

Wildlife Program

Week of September 2-8, 2013

SCIENCE DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Washington Reptile and Amphibian Atlas: Citizens around the state continue to use the online Washington Reptile and Amphibian Atlas to learn about our native species and to report observations to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Lori Salzer has corresponded with dozens of citizens recently who are seeing Rubber Boas, Western Skinks, Western Fence Lizards, Northern Alligator Lizards, Short-horned Lizards, Western Toads and more. These citizen reports provide us with current distribution information for many species. Check out the Atlas at <http://www1.dnr.wa.gov/nhp/refdesk/herp/herpmain.html>.



Northern Alligator Lizard reported from Bush Prairie.

White-tailed Ptarmigan: In 2010 the Mount Rainier subspecies of the white-tailed ptarmigan (*Lagopus leucura*) in Washington State was petitioned to be federally listed as a threatened species by the Center for Biological Diversity. The argument presented in the petition was that isolated populations of ptarmigan living in naturally fragmented alpine habitats are at high risk of population isolation and extirpation due to climate change. In 2012 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determined that the petition warranted a more in-depth examination of the status of the subspecies.

Michael Schroeder (WDFW Research Scientist) prepared a proposal to conduct basic research on ptarmigan within Washington. The goal of the research is to capture and band ptarmigan in key locations and to collect feather samples for genetic analysis by Dr. Sara Oyler-McCance of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in Fort Collins, Colorado. Two of the key locations are Mount Rainier National Park and the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Both of these areas support substantial ptarmigan habitat separated by more than 50 kilometers of mostly non-ptarmigan habitat. This is the largest gap of non-ptarmigan habitat in the Cascades of Washington. Collection of feather samples from at least 10 individuals from both areas, and comparison with available samples

from the Pasayten Wilderness in northern Okanogan County will help determine the level of connectivity among ptarmigan populations in the state.

Feather samples were collected in August from at least four ptarmigan in the Enchantments portion of the Alpine Lakes Wilderness; Jon Gallie (WDFW Biologist) aided in the collection. Feathers from nine ptarmigan in Mt. Rainier National Park were also collected. Dr. Clait Braun (retired Wildlife Biologist from Colorado Parks and Wildlife), Greg Wann (Colorado State University), and Mason Reid (National Park Service Biologist) aided in the effort.

Scientific Conferences -- Western Field Ornithologists' Conference: Michael Schroeder (WDFW Research Scientist) gave a talk at the 38th Annual Conference of Western Field Ornithologists' Conference in Olympia. This joint conference with Washington Ornithological Society, hosted by Black Hills Audubon, focused on ecology, research and conservation of birds in Western North America. The conference included scientific papers, workshops and field trips. Mike's talk was titled "Phenotypic variation across the range of Sooty and Dusky Grouse in western North America" and was co-authored by Fred Zwickel (retired professor from University of Alberta), George Barrowclough (American Museum of Natural History), and Jonas Lai (American Museum of Natural History).

Lori Salzer also attended sessions focused on Citizen Science. Most notably both the eBird presentation by Brian Sullivan of Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the COAST (University of Washington's Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team) presentation by Jane Dolliver – both highly successful, ongoing projects.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1: Biologist Prince returned a call about a wolf sighting in Pend Oreille County.

Specialist Shepherd, Officer Anderson, and Sheriff Allen responded to an alleged large canine attack on a thoroughbred colt near Sherman Pass. The animal was tended to near Arden, WA when it died of injuries which were not consistent with a wolf attack and were possibly hardware or a cougar



Chest wound on dead thoroughbred colt from Ferry County.

attack. The determination was injuries occurred from an unknown cause.

Specialist Shepherd assisted Assistant District Biologist Prince check remote cameras in the Wedge. No carnivores were detected other than coyotes and black bears.

Specialist Shepherd met with and discussed range riding, observations, and hazing opportunities with contract and volunteer range riders. Specialist Shepherd worked with current and potential contract and volunteer range riders in order to put into place a network of riders who can patrol various areas occupied by wolves. Specialist Shepherd discussed range riding and wolf observations with federal grazing allotment permit operators within the Smackout wolf territory.

Specialist Shepherd worked on a PowerPoint presentation for a range rider training in Goldendale in Region 2 with District Biologist David Anderson and area ranchers next week.

District 2: Conflict Specialist Rasley received a call from one of our Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement-Livestock (DPCAL) cattleman who has cattle on Jasper Mountain south of Dayton. The cattleman said, “Him and the neighbors have seen one black wolf roaming the area over the past week, but have not had any problems with their cows.” He added that “he thought it was because they have increased their range riding and human presence.”

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

Wildlife Management

Depredation investigation Stevens County: Conflict Specialist Bennett went with Officer Spurbeck to Stevens County (just south of Springdale) to meet with a landowner that had some damage to two horses that they believed were predator caused. The cause of damage was determined to be structural (fencing and t-post).



Structural damage caused by fencing on the female horse (left) and on the male horse (right) just south of Springdale, WA on September 1, 2013.



**Depredation Investigation
Spokane County:** Conflict Specialist Bennett and Assistant District Biologist Mike Atamian went to a depredation on a goat in north Spokane County. The cause of death was determined to be caused by a cougar.

A cougar depredated this 5 month old goat in north Spokane County on September 4, 2013

REGION 2

Wolf Management

Nothing to report.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Common Loon: Biologist Heinlen conducted the last survey of the season to document Common Loon chicks in the District. Lost Lake produced two chicks and Bonaparte Lake produced one chick this season. These are two of the most productive Common Loon nesting sites in the state.

Bonaparte Lake Common Loon chick – Photo by Jeff Heinlen.



Columbia Basin Wetland Management: Biologist Duvuvuei accompanied Biologist Finger and Wildlife Area Technician Carpenter to discuss future habitat improvements and crop plantings in order to benefit waterfowl and provide additional hunting opportunities. Also discussed was parking area placement for the Winchester Regulated Access Area and Americans with Disabilities hunting blind placement and construction at the Frenchmen Regulated Access Area.

Biologist Finger and Natural Resource Technician Carpenter mapped vegetation around Mansfield Pond for the aerial herbicide application scheduled for this week. Mapped polygons were provided to the pilot for treatment. The intent is to eliminate phragmites and tall emergent vegetation in areas that are currently dry (i.e. will be shallow zones when pond is full) to promote short emergent seed producing vegetation such as smartweed and millet. Previous treatments to this project area appear very promising with a tremendous amount of smartweed colonizing the newly opened areas. Some millet is also invading. These species are highly valuable for dabbling ducks.



Waterfowl use at the Mansfield Pond Project area, February 2012. We expect these numbers to increase dramatically after Orrin attends the Wetland Management Workshop during September 17-19.

Bighorn Sheep Management: Biologist Heinlen continued to download location data from two Argos collars deployed in eastern Washington. Data was forwarded to pertinent staff. Biologist Heinlen also received a report of 21 Bighorn sheep rams observed in the Sinlahekin herd within the last month, suggesting the herd may not have declined as drastically as indicated by surveys this past spring. Biologist Heinlen will conduct ground surveys to try to verify this report.

Wildlife Areas

Obanion fish habitat project: The Obanion project is now at the 75% completion point. Construction is now slightly delayed with completion slated for early October. Recent rains

elevated flows in the Methow River from approximately 300 cfs to > 1,000 cfs requiring the construction crew to continue beefing up their bypass structure.





Bio control releases (Diffuse knapweed): Over the past couple of years the Methow Valley has experienced a marked increase in diffuse knapweed abundance, and a sharp decline in bio control insect populations. In cooperation with Washington State University (WSU) Extension Agent Jennifer Andreas, Tom McCoy made two releases of *Cyphocleonus achates*, a relatively new stem boring beetle that attacks both diffuse and spotted knapweed. We will be investigating how effective they are in combination with the *Larinus* beetle, and how they disperse on steep slopes.

North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team – The prescribed fire team members assisted Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Manager Haug with cleaning up the McLoughlin Falls Unit of the wildlife area. The team also cleaned up a large garbage pile on Zachman Road.

Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Assistant DuPont and Restoration Specialist Guse have completed a draft prescribed fire burn plan with the goal of restoring two aspen clones on the Chesaw Unit. The draft has been sent to Fuels Manager Leuschen for technical review. Comments on the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) document for this project have been addressed. The cultural resources survey report has been completed and passed onto the Colville Nation and WA Department of Archaeology and Heritage Protection so sensitive resource protection can be inserted in the plan. We should be ready to implement these two burns once burn bans are lifted and environmental conditions are favorable to meet burn objectives. Keep watch for pictures of the burns, and how the site changes over time through photo monitoring.

A scoping conference call is being scheduled next week to explore how the prescribed fire team can assist with burning intentions on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area. Leuschen and Guse will make a site visit to Oak Creek within the next two weeks before the fall burn season begins to discuss possibilities and kick the dirt with area managers.

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

Wildlife Areas

Chiliwist Firewise Celebration – Manager Haug represented the department and joined the community around the Chiliwist Unit in celebrating their recognition as the first official Firewise Community in Okanogan County.

NFPA's (National Fire Protection Association) [*Firewise Communities Program*](#) encourages local solutions for safety by involving homeowners in taking individual responsibility for preparing their homes from the risk of wildfire. Firewise is a key component of [*Fire Adapted Communities*](#) – a collaborative approach that connects all those who play a role in wildfire education, planning and action with comprehensive resources to help reduce risk.

On hand were representatives from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Okanogan County Emergency Management and 30+ community members (a great showing of community cohesiveness and dedication not lost on the DNR and Okanogan County). The group was read a letter from Commissioner of Lands Peter Goldmark congratulating them on their achievement.

Also in attendance was a representative for Barricade®, a product applied to structures to protect them from ignition. The gel-like product uses polymers, carried and mixed with water, sprayed onto homes as a wildfire approaches. For more information on the Firewise Program and communities visit <http://www.firewise.org/about.aspx>.



REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Duck banding: Trapping wrapped up at two locations on the Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area. Three traps captured 395 ducks. Of these, 385 were mallards and 10 were wood ducks. Of the total, 80% were hatch year birds and 53% were female. All of the wood ducks were male.



Left: A drake wood duck banded at the Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area. Right: The 2013 District 4 duck capture crew.

Wildlife Areas



Colockum Flood Damage:

The Colockum experienced another severe rain event on Thursday evening this week, with 1.7 inches of rain falling in a short period of time. Total damages have not been assessed yet, but some roads such as the Tarpiscan Road south of the wildlife area headquarters are impassable due to flood damage.

Tarpiscan Road north of the wildlife area headquarters after Thursday's flood.

The upper portion of the North Fork Tarpiscan Road was closed again due to several large rockslides, trapping several archery elk hunters in the canyon. These slides were cleared Friday evening to allow them to leave the area. The headquarters was isolated by rockslides and washouts to the north and south on Tarpiscan Road.



Tarpiscan Road at Lone Pine Canyon, south of the wildlife area headquarters, was impassable due to flood damage.



Oak Creek Flood Damage: Friday morning following a severe thunderstorm the night before Manager Huffman went out to check on damage to the wildlife area. Huffman found SR 410 closed in the same area that was closed by a landslide in 2009 and had just been repaired last year. After talking with Department of Transportation (DOT) personnel, Huffman learned that the largest of the six mudslides had come down Garrett Canyon off of the Garrett Canyon Road blocked the highway and 90% of the Naches River.

View of Garrett Canyon Road on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area following the flash flood event on September 5, 2013.

The landowner who owns along the highway and the first 0.5 miles of the road was requesting the gate be closed as the area was inaccessible. Huffman closed the gate and notified regional staff of the damage. Early estimates are that at least one mile of road is completely gone (pictures below) and it is likely that there is damage to roads higher up the slope. This area just received RMAP improvements from



View of Garrett Canyon Road on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area following the flash flood event on September 5, 2013.

damage in the 2011 flood events. This road provided the only legal access to Cleman Mountain and a large part of the Oak Creek Unit. One other access site exists that comes off of a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) road. Roads will be assessed this coming week and the process to close the roads for longer term periods will be implemented as needed.



Mudslide material deposited in the Naches River and onto SR 410 from Garrett Canyon Road. The person in the orange vest is standing on SR 410.

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum spring repair: Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association had put out a call for volunteers to help repair springs that were damaged from the Colockum Tarp fire. About a dozen volunteers along with wildlife area staff spent the day removing down fence and laying out several hundred feet of new hose to restore the Walling and Whitson canyon springs. The group also helped clean up debris from the fire.



REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Great Blue Heron Management: Biologist Smith documented the location of a colony in the Maple Valley Area. This information was forwarded to city planners for use in development decisions.

Westside Cougar Project: Biologist Smith assisted Wildlife Research Scientist Kertson and Detachment 10 Officers in re-capturing a young cougar for collar adjustment and relocation.

Oregon Spotted Frog (OSF) Project: Biologist Danilson completed the draft report on the OSF project for 2013. The report was sent out for peer review.

Mt. Baker Mountain Goat Survey: Biologist Danilson completed the compilation of mountain goat numbers and projected estimates from survey flights in late July. Numbers of goats were down slightly from last year but higher than 2011.

Nooksack Elk Management: Biologist Danilson recovered a collar from a cow elk that was at least 15 years old that died of apparent old age in a field east of Hamilton. Biologist DeBruyn worked with a graduate student from Western Washington University (WWU) who is studying elk crossing issues on Highway 20 and four trail cameras on trails used by elk to cross the highway. The hope is to gather information on successful highway crossings to augment road kill data. Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn along with Conflict Specialist Griffith met with Manager Link and other members of the elk working group steering committee to plan for two meetings in September to move forward on the herd plan for the Nooksack Elk.

Illegally Tagged Deer: While at the Bow Hill site, Otto noticed a fresh killed black-tailed buck with nobody in the vicinity and no notched tag on the deer. Otto contacted Officer Dave Jones about the situation and while on the phone with Dave the hunter returned for the deer after going back home to get help with dragging the deer off the property. Officer Jones made quick time getting to the site and ultimately cited the hunter for not notching his tag. Apparently the hunter forgot his license while hunting and forgot it again after he went back home to get help. The hunter mentioned he found a decomposed 5x6 buck on the property and had brought a saw to retrieve the head. He was reminded about the legality of removing antlers still attached to skulls. Otto and Jones found the carcass and removed the skull and antlers.

Wildlife Areas

Lake Terrell Dam: Manager Kessler checked the Lake Terrell dam to make sure there is continued flow into Terrell Creek. The beavers have rebuilt their dam on Terrell Creek. Kessler coordinated with the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association to get some volunteers to clear the dam.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Belinda Rotton to discuss this year's pheasant release plan. A tour of the three access lots was completed. New this season is the release of pheasants at the West Lobe access area. Manager Boehm also replaced the "Discover Pass Required" sign that had been destroyed last week at the east parking lot. Manager Boehm also removed a load of rubbish that someone dumped in the parking area.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm began maintenance at the pheasant pen facility for the upcoming pheasant season. A considerable amount of work will be required to get the facility fully operational including repairs to the pens, troubleshooting the

electrical system, providing water delivery for the birds, and improvements to the grounds for safe loading and transportation of the birds to the wildlife areas. Manager Boehm continues to recruit volunteers to assist with the workload.

Manager Boehm also met with Frohning Dairy to discuss the harvest plan for the corn that was planted earlier this season. He also discussed the option of conducting additional field preparation to increase the number of acres under plow next spring.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Project Coordinator Brokaw drafted and distributed a Leque Island Alternatives Analysis survey for internal review. Once approved, the survey is intended to be distributed at the first public meeting and posted on the WDFW webpage.

Stillwater Revetment Removal Project: Wild Fish Conservancy and their contractor have completed all major construction work on the project. Over 2,000 linear feet of rock revetment material on WDFW's Stillwater Unit and the adjacent private property was removed from the bank of the Snoqualmie River to restore natural processes that benefit fish.

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

Wildlife Management

Waterfowl Trapping and Banding: Biologist DeBruyn finished trapping mallard ducks as part of western flyway modeling work. Traps and bait sites are being removed to comply with regulations against baiting waterfowl during hunting seasons. Traps and bait will be removed at least 10 days prior to the youth hunt which starts on September 21. DeBruyn has trapped 66 ducks this season, falling short of his goal of 100.

Skagit Agricultural Enhancement and Lease Program

Island Unit: Natural Resources Tech Curran Cosgrove mowed the Fireman's 2 and 3 fields on the Island Unit before the heavy rains. Additional disking is planned if field conditions improve following the heavy rain.

Manager Belinda Rotton expects Skagit County permitting to be approved soon. The Army Corp of Engineers Nationwide permit is pending for the ditch maintenance project on the Island Unit.

Samish Unit: Manager Rotton and Natural Resources Tech Cosgrove monitored crop and field conditions on the Samish Unit. Natural Resources Tech Cosgrove installed hunting season signs on this and other units. Natural Resources Specialist Meis coordinated with Washington Waterfowl Representative Art Kendall about the installation of shell receptacles and additional blind improvements prior to the hunting season.

Bow Hill Road: Natural Resources Specialist Greg Meis and Natural Resources Tech Cosgrove began preparations for the pheasant season general opener at the Bow Hill Road site. Downed

tree were removed, closed areas and safety zone signs were posted, temporary foot bridge was installed, and path for release and entry trails were cleared.

Wildlife Areas

Tennant Lake Boardwalk: Manager Kessler was contacted by the Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) and informed he had secured partial funding for the Tennant Lake Boardwalk Improvement project. DFW will receive \$170,000 for the project. This project will make a section of the raised wooden boardwalk handicapped accessible, and raise sections of the loop trail to keep it dry throughout the year. Kessler coordinated with John Hanson, our Department engineer, on preplanning for the project.

First Annual Run With The Chums Fun Run: Manager Kessler attended the first annual “Run With The Chums” Fun Run which was held on the Intalco Unit. The event was arranged by the Whatcom Conservation District and the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association and was very well attended with over 100 runners of all ages. Manager Kessler hosted a display of wildlife skins, skulls and informational handouts which was very popular.

Handicap Hunter Access: Manager Kessler coordinated with the WDFW ADA program manager on getting the new ADA Accessible Hunting Blind in the system and on the website. This blind was built by the Whatcom County Chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association (WWA). It will be open exclusively for handicapped users by reservation.

British Petroleum (BP) Farming: Manager Kessler met onsite with one of the farmers managing the fields on the BP Unit. Recent mowing will significantly affect the hunting on the unit.

Wildlife Area Reader Boards: Manager Kessler updated the reader board hunting and access information on the British Petroleum, Tennant Lake and Lake Terrell units. New maps and hunting season information was posted.

Skagit Acquisition Team: The Skagit Acquisition Team continued contacting stakeholder groups to outline and request feedback on the proposal to acquire waterfowl hunting replacement lands in the Skagit Delta. The Lands 20/20 application is currently under regional review and will be submitted this week.

Nowak Acquisition: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Lands Agent Iris, and Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm completed a draft Lands 20/20 proposal to acquire the Nowak property on Ebey Island. The proposal will be reviewed and submitted this week.

Private Lands/Access

Contracts: Natural Resource Tech Otto assisted Biologist Milner with contract updates and renewals for partners on Whidbey Island properties, which include pheasant, deer and watchable wildlife sites.

Partner Landowners: Natural Resource Tech Otto met with multiple landowners in Whatcom and Skagit counties checking on their participation for the 2013-14 hunting season. All that were visited are happy to re-enroll for this season.

Blind Building Preparation: Natural Resource Tech Otto delivered blind material to field locations and mowed reed canary grass on Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites. Otto also assisted Skagit Wildlife Area staff in safety zone placement on the Bow Hill pheasant release site.

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 Elk: Specialist Griffith spent the majority of this week working on Day Creek elk issues. Two Tribal hunters were put afield to hunt bull elk in the area. So far, no elk have been killed. Griffith was contacted directly by two Legislators inquiring about the specifics of the Day Creek issue. Both wanted to know what WDFW's plan of action was.

Griffith participated in the Elk Work Group Planning meeting in preparation for the Damage Committee meeting to be held on September 10. The group discussed strategy for the committee meeting, finalized the meeting venue, and Griffith emailed the invitation. Aside from WDFW Staff, Legislators, and Game Commissioners, 12 local producers signed up to participate and were emailed an invitation.

Griffith met with Mike and Pat Janicki on their private timber stand in Sedro Woolley. The property is a bit over 150 acres and is composed of a mixed age/species stand. Elk are only passing through the property, but are doing a good job of rubbing the young trees before they mature enough to sustain rubbing. The damage areas are small and predominantly in the areas of the last timber harvest where they are in an accelerated regeneration stage. After talking about options, Griffith proposed to the Janicki's to work with them to implement a trial project in which Griffith would provide guidance on how to use motion activated noise deterrents, light system, and temporary electric fencing to reduce elk entry into a couple of the critical areas. The goal is to keep elk away from three identified areas for a period of five years, at which time the timber can sustain occasional rubbing. At that time, the materials would be moved to another three areas immediately after timber is harvested and the process repeats itself. If successful, the project would allow timber to be harvested in a mosaic pattern that continues to allow elk to use the property. Janicki's are excited about the idea, will fund the costs, and volunteered to "showcase" the project once it gets going.

Carnation Area Elk Damage: Biologist Smith took several calls and also met with landowners to inspect agricultural fields in the Carnation area for elk damage. Some relatively old elk sign (spring/early summer) was found but no recent elk activity was apparent. Smith spooked a black bear out of his bed in a corn field, which may have been partially responsible for damage to vegetable crops in the area. Landowners were given suggestions on actions they may take to help minimize potential damage to crops.

Private Lands/Access

Whatcom Chapter WWA Meeting: Natural Resource Tech Otto attended the Waterfowl Association meeting on Tuesday evening at the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center. Otto discussed the upcoming waterfowl season and the private lands opportunities for the county. Otto also encouraged them to get signed up with the volunteer program CERVIS for upcoming volunteer needs.

Wildlife Areas

Headquarter Unit: Natural Resource Specialist Meis assisted Dave Heimer from the Lands Program Weed Crew supervisor with the JARPA for the cattail management project proposed for Skagit Bay restoration projects.

Natural Resource Specialist Meis improved the entry road to the pheasant pen and equipment storage yard with additional gravel.

Samish River Unit: Manager Rotton discussed improved fencing options with a representative from Dike District #5; he will run the options by other Commissioners for approval. Manager Rotton responded to an interview from the Skagit Valley Herald about the Samish River Unit Restoration public meeting.

Capital Asset Management Program staff repaired the stairs on the Skagit Residence.

Sign Maintenance and Installation: Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resource Tech Cosgrove replaced signs at the North Fork Access and Leque Island units. Natural Resource Tech Cosgrove prepared safety zone and game reserve signs for installation. Game reserve signs were repaired on Fir Island Farms.

Fir Island Farm: Manager Rotton is coordinating with Skagitonians to Preserve Farm Land to install a Talking Field sign on the site. The sign will have a call in message or webpage link for people to get information about the proposed restoration project and agricultural community connection to fish and wildlife habitat projects.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm received a supply of various WDFW signs that will be posted throughout the wildlife areas.

Samish River Unit - Welts Wetland Restoration Project: Project Coordinator Brokaw updated information on the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) permit application and transferred comment and contact information from the previous week's meeting to a spreadsheet. The contact spreadsheet will be used to notify interested people when the permit comment periods open up.

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

Snoqualmie Wildlife Areas: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to respond to volunteers interested in assisting with field work and continued recruitment of additional volunteers. Manager Boehm believes that volunteer labor needs to be a part of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager's "tool box."

Manager Rotton continued coordinating with Waterfowl Program Manager Don Kraege and Dr. Leigh Fredrickson in preparation for the Wetland Ecology and Management training workshop early this fall.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

American Pika Research: Biologist Anderson and Biologist Abbruzzese (DNR) assisted Dr. Erik Beever (USGS Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center) with his field research in the Columbia River Gorge. Dr. Beever is currently studying pika in many areas of the western U.S. evaluating their abundance, distribution, and habitat use.



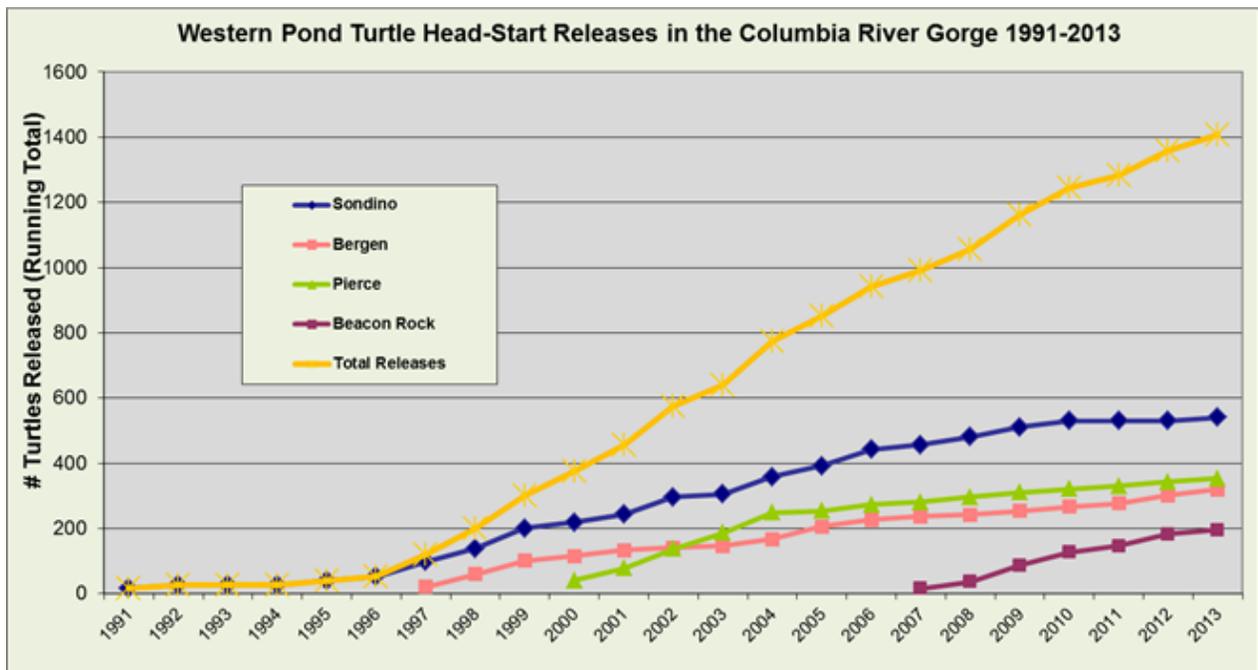
The Columbia River Gorge contains the lowest-elevation records of pika in the U.S. and these populations have been little studied to date. In addition to quantifying pika distribution and abundance throughout the Gorge, Dr. Beever and colleagues are also quantifying microclimates across the Gorge (at >100 locations in Oregon and Washington), percent cover of vascular and nonvascular plants as well as shade on talus, size of talus patches, and thickness of moss.



This information is being collected to address climate-change related questions. Dr. Beever's work is documenting the remarkable diversity that is found in the Columbia River Gorge and how pika in this particular habitat at low elevation can provide insight into species' vulnerability, their capacity to adapt (behaviorally and otherwise) to changing climates, and what factors are driving changes in wildlife distributions. We are fortunate to have Dr. Beever working on this project in District 9 as this information is not only documenting this rare animal's habitats, but its assisting WDFW with evaluating the potential impacts to pika from rock mining projects in the Columbia River Gorge.

Black-tailed Deer Annual Productivity Surveys: Biologist Holman and volunteers from the Yacolt Burn Sportsman's Club conducted an evening of spotlight surveys for deer in Game Management Unit (GMU) 568 (Washougal). Conditions featured thunderstorms and wet windy weather. Eighty-one deer were located during the effort. Additional surveys will be conducted and data will be compiled for inclusion in the annual Pittman-Robertson report and incorporated into the Regional Sex, Age, Kill population estimation model for black-tails. Thanks to the Yacolt Burn Sportsman's Club for their ongoing efforts to promote hunting access, hunter education, and aid in wildlife surveys.

Western Pond Turtle Head Starting Program: Biologist Holman summarized data related to the release of head-started juvenile western pond turtles in the Columbia River Gorge. Fourteen-hundred and seven (1,407) young pond turtles have now been released over the 23 year history of this undertaking. Thanks to the following cooperators for their support over the history of the program: the Oregon Zoo, the Woodland Park Zoo, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Volunteers Kate and Frank Slavens, Skamania County Weed Control, Bonneville Power Administration, etc. Please see figure below illustrating the pond turtle releases at various locations over the years in the Columbia River Gorge.



Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area -- Vegetation Sampling at Grazing Enclosures: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis worked with WDFW Range Ecologist Burnham to collect data on trees and shrubs within the enclosures on the Soda Springs Unit. This was the second revisit to the enclosures since they were constructed in 2003. The last tree and shrub sampling effort was in 2007. This is part of a long-term study of how range utilization by cattle and wild ungulates influences the plant community in this area.

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

Private Lands/Access



Oneida Access Site: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes posted signs at the Oneida boat launch regarding the ramp closure for September 3-5. The Construction crew was busy with in water ramp work, which is a part of a larger effort to improve safety and general conditions at the Oneida water access area.

Oneida Access Site

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Fisher Project – Hex 563 Station 1 First Check: The District 16 team got a fisher detection (both photograph and hair samples) on their survey Hex, part of the Olympic Peninsula Non-Invasive Fisher Surveys. This is the third fisher detection for the Official Hex surveys on the entire Olympic Peninsula this season. Biologists McMillan and Ament visited the three camera and hair snare trap stations that had been set up on August 8 and August 16.



A fisher visited Station 1 on August 26.

The first station check was conducted on August 30. The results included pictures of a single fisher at two different times on the same day. The station had been set up August 8 and the fisher pictures were taken on August 26. Biologist McMillan completed the forms for Hex 563 and processed the photos and hair snare samples.

All data and samples were provided to Dr. Patti Happe (Olympic National Park Biologist). At least two of the hair snag brushes had hair samples that were most likely from the fisher, determined by the photos. The DNA sampling will be compared to the DNA collected from the reintroduced fishers. Ultimately the DNA sampling will be used to determine the “reproductive success of the released fishers” and “if the population has experienced a genetic bottleneck.”



A bear visited Station 1 on August 9, but left the site without removing the bait from the tree or hair snare cubby.



On August 26 at 6:40 a.m., a fisher visited Station 1. Notice the bait remains visible (left) on the bait tree (after 18 days of the bait being out) before the fisher begins to eat the bait (right).



On August 26 at 11:15 p.m., a fisher visited the station.

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

Resident Dark Canada Goose Surveys: Biologist Michaelis conducted the last of two surveys for resident dark Canada geese (“Wuskies”) in southern Pacific county. He observed 86 dark geese with one marked bird. He also detected a radio-collared bird that had been captured and marked near Baycenter, WA. Surveys for resident dark geese are being conducted in an effort to estimate the size of the resident dark goose population. The population size estimate is needed because WDFW hopes to begin implementing management strategies to reduce the size of this population, and the effectiveness of those strategies cannot be evaluated without monitoring population trends.