

# Wildlife Program

Week of October 7-13, 2013

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Proposed Federal Listing of Yellow-billed Cuckoos:** Biologist Wiles continued work on compiling a list of yellow-billed cuckoo records for Washington, which will be submitted as part of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding its recent proposal to list the western Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of this species. Section Manager Becker solicited regional staff for their comments on the proposal and for cuckoo records in their districts.

**Spotted Owl Conservation:** Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan participated in two meetings to discuss aspects of an initiative to identify landscapes in Washington where voluntary, incentive-based actions would benefit Spotted Owls. The first meeting involved technical team members and focused on interpreting initial model output. The second meeting included the Northern Spotted Owl Implementation Team and focused on reaching agreement about specific output the implementation team desires for the November meeting of the Forest Practices Board. The technical team then developed a framework for the final model scenario, which involves evaluating a simulated network of Spotted Owl clusters between Olympic National Park and the Cascade Range. The entire project will conclude with 48 model scenarios run by mid-October and interaction with the implementation team to structure an appropriate presentation of data to the Forest Practices Board.

**Short Term Conservation Plan Formation:** Section Manager Penny Becker worked with staff in the Listing and Recovery Section to create a draft format for a 2-Year Species Conservation Plan that will be used to guide, prioritize and clarify activities to be done in the short term to achieve species recovery.

## **REGION 1**

#### **Wolf Management**

**District1:** Assistant District Wildlife Biologist (ADWB) Annemarie Prince removed two self-activated cameras from the Hope Mountain area in the Wedge. No wolves were captured on the cameras.

Specialist Shepherd, Officer Weatherman, and Stevens County Sheriff Allen investigated a cow carcass which had wolf activity and scavenging evidence. The investigation and carcass

dissection indicated no evidence of a predator attack signature. The carcass will be removed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the rancher.



***Left: Cow and calf in pasture with wolf location near Spirit Junction north of Colville. Right: Carcass dissection being conducted by Officer Weatherman as Sheriff Allen and the owner look on near Spirit Junction north of Colville.***

Specialist Shepherd talked to the Science Club at the Onion Creek School about wolves and delivered remote camera bait to them. Specialist Shepherd discussed an injured llama incident with Conflict Specialist Heilhecker from Okanogan. Specialist Shepherd kept in contact with the contract range rider who worked in the Tiger Hill allotment and near Spirit Junction in the Smackout wolf territory. Private Lands Technician Bendixen retrieved hazing materials (fladry, screamer gun, etc.) from a landowner in south Stevens County.

**District 2:** Conflict Specialist Bennett discussed two wolf sightings with landowners in north Spokane County and south Spokane County.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Bighorn Sheep ‘Spot Check’ Survey:** In the course of other duties, District Wildlife Biologists Dana Base and Annemarie Prince observed a group of bighorn sheep in the Vulcan Mountain area this week with a minimum count of 14 sheep including 2 rams, 8 ewes, and 4 lambs.



***Group of bighorn sheep observed in the Vulcan area on October 9, 2013.***

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Deer Hunter Check Stations:** Check stations were conducted on Sunday, October 13 at Washington State Patrol Truck Scale facilities alongside Highways 2 and 395. Hunter participation was slightly lower this year. Deer harvest remained about the same.

	2012	2013
Deer Park Check Station		
Hunters	114	91
Deer	12	12
Chattaroy Check Station		
Hunters	66	67
Deer	9	9

**Private Lands/Access**

**Hunt by Written Permission:** Two brothers hunted with their mom and dad in Game Management Unit (GMU) 178. The oldest boy tagged his first buck on a Hunt by Written Permission property near Peola in Garfield County. The family was very excited and appreciative of the WDFW’s private lands access program.



**REGION 2**

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

**Wildlife Management**

**General Deer Opener** – Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen ran the Winthrop deer check station for opening weekend of the general modern firearm season. The biologists checked 107 hunters with 30 deer. These numbers suggest a reduction in hunting pressure, but a significant increase in success as compared to last year’s opening weekend. Thus far, we’re also seeing a higher than average percentage of the harvest in the  $\geq 4 \frac{1}{2}$  year old age class as expected including one nice 30” wide buck (see photo). Prospects for the rest of the season remain good, although mild weather will likely keep deer well distributed on the landscape. Hunters who harvest animals on the weekend are encouraged to bring their deer to the WDFW Deer Check Station located at the Red Barn in Winthrop.

Biologist Volsen spent the opening weekend of general modern firearms deer season contacting hunters in the Entiat (247), Slide Ridge (246) and Chiwawa (245) Game Management Units (GMUs). Seven deer were checked, with the majority of the bucks harvested being taken at

higher elevation of 6,000 to 7,000 feet, in the remnants of our late September snow. Hunters were seeing deer and reporting good hunting. Hunters at lower elevations were having a tougher time as the snows were not heavy enough to move deer down in elevation.



*Winthrop Check Station mule deer buck. Photo by Scott Fitkin.*

**Wolverine Research:** Biologist Fitkin and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Biologist Rohrer retrieved the cameras from the final run-pole survey site in the Pasayten Wilderness before winter precluded access (but just barely). Despite cutting four sets of wolverine tracks on the way in, they did not capture any wolverines on the remote cameras this session; however, the biologists did get some entertaining marten footage. This effort is part of an interagency project to develop a long-term summer wolverine monitoring methodology.

**Pygmy Rabbit Recovery Project:** Biologist Wisniewski worked on coordinating plans for building the new breeding enclosure at Beezley Hills. Biologist Wisniewski and Technician Duvuvuei met with an Evergreen College class at the Sagebrush Flats recovery area to discuss the project. They were very excited about actually getting to see pygmy rabbits. Hopefully we will acquire a few new volunteers from this group. Biologist Wisniewski and Technician Duvuvuei firmed up plans for dividing the Sagebrush Flats small enclosure to rehab the vegetation on one side while still housing rabbits in the other half.

**Deer Escape Ramp** – Biologist Duvuvuei contacted the Quincy Irrigation District to discuss the possibility of using a portable deer ramp (design in progress) to assist with removing trapped deer from the dewatered irrigation canals. Each year, hundreds of deer get trapped in the irrigation canal and die from starvation and stress.

**Deer Assistance** – Biologist Duvuvuei responded to a call reporting that a deer was trapped in the irrigation canal. When he arrived at the scene, Biologist Duvuvuei found the deer swimming downstream, two miles from where the reporting party spotted it. The deer tried to climb out on several occasions, but was unsuccessful with each attempt. As Duvuvuei prepared to rope the deer from a bridge, two good-intentioned citizens stopped to help. Duvuvuei and the citizens were able to rope the deer and pull it out of the water. Although the young buck was weak and exhausted, it meandered off and is expected to make a full recovery.



*Young buck trapped in irrigation canal – Photo by Orrin Duvuvuei.*

**North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team** – The prescribed burn team started the week by burning part of the Cecile 3 Unit on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Tuesday was cloudy and damp, but they were able to complete burning the unit Wednesday, along with a portion of the Cecile 2 Unit. On Thursday they traveled to the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area where they resumed burning in the high complexity Cougar Unit. Although conditions were not dry enough to meet objectives for broadcast burning the crew was able to burn jackpots of fuel to reduce fire intensity for future entries. On Friday, conditions improved and they were able to finish blackening ground between WDFW and private lands to the north. The unit is now secured on three sides.



*Cecile 3 Rx Fire*



*Left: Three members of the team removing fuel from around a resource snag to protect it from approaching fire in the Cecile 2 Unit. A pileated woodpecker was observed flying around the unit at the end of the day. Right: Sherman Creek Assistant Manager Daro Palmer on the Cougar Burn Unit.*

**Obanion – WDFW Floodplain Project:** The project is now essentially complete. All of the structures are finished, the coffer was deconstructed and final grading and cleanup are underway. The replanting/reclamation portion of the project is now in progress as the heavy equipment is being demobilized.



*Deconstruction of the approximately three acre coffer in the Methow River – Photo by Tom McCoy.*



*Deconstruction of the approximately three acre coffer in the Methow River – Photo by Tom McCoy.*

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

**Disabled hunters:** Specialist Bridges met with veterans within the NCW Vets Serving Vets organization. Bridges supplied them with maps of each area experiencing damage, landowner contact information, and expressed all concerns regarding access to each particular area.

**Waterfowl** – Biologist Finger showed Waterfowl Specialist Wehland around the Desert and Potholes Units of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area to introduce her to popular hunting areas. Wehland will be contacting hunters during the opener and needed advice on the high priority areas to seek out for harvest checks. Waterfowl appeared to be abundant in the areas toured (North Potholes, Winchester Wasteway around Dodson Road). Fifteen vehicles were already observed at the Dodson/Winchester Access at 11 a.m. on Friday, getting ready for opening weekend.

Biologist Finger introduced Biologist Duvuvuei to the Saddle Mountain Pump Plant wetland project near Othello. This small project (<4 wetland acres) will be filled on October 21 and may provide some good hunting opportunity when a couple of adjacent cornfields are harvested this fall. Biologists have previously attempted to plant food plots on the project and learned that alkalinity was too high to be successful. Fortunately however, the vegetation community is shifting from weedy species, such as kochia and bassia to saltgrass and what appears to be the native species of phragmites based on the red stems observed.



**Bighorn sheep:** Region 1 staff pinned the second and final bighorn ram harvested from Mt. Hull by non-tribal hunters this season. The senior ewe permit hunter was also successful this year and the youth ewe hunter was on the hill this week.

*Mt. Hull bighorn ram  
– Photo by Howard  
Ferguson.*

**Access Site Work** – Progress on the Bridge 1 site is going well (see photos). Barrier rock is set along with gravel.



*Bridge 1 – Access Site*



***Bridge 1 – Access Site***

**Dryden Access Area** – Access Manager Graves acquainted himself with the soon to be new access site on the Wenatchee River, near the town of Dryden. The site will provide fishing and rafting access opportunities for the public.



***Dryden Access Site – Wenatchee River shoreline and mouth of Peshastin Creek. Photo by Joe Graves.***

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

**Modern Deer Season preparation:** Preparation for the modern deer season continues. Shut down of the federal government has created a rather unusual situation in the Methow Valley. All of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) campgrounds are closed! The result is that the seven campgrounds on the Methow Wildlife Area are the only non-fee public campgrounds in the entire valley. The phone at the wildlife area has been ringing off the hook as members of the public, local businesses and the media try to sort out what the federal shutdown means for hunters showing up for the modern rifle opener on Saturday. It will be very interesting to see how many of the USFS “refugees” will show up in our campgrounds.

**Wildlife Areas**



***Fall colors near the Cutchie Homestead, Chopaka-Similkameen Wildlife Area. Photo by Justin Haug.***



*Above: Forde #2 burn unit smoke in the valley with Sumac, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Below: Forde #2 burn unit smoke in the valley surrounding Connors Lake, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Photos by Justin Haug.*



## **REGION 3**

None

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Trumpeter Swan Lead Poisoning Investigation:** Biologists Smith and DeBruyn checked conditions at Judson Lake in preparation for winter exclusion of swan use at the lake. Personnel will use an airboat in coming weeks to reinstall an exclusion area across 60 acres of the lake to exclude swans from accessing the portion of the lake with higher lead pellet densities. This exclusion area has been successfully used the past three winters. Water levels were still too high to test the feasibility of machinery that may be used in the future to lessen the availability of lead pellets to swans at the lake. Smith and DeBruyn also met with landowners to update them on the project and secure the appropriate permissions.



***Biologist DeBruyn checks water depth at Judson Lake in preparation for upcoming swan exclusion activities. The bamboo pole exclusion area can be seen in the background.***

**Elk Work Group Steering Committee:** Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn and Conservation Specialist Griffith met with enforcement, regional staff and tribal representatives to plan future meetings and discuss issues involving management of the North Cascades Elk Herd. DeBruyn also set up a meeting of the public safety committee and worked with a graduate student from Western Washington University who is designing a course of study around elk crossing issues.

**North Puget Sound Waterfowl Flights:** Biologist DeBruyn worked up a schedule for this season's waterfowl flights and communicated with the flight vendor. Monthly dabbling duck surveys are planned as well as some additional flights for brant and snow geese.

**Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw worked with Public Affairs to draft a press release to advertise for the upcoming public meeting for the project, which will be distributed this week. WDFW will kick-off the project with a public meeting on Wednesday, October 30 from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. in the Stanwood Middle School cafeteria, located at 9405 271st St. NW Stanwood, WA 98292. WDFW will present background information, project goals, and the expected timeline for drafting conceptual designs and selection of the preferred alternative. For more information, contact Loren Brokaw at [Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov).

Projects Coordinator Brokaw participated in a conference call with Washington Department of Ecology and other sponsors of projects in the Lower Stillaguamish delta. The purpose of the call was to coordinate contracts for a grant that is administered by Ecology.

**Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP):** Project Coordinator Brokaw finalized a list of known issues with PSNERP projects proposed on WDFW lands that will need to be addressed as the projects are developed. The list of issues was developed with assistance from Manager Link, Wildlife Area staff, area habitat biologists, and real estate staff.

**Fir Island Farm Final Design Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw and the project consultant uploaded water quality data from data loggers on the site. The data loggers are located in groundwater wells and drainage sloughs at the Fir Island Farm Reserve and adjacent neighboring properties. The loggers monitor temperature, water level, and salinity. These data establish baseline water quality conditions, so that WDFW can detect if changes occur in the future.

**American Pika Surveys:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra finalized work on this summer's American Pika surveys creating survey route maps and data tables for progress report submission.

**Mountain Goat Population Surveys:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra reanalyzed survey data from this summer's aerial surveys so the data would work with sightability models that use outdated software. Biologist Milner entered this summer's mountain goat survey data into the sightability program and provided results to section lead Harris.

**Priority Habitats and Species and Permit Assistance:** Biologist Danilson was contacted by two consultants working on two different projects. The first individual contacted WDFW because he was assisting in an appeal of a forest practice application in western Skagit County

that has the potential to impact peregrine falcons. Assistant District Biologist DeBruyn consulted with Skagit County on this project earlier in the year and will follow up. The second individual was directed by Whatcom County to prepare a habitat management plan for a forest conversion that has potential impacts to pileated woodpeckers and to work with WDFW for this project. Danilson is getting more background on the project by following up with Whatcom County and will ultimately follow up with the consultant.

## **Wildlife Areas**

**Sign Kiosk:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with three volunteers to build and install a sign kiosk at the new West parking area on Ebey Island. A new entrance gate and pedestrian gate were also installed. Manager Boehm continues the installation of kiosks and gates at the two remaining parking areas.

**Cherry Valley Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm completed posting of informational signs at Ebey Unit. Maintenance was also conducted on the net pens by volunteers.

**Crescent Lake Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with a high school volunteer who completed the ADA duck blind. The entrance ramp and final painting were completed prior to Saturday's opening waterfowl season.



**Stillwater Wildlife Area:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm and two pheasant release volunteers contacted WDFW Enforcement Officers to report a hunter hunting in a safety zone, after the unit's 4:00 p.m. closing time. Enforcement Officer's responded and issued the appropriate citations.

**Lake Terrell Dam Water Flows:** Manager Kessler cleared a blockage at the leak valve on the Lake Terrell Dam. This blockage was preventing water to flow past the dam into Terrell Creek. A beaver dam at the edge of Lake Terrell was cleared to also keep water flowing into Terrell Creek.

**Island Unit:** Manager Belinda Rotton worked with CAMP program permit Biologist Chris Gourley and representatives from the Department of Ecology to schedule a field tour of the Island Unit. The purpose of the trip is to discuss the permitting for the Island Unit ditch maintenance project.

**Hunting Season Prep** - Natural Resources Specialist (NRS) Greg Meis and Natural Resources Tech (NRT) Curran Cosgrove monitored water conditions on the Island Unit. Safety zones signs were re-posted on Leque Island following corn harvest. Fencing and field entry gates were repaired on the DeBay Slough hunt unit.

NRS Meis and NRT Cosgrove placed a buoy on a log that has stopped near the lower landing on the Island Unit. Hunter access during low light conditions creates a potential boating hazard in this location.

**Pheasant Release program:** Natural Resources Specialist Meis and Natural Resources Tech Cosgrove worked with the Region 4 private lands program to set up the parking area for the Bow Hill pheasant release site. Bow Hill Road site has off-site parking. The temporary parking area was installed, a small access trail was mowed, and signs and field entry points were completed.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Big Game and Waterfowl Hunter Assistance:** Biologist Danilson followed up with several hunters inquiring about quality hunt sites, goose hunting regulations, access to private lands, and general questions about access. Among those hunters was the mountain goat auction tag holder who called to provide notification that he was heading for the Mount Baker area in search of his trophy animal. Danilson provided the hunter some information about access and potential conflicts with other recreational user groups. Danilson was also contacted by a local hunter who had harvested a mountain goat in the Methow Unit. Danilson met with the hunter to measure the horns and collect biological samples.



***District 14 Wildlife Biologist Chris Danilson takes horn measurements from a mountain goat harvested in the Methow Unit.***

To facilitate private lands access for late season quality buck permit holders for GMU 418, Danilson coordinated with Private Lands staff, Sierra-Pacific security representative, and the

volunteer “hunt master” for the master hunter antlerless elk tag holders. Danilson will work with volunteer master hunters and Private Lands to manage access to Sierra-Pacific timber lands for the 25 tag holders for this six day hunt in mid-November.



*A bull elk harvested in Game Management Unit (GMU) 418.*

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Lands 20/20 Proposal:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw updated the Region 4 Lands 20/20 proposals for the Executive Management Team presentations this week. Region 4 proposals include acquisition of property on Ebey Island to provide public access to existing WDFW lands on Ebey Island, and a proposal to provide hunting replacement lands in the Skagit delta for lands displaced by estuary restoration projects.

**Lindsey Road Site Assessment:** Biologist DeBruyn walked in to an 80 acre property that is part of the Whatcom Wildlife Area in north Whatcom County to see if it has potential as a pheasant release area. The property is completely wooded and thus not suitable for pheasants, but it did seem to be an ideal deer hunting area.

**Whatcom Wildlife Area Opening Day of Waterfowl Season:** Opening day of the waterfowl hunting season was well attended at Lake Terrell, Tennant Lake and the Nooksack Units with no problems reported.

**Lake Terrell ADA Hunting Blind:** Manager Kessler completed setting up the ADA Hunting Blind on the Lake Terrell Unit. This blind will be for handicapped hunter use only, by reservation. The blind is advertised on the WDFW website.

**Tennant Lake Hunting Blinds:** Manager Kessler coordinated with Whatcom County Parks Managers to make sure the wetland boardwalk trail was closed and locked for the hunting season. Closure signs were placed on the boardwalk gate. Kessler posted signage at the boat launch to advise users to sign in for use of the Tennant Lake hunting blinds. He also cleared a beaver dam in the access channel to Tennant Lake.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt (WQH) sites:** Private Lands staff built hunting blinds and posted the unit boundary at access sites in Skagit and Whatcom counties. Staff contacted partners in the Waterfowl Quality Hunt program to get access agreements signed. The hunt unit signs which contain the rules and a map of the unit were posted and additional signs for the parking area were also added. The WQH program currently has 19 hunting sites open. Natural Resource Technician Otto surveyed and monitored WQH sites opening morning.

***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 talked to two landowners this week regarding elk damages to their properties. Both are new complaints and are non-commercial backyard orchards. Griffith advised the landowners on hazing, deterrents, and exclusionary methods.

Griffith continued to work with the Master Hunter coordinator on last week's assignments in Day Creek, Concrete-Sauk, and Sedro-Woolley. Two of the three assigned Master Hunters harvested on the first day of their hunt. The third is awaiting a call from the landowner once the elk come back to their property.

**North Cascades Elk Herd Management Damage Committee Meeting:** Griffith facilitated the third meeting of the committee this week. The meeting was well attended with 24 individuals representing Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Tribal Government, State of Washington Senate, local agricultural producers, public sportspeople, and concerned local residents. Discussions continued regarding what types of damage management tools could be brought forth to the North Cascades Elk Working Group for possible inclusion into the draft herd plan that is in process of being updated.

**Skagit County Deer Conflict:** Conflict Specialist Griffith responded to two deer complaints this week in Concrete and Bow. Both are commercial orchard/vineyards. One is new to the area and Griffith will conduct an on-site visit next week. The second is a historic complaint and the landowner has constructed an exclusionary fence around three sides of the property and is working on installing the final section. Griffith issued two damage permits and will be working with the producer on cooperative fencing.

**Bald Eagle Management:** Biologist Milner talked to three unrelated parties about bald eagle management requirements for their property. Milner referred each to the federal website and explained that state biologists cannot answer detailed questions about the federal requirements. Milner also suggested hiring a consultant to determine whether a nest is still extant on the property, since our data set is old and WDFW staff time is limited for updating existing nest information, which is generally best accomplished from an airplane.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm completed safety and informational signage at the Stillwater, Cherry Valley, Crescent Lake and Ebey Island Wildlife Areas. Manager Boehm installed informational and safety signage at Stillwater, Cherry Valley, Crescent Lake and Ebey Island pheasant release units. Additionally, Manager Boehm was at the Ebey Island Unit on Saturday and Sunday morning and evening to meet hunters, and inform waterfowl hunters about the 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. hours. Numerous signs at each entrance area were posted and explained. Manager Boehm educated approximately 40 hunters about the unit's restrictions during the pheasant hunting season.

**South Fork Skagit Cattail Maintenance Project:** Manager Rotton worked with Dave Heimer of the WDFW weed crew to edit the WDFW response to comment letters from the SEPA process for the cattail management proposal. WDFW is proposing to examine the effectiveness of control measures on invasive cattail growth primarily on WDFW intertidal restoration sites such as Wiley and Deepwater Slough projects. Comment letters were received from the Washington Department of Ecology and the Skagit River Systems Cooperative. Response letters will be sent out early next week.

**Wildlife Area Planning:** Manager Rotton downloaded monitoring photo points for the Wiley Slough Restoration on the S drive. Mike Schroeder from the Science program will organize, label and geo-reference the photos in preparation for the citizen science data collection portion of the ecological integrity monitoring project.

**Skagit Barge:** Manager Rotton contacted representatives from Department of Natural Resources to determine the potential of the Puget Sound Crew to assist with the decommissioning of the barge. This week the Skagit Wildlife Area staff relocated and anchored the barge temporarily in the Skagit boat launch. It was determined that anchoring the barge in the South Fork of the Skagit during the winter high river season posed a risk. The barge is signed and marked with reflectors to allow for coordination time for the project.

### ***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 assisted several staff in providing instruction on radio training and radio use requirements, and assigning radio call numbers. Cyra began

reviewing the Program's assigned call list for non-active users to accommodate the increase in field staff in need of call numbers.

**Aircraft Safety:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra in conjunction with Marine Waterfowl Specialist Evenson continued work on a proposed over-water component to the Aircraft Safety Program and compiled lists and researched necessary equipment needed prior to winter aerial surveys.

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Areas:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to recruit volunteers for various projects that need to be completed. Last week, six volunteers stated they were interested in the volunteer program. Manager Boehm will try to turn interest into action this coming week.

**Conflict Wildlife Technician Hiring:** Conflict Specialist Griffith received a list of applicants this week for the technician position that he will supervise. Griffith will be working through the hiring process throughout the next few weeks.

**Private Lands Biologist Recruitment:** Biologist Danilson helped conduct interviews for the Region 4 Private Lands Biologist 2 position. Six candidates were interviewed.

**Wildlife Conflict Meeting:** Conflict Specialist Griffith participated in the Statewide Conflict meeting.

**Private Lands Access Biologist Interviews:** Biologist Milner convened a team who interviewed six prospective candidates for the Biologist 2 position in Region 4. Milner followed up with the HR paperwork and scheduled second interviews for the top candidates.

## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Ridgefield's BirdFest:** Biologist Stephens staffed a WDFW table at BirdFest this weekend. The table was stocked with Living with Wildlife informational brochures, hunting pamphlets, wildlife posters, and a cougar skin which was a hit with the kids. BirdFest was impacted by the shutdown of the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge in that many of the tours scheduled to take place on the Refuge had to be cancelled. The turnout was good considering the circumstances and everyone seemed to be in high spirits and enjoying the incredible weather.

**Jackrabbit Monitoring Project:** Biologist Holman coordinated work to monitor jackrabbits in Klickitat County with Region 1 Biologists Ferguson and Walker. Following the protocol developed by Region 1, eight survey locations were checked in Klickitat. Volunteer Flick and Biologist Holman conducted the surveys. Work on jackrabbits in Klickitat will continue into the

fall as long as permission to access additional parcels of private property and suitable weather continue.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Shillapoo Wildlife Area -- La Frambois Road Boulder Placement:** Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald, Assistant Manager Loomis, and Technician Sample placed boulders along La Frambois Road going into the Vancouver Lake Unit of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. Boulders were placed along the roadway to keep people from driving off the pavement through the pasture and wetlands, causing habitat damage, and dumping trash in remote areas. The boulders were placed along two problem stretches of the road totaling over 700 feet of barricade placement. Signage was also posted along the roadway warning drivers of a sharp curve.



*Technician Sample operating track hoe, Assistant Manager Loomis hauling boulders.*

**Klickitat Wildlife Area -- Deer and Turkey Forage Plots:** Recent rains have dampened the soil enough to cultivate. Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis used the opportunity to work on the forage plots. Eight plots were disked and planted with wheat. These plots were established many years ago, but farming them has occurred sporadically during the last decade. All the plots are located on the Soda Springs Unit along the South Breaks Road and 5 1/2 sacks of surplus seed (mix of red and



*Drilling seed on the Klickitat Wildlife Area*

white varieties of wheat) from the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) were used. During efforts to cultivate and plant the forage plots, staff found five patches of medusa head, which is a grass on the noxious weed list. Technician Davis treated these with RoundUp and completed herbicide application forms for the work. Annual grasses are actively growing and should be susceptible to herbicide treatment.



**Klickitat Wildlife Area -- Wood Duck Nest Box Utilization on the Sondino Ponds Unit:** Volunteer Hulbert checked the nine wood duck nest boxes that were placed around ponds on the Sondino Ponds Unit in 2012, and found that six of them had been used. In his observation, having that many boxes used in the first year since installation is very encouraging. Hulbert built and put up the boxes using Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant funds.

*Sondino Duck Box*

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

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Klickitat Wildlife Area -- Opening Weekend of Modern Firearm Deer Season:** Modern firearm season for deer opened on October 12, accompanied by overcast and showery weather. Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis worked together conducting a hunter success survey and monitoring camping activity. During an evening patrol of the Soda Springs Unit on Friday, staff found far fewer camps than normal. Hunting pressure was considerably lighter than expected over the weekend. However, staff had many positive contacts with most people observing deer tracks or other sign, or hearing or seeing animals. In addition, hunters saw bears and one cougar.

**Results of Survey – Saturday, October 12:** Contacted 65 hunters: 4 Deer (One 3x4 buck, one 4 pt. buck, one 3 pt. buck, and one doe); 1 Bear; all in GMU 388. Additionally, one contacted hunter had taken a deer and a bear in GMU 578.

**Results of Survey – Sunday October 13:** Contacted 68 hunters: 2 Deer (One 2x3 buck, one 3x3 buck), 1 Bear; all in GMU 388. One illegal spike buck was killed.

**Cowlitz Wildlife Area -- Allen Barn Approach:** Cowlitz Wildlife Area staff completed the Allen Barn approach off of Davis Lake road. The old grass driveway was sprayed, leveled and

cleared of sod. Approximately 120 yards of gravel was hauled in by the Wildlife Area dump truck to complete the project.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Fall Upkeep:** Access staff Spangler and Rhodes used blowers on the North parking lot, fishing platforms, and trails at Kress Lake as well as Beginner's Hole and I-5 access sites. They also cut and removed limbs off a large cottonwood tree that fell alongside the Kress Lake trail.



*Fall upkeep at Access Sites*

**Oneida Access Site:** The new restrooms are complete; however, the dock is partially complete and access staff Spangler and Rhodes signed the dock with danger signs so that recreationalists will not use the unfinished dock.



*New Oneida restroom*



*Oneida dock*

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Hunting on Federal Lands:** Wildlife program staff and customer service staff answered many phone calls about hunting on federal lands with the current federal government shutdown.

National wildlife refuges (NWR) are currently closed to public access and hunts held exclusively on the refuges that are scheduled to occur during the shutdown are cancelled. U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land (Mt. St. Helens National Volcanic Monument is managed by the USFS) is open to public access, but all facilities (campgrounds, boat launches, etc.) are closed. Biologists Miller and Bergh contacted several hunters preparing to launch and get ready for the Duck opener on October 12. Unfortunately, they intended to hunt the Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge and all Department of Interior facilities are closed. This was very confusing for the hunters as U.S. Department of Agriculture lands (USFS for example) were left open to access, but facilities were closed.

Several important surveys for geese and shorebirds may be impacted by the federal shutdown. NWR's are critical survey locations and often the coordination and protocols are developed by FWS employees who are not working.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Cowlitz Wildlife Area -- Hunter Education Online Evaluation Class:** Cowlitz Wildlife Area staff conducted a five-hour course to evaluate 10 students who have passed the online hunter education class. These students take the agency approved online course studying at their own pace. After each unit they must take a quiz and pass with an 80% before proceeding to the next unit. Once each unit has been successfully completed, they may then take the final exam. They are given two attempts to pass the final otherwise they must retake the whole course. They then enroll in an evaluation class to be trained in the safe and proper handling of firearms. If they pass a 20-question review quiz, demonstrate a proper attitude, and show an understanding of the eight required skills they are then certified under the hunter education program.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Lower Columbia River (LCR):** Biologists Miller and Bergh traveled to Gray's Bay to share logistics and local knowledge of Lower Columbia River (LCR). Miller is trying to impart some practical knowledge from the 37 years of working in the LCR with others so that they can avoid some of the dangerous situations biologists have faced in the lower river. Upcoming surveys on shorebirds and Resident Dark Geese next year will take place in Gary's Bay and it is a difficult place to travel. While out on river, one of the small 15 hp Merc motors failed and we were forced to transfer engines from one vessel to another while anchored in 30 feet of water.

### **REGION 6**

None