345 ext. 266 if they see injured, sick or dead swans.

Natural Resource Techs Deyo and Otto captured a trumpeter swan with a leg injury. Otto made arrangements for its delivery to Northwest Wildlife Rehabilitation Center where the leg was splinted and is making a good recovery.



Adult Trumpeter Swan released at Lake 16, Skagit County.

Winter Shorebird Survey: Biologist Milner participated in the second offering of the annual training session for volunteers who will be counting shorebirds as part of the Pacific Flyway Shorebird Survey. In Region 4 this effort is headed up by Ecostudies Institute with WDFW partnering to provide support to the effort.

Urban Coyote Presentation: Biologist Anderson provided information on urban coyote ecology, how to avoid conflicts and academic work nationwide studying the common occurrence of this very adaptable “urban top predator” in cities and suburbia. The presentation was at Camp Long, in a joint effort with Seattle Parks, and complemented a WDFW interview on the subject. The presentation had child activities with naturalists in one room and “biologist presentation” in the other. The interview on urban coyotes can be found at <http://www.capitolhilltimes.com/2013/11/coyotes-problem/>.

Osprey Management: Biologist Anderson returned multiple requests for direction and process regarding take authorization of osprey nests on cell towers and other structures. Anderson continued discussions with area major tower owners regarding consultation needs with WDFW regarding removal of nests.

Heron Colony Management – Seattle: Biologist Anderson provided advice to Seattle Department of Planning staff inquiring about management needs regarding construction projects proposed around a heron colony in Seattle.

Wildlife Areas



View from Seattle Pond on the Island Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area.

Hunting Season: Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis and Natural Resources Tech Curran Cosgrove monitored water levels, waterfowl and hunter use on the Island, Samish, and Leque Island units and the Bow Hill Pheasant Release site. Ducks have been feeding in the barley fields

at the Samish Unit for the last week or so. Tens of thousands of ducks were seen landing in agricultural fields at dusk in the greater Samish Flats and lower Fir Island area.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw attended a meeting organized by the Stillaguamish Tribe to discuss their Matterand project, which is adjacent to Leque Island. The Stillaguamish Tribe is beginning feasibility and design work on their project which involves restoring tidal processes on the property. WDFW will continue to coordinate with the Stillaguamish Tribe on this project due to its close proximity to Leque Island and the potential that it could impact Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project. The alternative designs that will be produced for Leque Island will consider how conditions may change at the Matterand property.

Samish River Unit (Welts Property) Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Manager Rotton met with staff from the Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) to plan next steps for the project including developing a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, modifying the parking lot design to expedite permitting, and responding to State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) comments.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with grazing leaseholder Everett Alexander to discuss year-end reporting and grazing fees for the 2013 grazing season. Additionally, Manager Boehm discussed closing the grazing lease at the end of 2013.

Lake Terrell Dam Water Flows: Manager Kessler monitored the water level at the Lake Terrell dam on Terrell Creek. He coordinated with the Whatcom Conservation District to get the maximum available flow of water down Terrell Creek. Recent heavy rains will help with the continued low water levels.

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

Wildlife Management

Private Lands Quality Black-tailed Deer Hunt: Biologist Danilson coordinated with volunteers, a private timber company representative, and WDFW Private Lands staff to facilitate access for the GMU 418 modern firearm “draw only” buck hunt. Through an annual landowner agreement with Sierra-Pacific Industries (SPI), WDFW was able to negotiate vehicle and walk-in access to a portion of SPI lands for this year’s hunt. Danilson has lined up several Master Hunter volunteers who will open, close and monitor the gate for this six-day hunt which began on November 15 and runs through November 20. Danilson met with SPI security staff to make arrangements for installing a temporary lock on the gate while Technicians Otto and Deyo installed signs informing buck special permit hunters that internal gates are “walk-in” only.

North Puget Sound Waterfowl Aerial Survey: On Veterans Day, Biologist DeBruyn took advantage of a limited weather window and conducted the first aerial waterfowl survey for the 2013-2014 season (the October survey was not conducted due to poor weather). A total of just

over 90,000 dabbling ducks were observed between Port Susan Bay in northern Snohomish County and Drayton Harbor in northern Whatcom County. Mallards were most abundant, with nearly 38,000 birds observed, while teal were least abundant with only 3,250 birds counted. The total count was up from the November 2012 survey when 83,000 dabblers were counted. Additional surveys will be conducted on a monthly basis through the remainder of the waterfowl season.

Location	Mallard	Northern Pintail	American Widgeon	Green-Winged Teal	Totals
Port Susan Bay	1,250	400		150	1,800
Livingston Bay	3,200	1,250			4,450
Skagit Bay	16,900	4,650	3,100	1,300	25,950
Fidalgo Bay				150	150
Padilla Bay	5,700	1,600	16,900	350	24,550
Samish Bay	7,200	9,000	1,800	775	18,775
Nooksack Delta/Portage	1,100	400		100	1,600
Lummi Bay	1,400	3,800	2,400	300	7,900
Birch Bay	500	700	1,300	75	2,575
Drayton Harbor	650	750	1,150	50	2,600
Totals	37,900	22,550	26,650	3,250	90,350

November 11, 2013 dabbling duck aerial survey of North Puget Sound bays.

Black-tailed Deer Research: Biologists attended a conference call regarding Black-tailed deer research in Western Washington. More discussion will occur between the regions and Olympia staff who collaborate on such efforts. DeBruyn also met with a tribal biologist who is looking into a deer study on tribal lands.

Fir Island Replacement Lands Meeting: Biologist Milner joined other staff to continue discussions about strategies that could help maintain and improve waterfowl habitat and recreational access. WDFW's Private Lands Access program has opened up hundreds of acres of private land to waterfowl hunting.

Required CITES Bobcat Pelt sealing: Biologist Anderson sealed the pelt of one nice looking female bobcat. This is a requirement (along with river otter and cougar) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna: <http://www.cites.org/>.

Green River Quality Hunt: The GMU 485 special permit hunts have come to a close this year. Results are forthcoming. With the weather, both the tribal and state hunts were a bit lower,

anecdotally, than in the past and with better weather conditions. Overall, the hunt went well with nice animals coming out, but a bit more hunt effort needed to take an animal.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Delta Replacement Lands Proposal: Wildlife and habitat program staff met with Western Washington Agricultural Association (WWAA), the perspective of the agricultural community, regarding the WDFW proposal to provide waterfowl hunting and forage replacement lands for acreage displaced by estuary restoration projects in the Skagit delta. WDFW and WWAA will continue coordinating to develop the proposal, and investigate potential partnership and funding opportunities.

Whatcom Wildlife Area Volunteers: Manager Kessler met with volunteers who will perform work on the wildlife area. He also coordinated with Master Hunters who need to perform volunteer work.

British Petroleum (BP) Farming Activity: Manager Kessler coordinated with the BP environmental manager on farming activity in the hunting area. The work was performed this week on a non-release day, so no closure or change to the hunting was needed.

Pheasant Release program: Pheasant release volunteers encountered another locked gate this week on the Skagit Wildlife Area. Enforcement received a flat tire complaint from an archery hunter that said some debris had been distributed in a parking site along the property. Wildlife Area staff assisted with the Friday pheasant delivery. Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to monitor parking areas and talk with hunters about the pheasant release program. Hunting conditions remain in good condition despite the recent wet weather. Manager Kessler received 390 pheasants for the pheasant releases. Birds were released by volunteers on the Intalco, Lake Terrell and BP units.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to work with volunteers on the pheasant release program. Continued maintenance on the net pens is required to close holes in the netting. About a half dozen committed volunteers continue to assist with pheasant release to the three units despite the wet muddy conditions of the access roads. During the week, zero pheasants died in the pens and two escaped.

Private Lands/Access

Private Lands Access Contracts: Biologist Milner continued work on Snow Goose Quality Hunt contracts and entering quality waterfowl sites into the WDFW system so they can be posted online. All active contracts for waterfowl quality hunt sites have now been submitted for posting to the WDFW website.

Blind Construction and Unit Set-up: Technicians Deyo and Otto continued with waterfowl unit set-ups in Skagit and Snohomish counties. This entails setting up unit boundaries, building blinds and brushing them to the terrain, installing parking signs and preparing parking areas.

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

Wildlife Management

Skagit County Elk Conflict: Conflict Specialist Griffith responded to five new elk damage complaints this week. All are in the Sedro Woolley-Lyman area. This area is entirely grass fields with approximately 10-12 producers experiencing fence and pasture damages. The landowner Griffith met with reported that a group of 100-150 elk have recently moved into this area. Griffith is working to verify that this number is accurate and is working on a damage mitigation approach that would group all producers in that area that are experiencing damage and assign master hunters and issue damage permits. Damage permit issuance, master hunter assignments, and tribal assistance are being discussed as tools and will likely be combined into one large damage hunt area.

Griffith also contacted producers in the Day Creek area in effort to monitor elk movements following a concentrated effort that occurred two weeks ago. While elk activity had ceased over the past few weeks, landowners are again seeing elk (or signs of nocturnal activity) on their properties.

Skagit County Deer Conflict: Conflict Specialist Griffith responded to two deer related calls in Skagit County. In one instance, a landowner has deer damaging ornamental plants. Griffith suggested that deterrents and electric fencing be used to keep the deer away from their plants. Griffith advised the landowner on fencing his property. The landowner agreed to report back to Griffith if they have any more problems. In the second instance, concerns about buck deer causing rub damage at a Christmas tree farm. Griffith advised the landowner on fencing. The owner agreed to this and will report back if they have any further problems.

Co-manager Coordination: Biologist Danilson met with the representative of the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe to help develop a grant proposal they are preparing. Danilson also responded to a call from a Lummi Nation Natural Resource Department representative and made arrangements for future discussions related to waterfowl management in Whatcom County.

Wildlife Areas

Island Unit: Manager Rotton continues to work with Department of Ecology regarding the 401 certification permit for the ditch maintenance work on the Island Unit.

Samish River Unit: Manager Rotton and Restoration Projects Coordinator Loren Brokaw sat in on a conference call with staff from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to discuss permitting, billing and other general project questions. The SEPA review process is underway and the permitting package is nearing submission to the appropriate agencies.

Specialist Meis and Technician Cosgrove began winter maintenance projects on the Wooldridge jet sled used for the ferry operations to the Island. Projects include pressure washing the hull and

inside, removing the auxiliary fuel tank to drain out water-contaminated gas, and repair of the throttle cable/

Wildlife Area staff with the assistance of the weed crew began the winter shop cleaning and organizing project. The Wildlife Area staff is also reviewing the equipment inventory and preparing items for surplus.

Leque Island Unit: Specialist Meis and Technician Cosgrove installed a traffic counter on Eide Road to begin collecting site use data for the Leque Island alternatives analysis process.

Friends of Tennant Lake and Hovander Park Annual Board Meeting: Manager Kessler attended the annual board meeting of the Friends of Tennant Lake and Hovander Park.

Private Lands/Access



Snow Geese in Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site

Online Mapping: Private Lands staff mapped and submitted Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites to be posted online.

Waterfowl Meeting: Technician Otto attended the Skagit Chapter Washington Waterfowl Association (WWA) meeting. Otto went over open Quality Waterfowl Hunt sites and rules.

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

Wildlife Management

Radio Training: Assistant District Biologist Cyra provided assistance to staff with instruction on radio training, radio use requirements, and assigning radio call numbers.

Aircraft Safety: Assistant District Biologist Cyra assisted Marine Waterfowl Survey Specialist Evenson with continued communication concerning the Aircraft Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and training requirements.

Volunteer assistance: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to work with the Monroe Rod and Gun Club to develop a local project. The Club requested a task list to review before they decide on a project. The Club has approximately 60 members, many of whom hunt in the Snoqualmie Wildlife Areas.

Seasonal Personnel Issues: Biologist Danilson attended to several issues related to the new seasonal Conflict Specialist (Kyle Pinjuv) and Sherman Anderson's return as the Seasonal Swan Technician. Primarily, this was related to field equipment, vehicle needs, and paperwork. Sherman and Kyle will begin work on November 18.

Habitat Program Assistance – Wildlife Mitigation: Biologist Anderson provided suggestions for habitat improvement and enhancements to Habitat staff regarding a Hydraulic Project Approval need on Green Lake and mitigation needs.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Winter General Goose Surveys: Biologists Miller and Bergh conducted the once-per-month winter goose surveys in District 10. The purpose of these surveys is to observe marked geese and record the information necessary for population estimation and analysis of survival and movements. The focus of these surveys is the Dusky Canada goose, but there are other subspecies of Canada geese as well as Snow geese that winter in the District that may also be marked. Very few geese were observed during this month's survey and no collars were read.

Wildlife Areas



Klickitat Wildlife Area – Fish survey of Wide Sky Creek: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis accompanied Fish Biologist Byrne as he electroshocked the four largest pools of water in the bed of Wide Sky Creek, within the boundaries of the Frey grazing permit area on the Fisher Hill Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area. This stream has a steady flow for a few months of the year and during the dry months it

Shocking Wide Sky Creek

consists of scattered pools in a bouldery bed. Region 5 fish biologists felt that the creek was not suitable for sensitive fish species, but agreed to check the stream anyway to verify that the grazing permit is not having an adverse effect on important fish habitat. During our visit we found no fish in any of the pools, only a few water beetles.

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

Wildlife Management

Elk Season: The modern firearm elk hunting season ended in the South Cascades with reports from hunters of low elk numbers. Several nice bulls were taken in the Siouxon and the Wind River units.

The Enforcement Program indicated that overall hunter numbers in the Wind River Unit were down this year in traditional hunting areas, especially in the upper Lewis River drainage. A few hunters reported success with cow tags in the West Klickitat Unit.

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt:

The 2013-2014 Southwest Washington goose hunting season continued this week. As of Sunday, November 17, 152 hunters checked a total of 317 geese at three check stations at a rate of 2.09 geese per hunter. At the moment, all zones remain open for Management Area 2A. A total of 40 duskies are distributed amongst five zones in Management Area 2A and 2B. Zones may close to hunting geese if dusky quotas are exceeded. For information regarding up-to-date zone closures, hunters can call the Region 5 office at (360) 696-6211 and follow the menu options for hunting and waterfowl. Hunters interested in participating in this season can refer to pages 16, 19 and 20 of the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season Pamphlet for further details regarding requirements for participation <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01535/wdfw01535.pdf>.



Wildlife Areas

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

Pasture Mowing: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Loomis has almost completed the mowing of the pastures in the North and South units of the area. Approximately 700 acres are mowed every year to improve forage conditions for wintering waterfowl and Sandhill cranes. This task starts the first of July and wraps up around the first of December every year.

Wetland Maintenance: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Loomis and Technician Fox have closed all of the water control structures to begin the process of flooding the wetlands in the

South and Vancouver Lake units. The pump in the South Unit was started on November 6 and has been running only a few hours a day due to the low water levels of the Columbia, but as winter rains increase and the river level rises the hours of operation will also increase to supply water to about 150 acres of wetlands. The pump is usually operated from the first of November to the first of June as river levels allow. The water supply to the Vancouver Lake Unit will not be turned on until the first week in December to flood the wetland areas there after pheasant season has ended.



Blind Maintenance at Shillapoo: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald, Assistant Manager Loomis, and Technician Fox all worked to camouflage hunting blinds for the waterfowl hunting season. Blinds 7, 11, 15, 16, 17 and 21 have all been camouflaged by tying natural vegetation to the structures. As a side note, hunters should be aware that blinds 9 and 10 are in too poor condition to hunt from, and Wildlife Area staff will work at removing the blinds and replacing them next year.

Waterfowl Hunting Blind

Private Lands/Access

Access Sites: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes used blowers on parking lots, fishing platforms, and trails as well as hauled off hundreds of pounds of trash on several access sites this week.



Kress Lake Access Site before (above) and after (below) maintenance.



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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Conflict: Conflict Specialist Conklin met with a Wahkiakum County farmer experiencing elk damage. He and other farmers are requesting a meeting to discuss further elk damage areas and also Conklin's new role in her continuing effort to assist commercial damage. Conklin also met with Lewis County farmers with elk damage to oat fields. Conklin sent out new "draft" agreements and other information to all farmers she has met so far and communicated with them regarding the transition and upcoming changes to the Conflict program.

REGION 6

None.