

# Wildlife Program

Week of November 25-December 1, 2013

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

#### **Other**

**Climate Change:** Lands Conservation and Restoration Section Manager Wilkerson attended the National Fish, Wildlife and Plants (NFWP) Climate Adaptation Strategy Joint Implementation Working Group (JIWG) meeting as the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Representative in Washington, D.C. on November 20. The JIWG is co-convened by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies that includes regional representations from five states. The NFWP Climate Adaptation Strategy was finalized earlier in 2013 (<http://www.wildlifeadaptationstrategy.gov/>) and the JIWG is now focused on next steps for implementation. The discussion included creating a community of practice to share successes, strategies, and lessons learned, developing an outreach strategy to different land managers (both public and private) to discuss the strategy and how to facilitate implementation, and supporting the new Interagency Council on Climate Preparedness and Resilience and State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience developed by the Obama Administration via Executive Order on November 1, 2013 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/01/executive-order-preparing-united-states-impacts-climate-change>).

**Federal Affairs:** While in Washington, D.C., Lands Conservation and Restoration Section Manager Wilkerson met with the Governor's federal affairs staff to discuss the Climate Adaptation Strategy and input into the upcoming Task Force process (the goal is concrete policy and implementation recommendations within a year). They discussed highlighting recent successes and issues of importance to Washington State's economy and natural resource future, including water for agriculture and the work of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan, ocean acidification and the shellfish industry, and forest fires in eastern Washington. Wilkerson teamed up with Special Assistant Quan on some Hill visits with staff from Reps. Reichert, DelBene, Larson, Heck, Kilmer, and McDermott and lobbyists working for the irrigators on the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. They also met with Deputy U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Chief Jim Pena to discuss coordination on implementation of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan.

## **REGION 1**

### **Wolf Management**

No activity this week.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Pheasant Release** – The final pheasant release of the season was made this week at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. In addition, private lands biologists released pheasants at standard release sites throughout Southeast Washington.



**REGION 2**

**Wolf Management**

No activity this week.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Pygmy Rabbit Recovery:** Biologists Wisniewski and Duvuvuei made a third attempt at capturing the remaining rabbits in the portion of the small enclosure at Sagebrush Flats (SBF) that is scheduled for vegetation rehab. Five additional rabbits (four males, one female) were caught and released on the Lancaster site at Beezley Hills. We believe there are at least three or four rabbits to be removed from the small enclosure. This puts the total number of rabbits at the Lancaster site at 27 (21 males and 6 females). We believe there are about that many remaining in the function portion of the small enclosure at SBF. The remainder of the week was spent on husbandry and continuing to put the finishing touches on the new enclosure (e.g., artificial burrows and deer netting) and checking perimeter for digging activity.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Mid-winter Waterfowl Surveys** – Biologist Finger tallied waterfowl survey results. Mallard counts were typical of the long-term average (2002-2008) for the North Basin during November with about 100,000 mallards. Mallard numbers peak in December for the north Columbia Basin, but December counts are typically similar to November so significant increases are not expected. Canada geese were slightly more abundant than usual with about 33,000 total geese (28,000

long-term average). Canada geese numbers will likely decline between now and February when spring migrants return. Scaup numbers were identical to the long-term average of about 30,000 scaup counted, but all other divers species were down in numbers. Diver numbers are likely at their peak now, some will move into southern Washington State while others will continue down the Pacific Flyway into other states.

**Recreational Opportunities (Weekender):** The Columbia Basin Irrigation Project Area has ample corn available due to strong winds blowing down stalks, resulting in tremendous amounts of waste corn. The Winchester Regulated Access Area is frozen solid. The Frenchmen Regulated Access Area is frozen solid, but efforts are underway to open up the ponds by increasing water flows through the system. This effort is not expected to have a significant impact but may create open water in the channels that feed the ponds. Biologist Duvuvuei entered Regulated Access Area data from this previous weekend (November 23-24). Although a handful of hunters hunted Winchester and Frenchmen Regulated Access Areas over the weekend they harvested only one mallard.

**REGION 3**

None.

**REGION 4**

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Swan Mortality and Morbidity:** WDFW Scientific Technician Sherman Anderson resumed the swan lead mortality and morbidity project for the 2013-2014 field season. This week Technician Anderson conducted searches for swans in Skagit and Whatcom counties, responded to calls on the Swan hotline and monitored roost sites and known sources of lead toxicity. This week three carcasses and one feather pile were collected in Skagit County and one feather pile in Snohomish County. The Swan hotline is up and running. Citizens are encouraged to call the hotline (360) 466-4345 ext. 266 to report sick, injured or dead swans.

	Skagit	Snohomish	Whatcom	Sumas	TOTAL
Powerline suspect					
Pb suspect	1				1
Trauma*	1				1
Unknown	2				2
Feather Pile	1	1			2
TOTAL	5	1			6

**Snoqualmie Cougar Project:** Biologist Smith continued with daily monitoring of a cougar trap that was set up last week as part of the cougar project. Traps were covered with native vegetation to provide protection from the elements (rain or sun) for captured animals. Once baited and set, the traps are monitored daily.



*Cougar traps are being monitored daily as part of a cougar project in Region 4.*

**Bald Eagle Nest Documentation:** Biologist DeBruyn recorded and submitted data regarding a recently occupied bald eagle nest in the Edgemoor area of Bellingham.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Ebey Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to compile year-end reporting and grazing fees for the 2013 grazing season. Additionally, Manager Boehm collaborated with DFW staff from the Ebey Island Team to address access issues, discuss grazing and agricultural lease options, and contact potential farmers who may be interested in a lease agreement for Ebey Island agricultural fields.

**Stillwater Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with Wild Fish Conservancy to begin planting the construction area for the revetment project that took place earlier this summer. According to Sound Salmon Solutions staff, approximately 300 potted

plants and 700 live stakes were planted last week. Next week another 700 potted native plants will be installed if the weather permits.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Big Game Season Setting Recommendations:** Biologist Danilson coordinated with other WDFW staff, Tribal co-managers, and other agencies in developing harvest recommendations for the 2014 hunting season. Danilson completed his draft recommendations and saved them to a shared file where they will be collated with other recommendations from Region 4 and reviewed by individual section managers.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Skagit Wildlife Area Hunting Season:** Natural Resources Tech Curran Cosgrove checked water conditions on the Samish Unit. There is still a significant amount of barley in the fields and there are hunter reports of ducks feeding on the corn.

Officer Phillips reported that over the Thanksgiving weekend there were good hunter numbers out, in particular on Sunday there were 27 vehicles at the Samish Unit site. Twenty vehicles were at the Headquarters site in the early afternoon on Sunday.

**Region 4 Pheasant Season:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued pheasant pen maintenance and monitoring mortality and escapement of pheasants. For the last week of the season there were no deaths or escapees to report. For the season, there was an average of two deaths and two escapees per week. The volunteer team has done an outstanding job this season with releasing pheasant to the Wildlife Units and assisting with maintenance of the pens.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to collaborate with WDFW Enforcement Officials who patrolled the Snoqualmie Wildlife Units where pheasant are released. Manager Boehm relayed information gathered from local hunters and volunteers about illegal activities occurring on the hunting areas. Enforcement Officials were out in force for the last pheasant hunting weekend of the season. Numerous violators received citations for a variety of infractions.

Whatcom Wildlife Area Manager Kessler received 390 pheasants for the last pheasant release of the season. Birds were released by volunteers on the Intalco, Lake Terrell and British Petroleum (BP) units. All units were very busy on Thanksgiving Day.

**Whatcom Wildlife Area Volunteer Constructs Wood Duck Boxes:** Manager Kessler met with a Master Hunter who built 11 wood duck boxes using materials purchased with Duck Stamp funds. These boxes will be installed on several units of the wildlife area.

**Tennant Lake High Water Levels:** Manager Kessler coordinated with the Regional Weed Control crew who worked removing beaver dams on the south side of Tennant Lake. Recent heavy rains had filled Tennant Lake to flood levels at the Tennant Lake parking area.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Unit Improvements:** Natural Resource Techs Otto and Deyo added wooden layout blinds to an open field Waterfowl Quality Hunt site to provide cover for hunters. Tech Deyo adjusted the unit boundary to incorporate more water for hunters to use. Staff worked on water control to increase sheet water next to hunting blind.

***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 met with numerous landowners along the Skagit River east of Sedro Woolley regarding ongoing elk damages issues. Griffith issued damage permits and worked with the Master Hunter Coordinator on hunter assignments.

Conflict Technician Kyle Pinjuv met with a landowner to discuss the purchase and installation of fencing to mitigate elk damage. Pinjuv began the process of pricing and organizing fencing specifications. Conflict Specialist Brandon Griffith and Pinjuv patrolled areas of known elk traffic and assessed potential solutions to mitigate elk damage on specific properties in the Day Creek area. Griffith and Pinjuv conducted elk hazing activities east of Sedro Woolley.



***Elk group before hazing.***

## Wildlife Areas

**Samish River Unit (Welts Property) Wetland Restoration Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw began drafting responses to comments submitted to Skagit County in response to the Special Use permit application for the project.

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

## Wildlife Management

**Aircraft Safety:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra assisted Marine Waterfowl Survey Specialist Evenson with preparations for the upcoming winter waterfowl aerial surveys.

**Volunteers:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to work with the Monroe Rod and Gun Club to develop a local project. Club members toured Cherry Valley and Crescent Lake units early in the week. The Club is working with local contractors and suppliers to determine how best to support the local Wildlife Units. The Club has approximately 60 members, many of whom hunt in the Snoqualmie Wildlife Areas.

## **REGION 5**

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

## Wildlife Management

**Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument Elk Hunts:** Region 5 Wildlife Program staff met with staff from the Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument to discuss the permit elk hunts that occur on three Elk Areas within monument lands. These hunts have taken place since 2008 with only minor changes in the hunt structure since then. While strenuous, these hunts provide opportunity for scenic backcountry elk hunting as well as elk population control in the monument. Annual phone surveys of permit holders are conducted and indicate general satisfaction and success from year to year. The group recommended that the hunt structure remain the same for the next hunting season and discussed additional information that could be gleaned from the hunter phone surveys.

**Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt:** The 2013-2014 Southwest Washington goose hunting season continued this week. As of Sunday, December 1, 278 hunters checked a total of 587 geese at three check stations at a rate of 2.11 geese per hunter. At the moment, all zones remain open for Management Area 2A. Sunday December 1 was the last hunt day before the break in the season. Goose hunting will resume on Wednesday, December 11 for Management Area 2A and on Thursday, December 12 for Ridgefield Refuge. 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 at <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01535/wdfw01535.pdf> for further details regarding requirements for participation.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Klickitat Wildlife Area -- Pheasant Release:** Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis met Conflict Specialist McDonald and volunteers Morrison, D. Wheelhouse, and R. Wheelhouse to receive delivery of 120 pheasants for distribution to the three Klickitat County release sites. Sixty-four pheasants were released at the Hatchery Unit, 40 at the Gun Club property, and 16 at the Finn Ridge Road site. The birds had nice plumage and most were good fliers. There were no problems and the distribution of birds went smoothly. The plowing of fields had not been completed on the Hatchery Unit, so there was still good cover for the birds at the time of the release.

**Klickitat Wildlife Area -- Late Archery Opener:** Technician Davis visited hunters at their camps on the Soda Springs Unit on the opening day of the general late archery season in Game Management Unit (GMU) 388. He found one 3-point buck taken, and one doe harvested under a special permit.

***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 McDonald responded to a Klickitat County landowner concerned about having a large number of turkeys that visit his property. The landowner was urged to stop feeding the turkeys as they probably will move on quickly once food is no longer provided. The landowner expressed interest in having the turkeys relocated.

## **REGION 6**

None.