

Wildlife Program

Week of September 23-29, 2013

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

South Puget Sound Grassland Restoration – Partners in rare species recovery burned approximately 140 acres in late season prescribed fires at four different sites in south Puget Sound, including two Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) wildlife areas (see below). Sites were burned to initiate habitat improvement for rare species, including the Mazama pocket gopher and Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, two species being considered as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

South Puget Sound Grassland Conservation; Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie

Wildlife Areas: WDFW in conjunction with partners burned 42 acres at Scatter Creek and West Rocky Prairie. Due to re-growth of vegetation after rains, only about ½ of the areas burned met objectives for restoration. Next steps include herbicide application to control exotic vegetation, followed by seeding with natives and transplanting nursery grown plants used by rare species.

Washington Connected Landscapes Project – This is the fifth year of collaborative scientific work by the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group (WHCWG) (see www.waconnected.org). The WHCWG Core Team includes representatives from 13 organizations as well as independent researchers. In recognition of the 5-year milestone, the team met this week to consider a vision for connectivity in Washington across the next 10 years and related considerations including (1) how to continue to make the group's work as useful as possible for those implementing connectivity conservation, (2) to consider future priorities, and (3) how to work as effectively and efficiently as possible. Joanne Schuett-Hames (WHCWG Co-lead) and Howard Ferguson (Region 1 WDFW) attended this meeting.

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

New Lands Conservation and Restoration Section Manager – I am very excited to announce that as of September 16, 2013, Cynthia Wilkerson has begun her employment as the new Natural Resource Scientist 4 Lands Conservation Section Manager. Cynthia has a Masters in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation from the University of Washington and was most recently the Pacific Northwest Regional Representative for The Wilderness Society (TWS). At TWS, she proved to be a strong conservation advocate and a leader in the development and implementation of comprehensive, place-based wildlands restoration programs. Cynthia has considerable experience working to protect lands to achieve priority species conservation goals. She has a solid history of developing and maintaining relationships with federal Congressional delegation

contacts, local community leaders, county commissioners, and conservation partners in Washington. All of these skills should serve her well in her oversight of the Diversity Division's Lands Conservation section. Please welcome her to her new position.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1: Assistant District Wildlife Biologist (ADWB) Annemarie Prince checked wolf traps with Wolf Biologist Trent Roussin and looked for fresh wolf sign near Calispell Peak.

Specialist Shepherd and Conflict Specialist Heilhecker from Okanogan toured the Smackout wolf territory discussing wolf issues and also discussed deer and elk issues throughout District 1.

Specialist Shepherd and Private Lands Technician Bendixen examined a deer in Southern Stevens County that was observed from a hunting blind near a residence and was apparently severely injured in a wolf attack. A black un-collared wolf was also observed ¼ mile from the yard in southern Stevens County where the deer died.

Specialist Shepherd attended Conflict Section training in Ellensburg. Specialist Shepherd participated in the bimonthly wolf conference call.



Deer in yard of southern Stevens County residence potentially injured by a black uncollared wolf observed a quarter-mile from the house.



Rear left haunch (left) and the injury under front leg and marks on body (right) of deer in yard of southern Stevens County residence potentially injured by a black uncollared wolf.

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

Wildlife Management

Special Permit Hunts: Both Biologists Base and Prince fielded questions from hunters this week about upcoming hunting opportunities, especially from moose permit holders.



Impressive bull moose photographed by a self-activated camera on the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge.

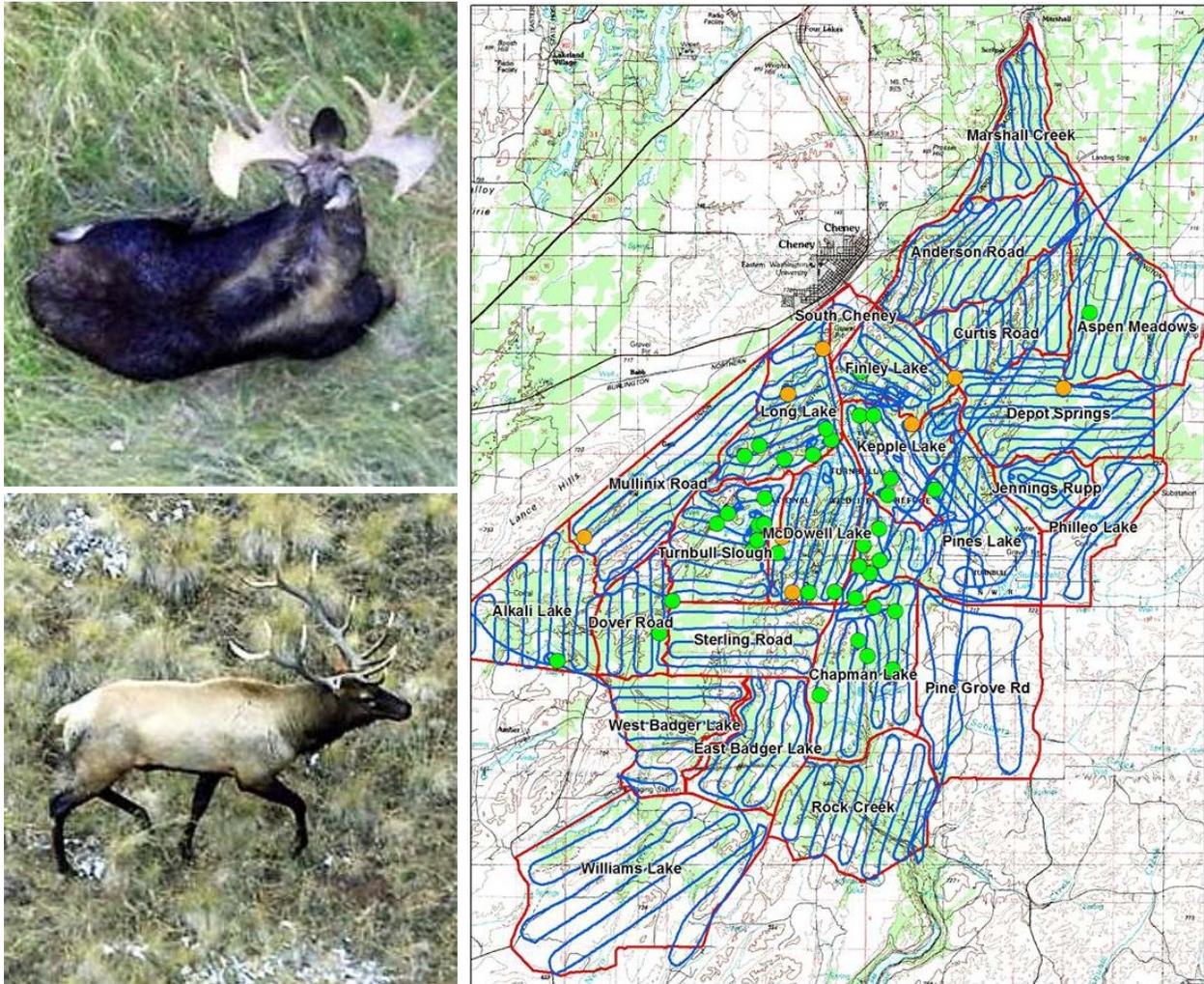


Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge Elk Survey: Biologist Ferguson worked with Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge Biologist Mike Rule to get a special use permit for the survey. Biologists Ferguson and Atamian prepared for flight – maps, gear, and forms, early in the week and then completed the elk survey on Wednesday and Thursday. A total of 349 elk were observed (207 cows, 103 calves and 39 bulls), 14 moose were observed (6 cows, 3 calves

Turnbull elk group

and 5 bulls), and 216 turkeys were counted.

This year's elk count is slightly higher than the average (335) with more cows observed than the average (185), but fewer bulls (45) and calves (105). This is the second highest moose count in the past nine years of surveys; the highest ever was 18 moose in 2009.



Top left: Turnbull Bull Moose. Right: Flight path of the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge Annual Elk Survey. Left: Turnbull Bull Elk.

Wildlife Areas

Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex – Heller Bar Boat Ramp: The boat ramp at Heller Bar on the Snake River has been failing over the late summer. A work crew was over this week from Olympia making repairs to the Heller Bar boat ramp. Broken concrete sections were removed and replaced with armor-flex flexible concrete sections. The armor flex is held in place with buried duck-bill anchors. Work was completed by Wednesday afternoon.



WDFW crew worked on the Heller Bar boat ramp on Tuesday.

Private Lands/Access



Bull Harvested on Feel Free to Hunt Property: Conflict Specialist Rasley received a call and a picture of a bull that was harvested on one of Biologist's Thorne/Hadley's Feel Free to Hunt farms in the Blue Creek unit. We only issue one rifle tag for this hunt and thanks to the farm being signed up in one our hunter access programs, the hunter was able to harvest a bull of a life time.

This 8x8 bull was harvested on Feel Free to Hunt property.

New Feel Free to Hunt: Conflict Specialist Rasley met with a new farmer that farms south of Walla Walla in the foothills of the Blues. They farm approximately 500 acres and are going to plant most of it to garb's. After our meeting they agreed to sign a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) and open all of their land as a Feel Free to Hunt property.

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

Wildlife Areas

Reardan Audubon Lakes Parking Lot: While performing weed control on Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area parking lots, staff found that someone decided it would be fun to spin donuts in the parking lot at the south Reardan Audubon site. This sort of “fun” actually creates more work for WDFW staff. This rough area will need to be smoothed out so it doesn't encourage additional “fun” and make it pleasant for the rest of the general public to drive across.



Reardan Audubon south parking lot

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

Wildlife Areas

Kids Learn about Fish and Wildlife – As a follow-up to last week's report on the Lake Roosevelt Water Festival, we received a few photos from a chaperone parent this week. It's nice to hear from parents how much their kids enjoy natural resource educational programs. Although it causes wear and tear, the kids are excited for the opportunity to put their hands on wild critter artifacts. “Are these all real?” is a very common question.



This young lady learned about predator/prey relationships and the difference between horns and antlers at the annual Lake Roosevelt Water Festival.

REGION 2

Wolf Management

Depredation Investigation: Specialist Heilhecker, Officer McCormick and Biologist Heinlen responded to a call regarding an injured llama and guard dogs. The landowner has 40 acres surrounded by a four-foot, well maintained, electric fence. He owns several animals including, exotic birds, sheep, and four maremmas (livestock guarding dogs). He then found the injured llama. It is unlikely to be a wolf, coyote or bear due to the electric fence, and the injuries to the llama were not typical of a cougar attack.

Possible Wolf Follow-up: Biologist Fitkin retrieved the camera placed on the remains of a deer killed (likely by canids) in a local resident's yard at the edge of the Lookout Pack territory. The camera produced many coyote photos, but did not document any other canids. The landowner had suspected wolves since the carcass did not exhibit the signs of a cougar kill; however, we have had no credible wolf reports in this area for many weeks; it is unlikely wolves were involved in this predation event.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Caspian Tern Supplemental Feeding Project – With assistance from the Fish Program, Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei helped to electroshock the Frenchmen Ponds Wetland project site to determine relative composition of fish species and catch per unit effort by species. Results continue to look favorable for our alternative food source project for Caspian Terns.



Frenchmen Ponds Electroshocking – Photos by Rich Finger.



White-tailed Ptarmigan:

Biologist Gallie, Research Scientist Schroeder and Leslie Robb ventured into the Alpine Lake Wilderness in Chelan County to gain some insight into the status of the white-tailed ptarmigan, which we have very little information on and has been petitioned for listing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). More specifically, we looked to map out available ptarmigan habitat, document their occurrence



Male white-tailed ptarmigan

and collect genetic samples for analysis of connectivity with other alpine regions they inhabit. We were only able to sample a small portion of the habitat effectively, but using call back players, we detected two males and one brood hen with five chicks, and collected 11 feather samples for genetic analysis. Future trips will include a more systematic search to document actual numbers of birds and banding them for further study, while searching more available habitat.



Female white-tailed ptarmigan with chick



Chelan County Enchantments and white-tailed ptarmigan habitat

Mountain Goat: While in the Alpine Lakes documenting ptarmigan, we also were able to assess the ongoing problem of aggressive mountain goat encounters with hikers and climbers in the Enchantments portion of the wilderness. Over two days, we had 10 encounters with mountain goats, all within 100 meters and sometimes as close as 20 feet. The goats appear to be fairly habituated to people, often traveling on hiking trails, bedding/foraging/urine seeking near camp sites (one goat wandered into our camp). Goats were non-aggressive, but disregarding of human presence. The only encounter with a goat that was at all cautious was when a nanny and kid approached us when getting water, the nanny got defensive around the kid. Discussion with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) are ongoing to address this issue.



This goat walked right into camp, so no telephoto or zoom was necessary to take this photo.

Jackrabbit: Biologist Gallie conducted jackrabbit presence/absence surveys in coordination with other districts to validate connectivity models of the species. Most plots are complete for Douglas County with only a couple to complete next week. Interestingly, the detection rate has declined in the northern part of the county. This past week, only 1 of 14 plots had jackrabbit pellets in them, despite quality habitat. In comparison, 10 of 14 plots detected jackrabbits in the southern portion of the county.



White-tailed jackrabbit habitat in Douglas County.

Washington Ground Squirrel Reintroduction – With assistance from wildlife area staff, Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei planted and watered approximately 350 native bunchgrass seedlings, 75 lupine seedlings, and 50 sagebrush seedlings within a 0.4-acre enclosure at the Soda Lake, Washington Ground Squirrel release site. If successful, these plantings should provide late season food resources and cover that are currently in limited supply at this site. Cover has become increasingly important as a badger has recently begun hunting extensively on this release site.



Soda Lake, Ground Squirrel release site badger activity – Photo by Rich Finger.

Private Lands/Access

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): Biologist Wisniewski continued to determine which landowners with expiring CRP, within the five mile buffer around the pygmy rabbit (PYRA) release site, also had Safe Harbor Agreements. Continued to contact landowners to find out the status of the CRP to determine if PYRA surveys were warranted as outlined in the Safe Harbor Agreements. Prepared maps and loaded GPS unit for Technician Duvuvuei to survey identified sites.

Biologist Wisniewski contacted the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) personnel regarding CRP ground set for mid-contract management which contains critical habitat in the pygmy rabbit recovery area. Management activities would require mowing sage brush in a connectivity corridor. We believe they are going to agree to a waiver of mid-management for this piece of ground.

There was another parcel being re-enrolled in CRP requiring mowing, harrowing and eventual reseeded; which also supplied connectivity corridors. An agreement was reached for reducing these activities to avoid travel corridors. Biologist Wisniewski flagged treatment areas for mid-management farming activities on Sagebrush Flats pygmy rabbit recovery area.

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

Wildlife Management

Bighorn Sheep: Biologists Volsen and Gallie measured and pinned four California bighorn sheep since the start of the 2013 season. One ram from the Swakane, one ram from Chelan Butte, one ram from the Quilomene herd, and one ram from Mt. Hull. This year, staff started a new data collection effort for bighorn rams which includes measuring the circumference and length for each year's incremental growth for ages 0.5 through 7.5, and retention of horn core trimmings for the purpose of future DNA work.

Private Lands/Access

Parking Area Maintenance – Access Management and Wildlife Area staff checked parking areas, closed gates, mowed weeds and repaired fences on parking areas in preparation for the hunting season opener. Access Manager Graves and Natural Resource Worker McAlvy mowed weeds and serviced the Jamison Lake Access Site.

With the assistance of Natural Resource Worker McAlvy and Natural Resource Tech Carpenter, Access Managers Harmon and Graves completed the Road 19 Fence Project in the Gloyd Seeps. Staff removed the old deteriorating fence and installed six new 3" galvanized post with braces for corners and stretch points. A total of 27 t-posts were painfully imbedded into the rocks, with approximately 1200' of wire stretched. Signs were installed and a new stretch gate put in.



Road 19 Fence Project before (above) and after (below) – Photos by Josh Harmon.





Gates open for Jameson Lake fall fishing opener – 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

Wildlife Areas

Ecology Complaint – Assistant Manager Cole investigated a complaint of herbicide spill on the Potholes Reservoir Wildlife Area relayed through the Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE). The report was that a contract applicator had dumped the herbicide mix and WDOE was following up with an inquiry. The contract applicator had properly applied the herbicides to a Puncture-vine infestation as labeled, with a marker dye additive that had turned the area blue.

Other

Deer Depredation: Specialist Bridges has continued to consult with one landowner regarding different fence designs for his vineyard. Specialist Bridges met with another vineyard owner to discuss deer damage concerns. The landowner has allowed archery hunters to hunt the vineyards, but the archery hunters have had no success due to the deer depredating at night. The landowner is going to hire a nighttime hazer in order to reduce the damage from the nocturnal deer. Additionally, the landowner agreed to fence another large vineyard at the beginning of next summer. Specialist Bridges met with an orchardist that is experiencing deer damage (the bucks have girdled one tree). The landowner has $\frac{3}{4}$ of the orchard fenced, and Specialist Bridges encouraged the landowner to finish the existing fencing project. Different hazing methods were discussed, and Specialist Bridges will help in directing hunters to his orchard.

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

Wildlife Management



Chelan Ridge Raptor Monitoring/Research: Biologist Fitkin spent a day at Chelan Ridge assisting the Hawk Watch Crew capturing and banding migrating raptors. We had a great day, catching several accipiters and a merlin (see photos). The Chelan Ridge site is the furthest north of a network of raptor monitoring sites and produces great trend data on migrating raptor abundance and species diversity. The site is also used to support periodic raptor research projects. Currently, biologist and prospective grad student Chris Vennum is collecting blood samples for a project looking at blood parasite diversity and abundance in several species.

Cooper's Hawk – Photo by Scott Fitkin



Left: WDFW Intern Rensel with a Cooper's Hawk – Photo by Scott Fitkin. Right: Biologist Fitkin with a merlin.



Left: Merlin. Right: Sharp-shinned hawk. Photos by Scott Fitkin.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area Flood Damage: Colockum Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky met with Sam Grant of Cascade Natural Gas Corp. to look at their high pressure gas line that was uncovered during the second flood event on the Colockum Wildlife Area. Manager Lopushinsky worked with Lands Agent Hendrix to get a Right of Entry Permit issued to them by Friday so they can complete repairs as fast as possible.



Flooding on the Colockum Wildlife Area uncovered this 6" high-pressure natural gas pipeline.

Wenas Wildlife Area Fire: The Wenas Wildlife Area had one last fire of the season on September 26. The fire occurred on Umtanum Ridge near the junctions with the Black Canyon roads and burned 5-10 acres. The cause appears to be from a lightning strike. It was within the forest protection boundary and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) ordered up two rotors with a helitack crew and a Forest Service hand crew to get the fire contained.



Goodwin Canyon fire along the north slope of Umtanum Ridge.

Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area -- Thornton Unit: Wildlife Area Manager Bjornstrom, Assistant Manager Sak and Biologist Gregory conducted a site visit at the Thornton Unit of the Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area to discuss opportunities for restoration using new mitigation funding from the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. A project proposal will be drawn up outlining a plan to replant Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) ground with sagebrush in the southwest portion of the unit to provide future habitat for a variety of species including elk and shrub-steppe dependent birds like sage grouse.



Thornton Unit of the Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management



Bull harvested in Game Management Unit 418.

Game Management Unit (GMU) 418 Unit Monitor:

Technician Otto toured parts of GMU 418 checking for any issues. Otto met with one successful hunter with a 6x8 elk harvested the previous day. Otto also encountered three other muzzleloader permit holders. All hunters stated they have been in the elk the previous two days of the season. Otto coordinated key returns for two other successful hunters with enforcement later in the week and also coordinated with District 13 staff to access an agreement with the western Washington raffle tag holder.

North Cascades Elk Management Work Group: The District 14 team as well as staff from Mill Creek and Olympia organized the third North Cascades Elk Management Work Group meeting, which was held on the evening of September 26.

Conflict Specialist Griffith facilitated the second damage committee to be held. This meeting was in conjunction with the North Cascades Elk Management Work Group meeting. The damage committee was well attended with 21 participants representing multiple Tribes, Farm Bureau, local cattle producers, local produce growers, sportspeople, and concerned community members. Status updates resulting from assignments and tasks developed during the committee meeting held on September 10 were presented by committee members and new assignments and tasks were developed. Of these, continued development of “areas of tolerance” on the valet floor was discussed at length and the committee made progress towards producing a map using Google Earth software. Other topics discussed were increased funding for cooperative fencing, methodology to prioritize potential cooperative fencing projects, mechanisms to allow for increased harvest of elk on private property within Elk Area 4941, and efficacy of biofence to deter elk from agricultural areas. The next meeting is scheduled for October 10.

Biologist DeBruyn chaired the public safety (elk highway crossing) committee at the North Cascades Elk Management Work Group meeting. There to discuss issues related to elk highway

crossing of S.R. 20 were representatives from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Washington State Patrol, Skagit County Sheriff, The Stillaguamish Tribe, Western Washington University (WWU), and some private landowners.

WSDOT outlined plans to install elk warning signs before the end of the year.

Biologist Jennifer Sevigny of the Stillaguamish Tribe discussed their program to put GPS collars on elk to document highway crossing and habitat use. Nathan Rice, a graduate student from WWU, talked about his work to document safe crossing areas along the highway. Andy Duff and Treg Christopher from WDFW's Wildlife Science Division unveiled a new smartphone app they have developed in cooperation with DeBruyn to record dead and live elk on the highway. While field testing the app earlier in the day, DeBruyn, Duff and Christopher were treated to the sight of a large group of elk in full rut.



The Public Safety Committee discussed issues with elk road crossings during the committee break-out session at the North Cascades Elk Management Work Group meeting.



North Cascades Elk in rut along Highway 20.

Skagit County Nutria Issues: Biologist Danilson followed up with representatives from the Western Washington Agricultural Association and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services to schedule a meeting in late October. The purpose of the meeting will be to close out the grant funded project and brainstorm next steps for nutria surveillance and follow-up.

Urban Peregrine Management: Biologist Anderson received word from Seattle Department of Transportation finalizing alteration of the long-term falcon box there. The goal was to retain this box. It is currently being altered and will be placed in a spot closer to land, where access for maintenance will be easier and birds will be more likely to fledge in that direction (towards land). Overall, a better spot, out of construction and regular bridge maintenance needs.

Bald Eagle Management: Assistant District Biologist Cyra worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to coordinate contact with the property owner of a newly known bald eagle nest in Mountlake Terrace, and communicated with concerned public interests. This nest is located next to the maintenance facility for the golf course and is in an area of constant disturbance. The nest was built recently and the management is aware of the nest. The USFWS is responsible for Bald Eagle management since the delisting of the bird several years ago.

Cyra communicated with community members in the area of a proposed timber sale on southern Camano Island. A bald eagle nest was recently identified on the boundary of the harvest property, and surrounding homeowners are continuing to forward wildlife sighting reports in an effort to slow or derail the sale.



Bald eagle nest (in red circle) located next to the maintenance facility for the golf course in an area of constant disturbance.

WA Pacific Coast Joint Venture (PCJV) Meeting: Biologist Anderson was invited to attend the WA PCJV meeting since a number of projects discussed were in King County, District 12. Information included updates regarding efforts involving the North Pacific Landscape Conservation Collaborative, Vashon-Maury Island Land Trust, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and WDFW changes to mid-winter waterfowl surveys, BirdNote (the nonprofit radio program) outreach and collaborations, Partners in Flight, and PCJV collaborations with all of these partners.

Swan Lead Poisoning Abatement on Judson Lake: Biologist Danilson participated in a conference call to discuss strategies for addressing potential lead shot ingestion (and poisoning) by swans. The funding for doing this work as it has been done for many years has diminished. The conference call focused on what level of effort could be cobbled together for this year. Danilson also provided an update on the current recruitment for the seasonal swan technician that will work in Skagit and Whatcom counties between November and March.

American Pika Lowland Survey: Assistant District Biologist Cyra compiled survey activity and locations, pika detection locations, and survey effort for an end of season report from this past summer's pika surveys at the U.S. Navy's Jim Creek Naval Radio Station outside of Arlington.

Wildlife Areas

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with two volunteers to build and install a sign kiosk at the new West parking area. Posts and concrete are in and the remaining portions of the sign will be installed this coming week. While Manager Boehm was on site, a number of senior hunters expressed how much they enjoyed the conditions at the new West release area. Additionally, Manager Boehm worked with the grazing lessee to round-up cattle on two of the three grazing areas. Cattle remain on the Middle Lobe, and will be rounded-up this week.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated the corn harvest with the lessee. Approximately 18 acres of corn were planted in four fields this spring as well as 7 acres of barley. Approximately ½ acre of corn was left standing for wildlife forage and cover in each of the four fields.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with the lessee to develop a harvest plan for this unit. Approximately 80 acres of corn was planted in spring and is now ready to harvest. Wet weather has delayed the harvest thus far.

Nooksack Unit Corn Harvest: Manager Kessler met onsite with the farmer who has the agricultural lease on the Nooksack Unit. The 100 acre corn crop was ready to be harvested. When finished, 10% or about 10 acres was left standing for winter waterfowl feeding.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Lands Agent Iris, and Ducks Unlimited (DU) met with the City of Stanwood, Dike District 7, and Stillaguamish Flood Control District. WDFW and DU presented information on the upcoming Leque Island Alternatives Analysis project and answered questions. The City and Flood Control District presented their future plans to improve access and recreation adjacent to Leque, as well as a few drainage improvement projects. The meeting attendees agreed to continue to update each other's progress to maximize coordination between projects.

Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP): Projects Coordinator Brokaw received updates from Region 4 staff in the Habitat Program on current issues with

PSNERP projects on WDFW wildlife area lands. These updates will be incorporated in a briefing paper for PSNERP.

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

Wildlife Management

GMU 418 Elk Hunt Coordination: Biologist Danilson met with the Western Washington elk raffle tag holder to facilitate his hunt in the North Cascades elk herd (i.e., GMU 418 and Elk Area 4941). Hunter access to Sierra-Pacific Industries land is allowed through a landowner agreement between WDFW and Sierra Pacific. To ensure adherence to this agreement, a meeting with hunters who want to hunt on this land is necessary and involves an overview of the rules for hunter conduct, an access agreement/vehicle dashboard pass, and issuance of a key.

Co-management Technical Committee Meeting: Biologist Danilson and Manager Link attended the quarterly co-manager's technical committee meeting between WDFW and the Point Elliott Treaty Tribes. A variety of topics were discussed including the sharing of harvest data, coordination between the tribes and other regions, a summary of 2013 mountain goat survey data, and ongoing/upcoming monitoring and research efforts.

North Cascades Elk Management Group: The North Cascades Elk Management Work Group met on Thursday evening in Sedro Woolley. Approximately 70 people attended the meeting including local stakeholders, elected officials, a WDFW Commissioner, and WDFW staff. At the meeting, attendees broke into five work groups to focus on elk damage, public safety/highway crossing, monitoring and science, elk forage enhancement, and elk education/watchable wildlife.

Hunt Access: Biologist Anderson is following up and in conversation with public and private entities in GMU 422 Vashon-Maury regarding expanding private land hunting access and hunter opportunity over the long-term. Biologists Anderson and Smith will continue to dialog and work with those interested in collaborating to initiate some expanded efforts as opportunity presents itself.

Wildlife Areas

Lands 20/20 Proposals -- Projects Coordinator Brokaw presented the Region 4 Lands 20/20 proposals to the Lands 20/20 Technical Review Team. The Region 4 proposals were well received by the Technical Review Team, and will be moved forward to review by the Executive Management Team in mid-October. If approved, Region 4 staff will continue to develop the proposals in coordination with local partners.

Whatcom Wildlife Area Hunting Season Preparations: Manager Kessler mowed hunting paths on the British Petroleum (BP) and Lake Terrell units. He also finished realigning the Safety Zones on the BP unit, and posting new informational signs detailing the new Safety Zone boundaries.

Whatcom Wildlife Area Pheasant Release: Manager Kessler received 390 pheasants for the Senior Hunt and the start of the Regular Pheasant Season. Birds were released by volunteers on the Intalco, Lake Terrell and British Petroleum units. The first weekend of the Regular Season was very well attended with 54 vehicles across all three sites on Saturday, and 73 vehicles across all three sites on Sunday.

Skagit Agricultural Enhancement and Lease Program: Natural Resource Tech Cosgrove mowed dike trails, the boat landing and fields on the Island Unit. Cosgrove mowed fields and ponds on the Samish Unit and weed-wacked and maintained the unit parking lot. Staff also checked and replaced reserve signs at the Skagit Estuary Reserve and staff and volunteers released pheasants for the regular season at Leque Island and Ebey Island.

Private Lands/Access

Private Lands Access Contracts: Biologist Milner reviewed 25 existing contracts and found several that need to be renewed for the coming year. Milner met with former private lands Biologist Roozen to discuss the program and consider potential changes to the program.

Private Lands Access: Biologist Milner met with landowners who are willing to provide parking on their property for pheasant hunting at the Bow Hill site and drafted the contract for the site. Milner updated the maps and provided information explaining the delay in opening the site for the website.

Hunting Blind Construction: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo cut and bundled Reed Canary grass. The bundles will be used to conceal hunting blinds with natural vegetation and to increase the durability of the blinds. With some of the grass bundles and other vegetation, staff concealed three hunting blinds in preparation of the upcoming hunting season. Straw bales were purchased and staged in Skagit and Whatcom counties. The bales will be used in hunting blinds as a floor to reduce erosion. Previous year's blind material was transferred and staged in the two counties to begin preparations of blind constructions.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites update: Technician Deyo toured all the Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites checking on the status of the fields and whether the crops have been harvested. Around 50% of the units were harvested and ready for the installation of a blind and hunting access.

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Wildlife Management

Skagit County Elk Conflict: Conflict Specialist Griffith met with Biologist Danilson and the Master Hunter Coordinator regarding hunter assignments in the Day Creek area.

Griffith met with two producers this week in the Minkler Road and Hamilton Cemetery areas. Both are very small producers and experience damages primarily during winter months. Griffith

advised them on non-lethal options they can employ when elk begin to cause damages to their fields. Both producers agreed to contact Griffith if/when elk begin to cause actual damages.

Griffith followed up with a Day Creek producer that is filing a damage claim. Currently, they are still working with the adjustor to develop a market price for the damaged potatoes and the completed damage claim packet will be ready for submittal in the coming weeks. The producer was able to beat the weather and harvest remaining potatoes in the Day Creek area and further damages have ceased.

Griffith talked to another producer in Day Creek this week regarding elk damages on his property, master hunter assignment, and damage claims process.

Snoqualmie Area Elk Damage: Biologist Smith and representatives from the Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group (USVEMG) met with landowners to investigate elk damage. Landowners are investigating the feasibility of fencing while Smith and USVEMG personnel investigate the potential for increased hunter opportunities in the surrounding area.

Green Valley Elk Damage: Biologist Smith continued to work with landowners to arrange for additional hunt #2710 tag holders to pursue elk damaging crops in the area.

Municipal Wildlife Assistance: Biologist Anderson provided specific advice to Seattle Parks regarding concerns over a seemingly acute die-off of small mammals in one spot at one of their parks. Please keep pets leashed, don't let cats free roam, and please consider trapping problem rats and mice rather than free baiting areas.

Biologist Anderson also has been working with city of Maple Valley and an applicant for a 35-plat single-family development that has herons nesting on it. Anderson is working with the applicant to provide a state Take Authorization permit to provide management direction in regards to the protection of the great blue heron nests. All native bird nests are protected under state law, whether occupied or empty. Wildlife Program has developed policy directing biologists to provide Take Authorization for management of bird nests in Washington.

Volunteer Management Position Development; Other Volunteer Efforts: Biologist Anderson worked with Regional Program Manager Link to review a proposed Volunteer Coordinator that would handle Master Hunters coordination, Hunt Education training and coordination, as well as similar coordination and volunteer needs for Diversity efforts within the region.

Anderson also continues to work with Woodland Park Zoo Amphibian Monitoring Program volunteers to assist in identification of observations from this past 2013 monitoring season.

Beaver Management Updates: Biologist Anderson dialoged with staff member of Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation District regarding their efforts, research, reports and papers on urban beaver management in the Portland area. They have developed very good detailed protocols for urban beaver management to avoid flood and other types of potential conflict and reduce need to use lethal measures. Anderson has copies and contacts if interested.

Wildlife Areas

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm responded to a request for an interview on the Saturday Morning radio talk show “The Outdoor Line” featured by KIRO ESPN 710. Manager Boehm provided information about the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program and the hunting opportunities this program provides.

Additionally, Manager Boehm installed informational and safety signage at Stillwater, Cherry Valley, Crescent Lake and Ebey Island pheasant release units.

Samish River Unit/Welts Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw updated permit applications for the project and anticipates submitting SEPA and Skagit County applications this week. A public review period will commence once the applications are submitted.

Island Unit: Manager Rotton is working on the permits for the maintenance/drainage infrastructure project on the Island Unit. Wildlife Area staff are working with local waterfowl stakeholders with planting agricultural crops on the unit.

Volunteer Outreach: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm distributed a task list and request for local volunteers to assist with field work that is needed to be completed for this coming hunting season. Through numerous Citizen Advisory Group meetings targeting specific user groups, Manager Boehm explained that volunteer labor needs to be a part of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager’s “tool box.” Manager Boehm was pleased to hear from four different groups or individuals so far who are interested in volunteering at the wildlife areas.

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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Conflict Training: Biologist Danilson and Conflict Specialist Griffith attended an all-day training in Ellensburg for Wildlife Conflict issues. The training was focused on policies, procedures, forms and equipment. This was a good opportunity to clarify direction from Olympia, ensure consistency across regions, and share experiences and ideas.

GIS training: Biologist DeBruyn organized a session by Analyst Treg Christopher to help Region 4 staff with transitioning to Arc GIS 10.1. The training went well, but was hampered by slow internet access to GIS data in Olympia. Christopher also helped DeBruyn create maps and graphics for an upcoming Elk Working group meeting.

District 12 Matrix Activities for Biennium: Biologists Anderson and Smith met with Manager Link to go over time allotments and duties for this biennium.

Radio Training: Assistant District Biologist Cyra assisted several staff in providing instruction on radio training and radio use requirements, and assigning radio call numbers.

Aircraft Safety: Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued work with Marine Waterfowl Specialist Evenson on recommendations for over-water aerial survey training and equipment needs.

REGION 5

None.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE



Fisher Surveys Hex 563 -- Station 2: Several pictures of a fisher were recorded and some possible hair samples were collected.



A fisher spotted at Station 2 for a second (above) and third (below) visit.



Western Pond Turtles: District staff excavated 10 western pond turtle nests aged 106 to 113 days on September 23, 2013. Seven nests had one or more live hatchlings and three nests had only eggs. The last time live hatchlings were excavated from Puget Sound nests was 2006. A total of 45 eggs and 39 hatchlings were taken to Woodland Park Zoo the following day. Seven nests remain, four will be excavated on October 1, and the remaining three will be excavated on October 17.



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

Wildlife Management

Resident Dark Canada Goose Surveys: Biologist Michaelis conducted the last of two surveys for resident dark Canada geese (Wuskies) in southern Pacific County. Michaelis observed 86 dark geese with one marked bird. He also detected a radio-collared bird that had been captured and marked near Bay Center, 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.

Biologist Michaelis conducted a radio telemetry flight for resident dark geese. All newly installed transmitters were located and two of last year's transmitter signals were received. One dark goose was located in Seaside, OR. Michaelis began his search at Vancouver Lake, continued downstream on the Columbia River, across Astoria and into Willapa Bay. The flight completed by Region 5 and Region 6 biologists had lost contact with the transmitters that were deployed this summer. Radioed geese are displaying movement patterns similar to those documented in previous studies; although they are making daily movements, they are primarily concentrated in the southern half of Willapa Bay.

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

Wildlife Management

Willapa National Wildlife Refuge: Biologist Hoenes participated in the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge's first hunter working group meeting. The primary intent of these meetings will be to create an opportunity for these refuge hunters, interested parties/organizations, adjacent landowners affected by the Refuge hunt program, and staff to exchange information, gather input and ideas, and present and discuss hunting-related issues. The meeting was very productive and provided insight into hunter attitudes and expectations with regard to game management in areas associated with Willapa Bay.

Thurston County Habitat Assessment Methodology: Biologists Linders and Stinson together with PHS Land Use Policy lead Folkerts (Habitat) participated in a conference call with staffs from DOT, USFWS, CNLM, Thurston County, and the Willamette Partnership to review the Magnitude of Effects indices portion of the SHARP (Species and Habitat Risk and Prioritization) model, a debit/credit methodology that will be used to address permitting on prairie habitat and habitats for proposed federally listed species (Taylor's checkerspot, Streaked horned lark and Mazama pocket gopher) in Thurston County. It was agreed that a face-to-face meeting would be a more appropriate format for reviewing and revising the current assessments. A schedule for that meeting is pending.