

Wildlife Program

Week of September 30-October 6, 2013

SCIENCE DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Ecological Integrity Monitoring (EIM) Project – Skagit Wildlife Area: Mike Schroeder spent time with Wildlife Area (WLA) Manager Belinda Rotton at the Skagit Wildlife Area preparing permanent photo points for the WLA Ecological Integrity Monitoring (EIM) project. GPS locations were collected from historical existing points, where 90+ photos were taken from the same locations. Each site was visited to recreate the photos and 'figure out' what directions they were pointed. This was successful, but took longer than expected. Not all of the repeat photos were taken in the same directions. Establishing the EIM protocol for these points should correct that issue. The Skagit Wildlife Area is extremely popular and getting citizens to help collect data at these permanent reference points should not be a problem.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Butterfly Monitoring for State Wildlife Grant (SWG) Prairie-Oak Project – Wildlife Diversity Biologists Ann Potter and Loni Beyer completed surveys for eight butterfly species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) on south Puget Sound prairies. Throughout the spring and summer, as part of the SWG Prairie-Oak restoration project, eight butterfly SGCN were monitored on nine south Puget Sound prairie sites scheduled for prairie and/or oak woodland restoration.

Monitoring was conducted within and adjacent to planned restoration units and in more generalized site searches. Between mid-April and mid-September, over 80 survey visits were made to sites on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and private lands. Seven of the 8 species were found on the WDFW Scatter Creek Wildlife Area.

This was the highest number of prairie-dependent butterfly SGCN for any site; however, many of these butterflies were found in very low numbers on Scatter Creek. Survey data for 2013 also have been entered into a project database. Butterfly surveys will continue for two additional years under this project, with an emphasis on post-restoration monitoring.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1: Specialist Shepherd, Biologist Becker, and Regional Director Pozzanghera attended the Steven County Commission monthly public meeting and discussed various wolf issues including pack size, dispersal, the contract range rider, and wolf observations.

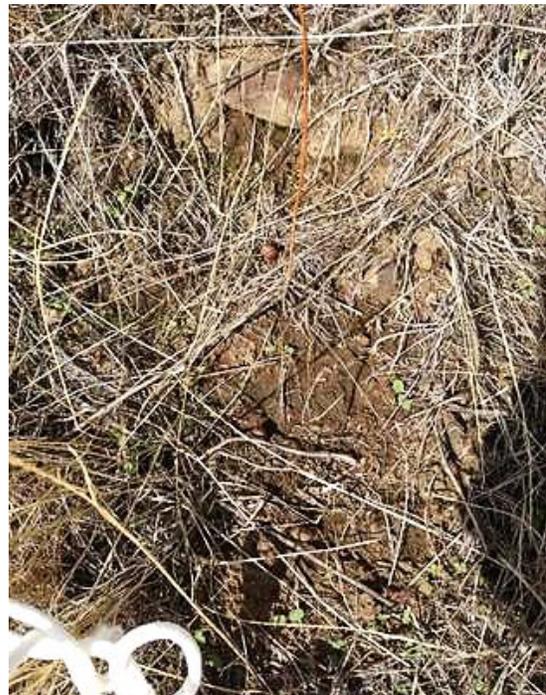
Specialist Shepherd attended the Coordinated Resource Management field trip sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) in Smackout Meadows. Specialist Shepherd presented the history of wolves within the Smackout area and some of the management issues and methods that have occurred in the last several years.

Specialist Shepherd kept in contact with the contract range rider who worked in the Tiger Hill allotment, the Wedge, and near Spirit Junction in the Smackout wolf territory.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group (WHCWG) Columbia Basin Jackrabbit Project: Biologist Ferguson surveyed jackrabbit survey points in southern Whitman County. Contract Biologist Savannah Walker received skin snip samples from Washington State University's Conner Museum; corresponded with Eric Holman and sent him pre-filled and labeled vials; worked on maps and directions for Klickitat County, and sent those to Eric Holman; called landowners in Klickitat, Yakima, Benton, and Franklin counties to gain access for jackrabbit surveys; and corresponded with Sara Gregory to discuss private land access and access to public land that requires cooperation from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and private landowners. Volunteers did not survey this week due to rain, but will be surveying over the weekend near Ephrata and Moses Lake.



Left: Jackrabbit surveys along the breaks of the Snake River, Whitman County, 2013.

Right: Jackrabbit survey involved a lot of looking at the ground to find these little M&M's.

Golden Eagle Study: As part of dealing with golden eagle lead toxicosis, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is hoping to get a better understanding of the transport of lead in ungulate gut-piles to golden eagles. In response to this concern, District Wildlife Biologists Dana Base and Annemarie Prince deployed one of three self-activated camera stations at golden eagle nest territories for potential documentation of scavenging habits by resident eagles. Other Districts in eastern Washington are also participating in this project and 2013 will serve as a trial run with lessons learned applied to future monitoring efforts.

Wildlife Areas

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area Controlled Burn – Wildlife Area staff worked together Thursday to burn 25 acres of mowed grass on Cook Ridge. The 25 acre parcel has been sprayed repeatedly with glyphosate herbicide and is scheduled for seeding to red clover this month. This is a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) funded project.



Controlled burn on Cook Ridge

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Bank Stabilization Project – The Trout Creek Bank Stabilization Project on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area was completed this week. An undersized, fish barrier culvert was removed from this site eight years ago. In the past couple of years the stream moved west and cut into the bank causing sediment delivery into the stream during high flow in the spring. The cut bank was re-sloped and structure added to the toe for bank stability. Wildlife Area Assistant Manager (WAAM) Daro Palmer worked with the two man crew from the Lacey construction shop and the project was completed in two days.



View of the Trout Creek Bank Stabilization Project site on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area in November of 2012 (above), and this week (below) following completion of the project.



Private Lands/Access

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Demo Plots: Biologists Thorne Hadley was assisted by Biologist Lewis, Technician Clements, and Vegetation Ecologist Kurt Merg in making progress on completion of management and restoration practices on the Walla Walla and Columbia County plots. The practices need to be completed before October 12 when the landowner has modern firearm deer hunters arriving at the property. Lewis and Technician Clements organized and gathered the equipment required to complete the practices (Drill, Disc, Harrow, and ATV with sprayer). Lewis and Clements also delivered and prepped all the equipment for usage. Lewis also assisted Thorne-Hadley with the herbicide application on the plots. Merg brought the tractor and mower to be used on the demonstration plots. Biologist Thorne Hadley mowed the demonstration plots and then spot sprayed yellow star thistle within the plots. These demonstration plots showcase a variety of farming practices which can be applied to existing CRP lands with the purpose of enhancing these lands for wildlife. Great team effort by all involved!

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

Wildlife Management

Boyer Mountain Moose: Ben Davenport stopped by the Regional Office with this 55 ¾” bull moose he harvested at Boyer Mountain in Stevens County.



Federal Shutdown affects Turnbull Muzzleloader Elk Hunters: Program Manager Robinette and Biologist Ferguson worked with Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge regarding the closing of

the Refuge due to the government shutdown. A skeleton crew of refuge staff remains working through the shutdown though the Refuge itself is not open. Refuge staff has been contacting hunters affected by the shutdown. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will reinstate points for those hunters who are unable to hunt.

Wildlife Areas

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Bull Moose – This successful moose hunter harvested this 45 inch bull moose on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area this week.



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

Wildlife Areas

Eagle Scout project on Liberty Lake Access Site: Access Manager Young coordinated with a young man on his project, clearing and replanting a weedy hillside at the Liberty Lake Access Site. The scout and his troop cleared the hillside of weeds, and gave Young a list of shrubs and trees they would like to plant.



An eagle scout and his troop cleared the weedy vegetation (above) on the hillside of the Liberty Lake Access Site. The hillside is now cleared of weeds (below) and ready for planting.



Private Lands/Access

Midwest Pheasant Study Group: Private Lands Supervisor McCanna attended the Midwest Pheasant Study Group meeting in Akron, Iowa. Since the National Wild Pheasant Conservation

Plan was accepted by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) in August, this was the last of the Midwest Study Group meetings. The new meetings will be the National Pheasant Study Group. Washington has been a big player in this group the last four years and decided at the meeting to hold the first National meeting in Washington State next September. Here are some of the topics covered during the meeting.

- State Status Reports
- Pheasant observations during statewide long-term monitoring, IA
- Adopt-A-Wildlife-Area, IA Pheasants Forever
- Interseeding Forbs, MN, WA
- Weather Modeling, SD/IA
- Wheat Stubble, NE
- Broken Kettle Grassland Area Tour, IA Nature Conservancy
- National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan: Implementation vs. Multi Species Plan Coordinator
- Pheasant Ingestion of Lead Shot, SD
- Steel Shot, IA
- North Dakota Landscape Changing, ND
- MPSG Business Meeting, Plans for 2014

REGION 2

Wolf Management

Biologists Fitkin and McCoy and Agent Treser responded to a report of a wolf chasing a young calf on the Methow Wildlife Area just before dark. While investigating we heard multiple coyotes howling. Later, the biologists solicited additional coyote responses but did not hear any wolf vocalizations. We found no wolf sign on site but will continue to monitor the area. The cattle operator hoped to have all his stock off the range by the weekend, so additional incidents are not anticipated.

Biologist Fitkin responded to a report of four possible wolves near a rural residence. The owners are dog breeders and thought the wild canids may have been attracted to a dog currently in heat. A thorough search of the area yielded no wolf sign, but a remote camera was installed and baited with attractant. The camera will be checked this coming week.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Obanion – Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Floodplain Project: The project has moved into the final stages of construction that includes three 60' wood structures projecting into the mainstem of the Methow River. To facilitate construction the contractor built an approximately 800' long by 150' wide coffer in the river. In-water construction is scheduled

to be complete on October 12. Methow staff is now working with the Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation (project sponsors) to finalize construction and reclamation details.



Above: Construction coffer in the Methow River. Below: Base of an instream structure under construction. Photos by Tom McCoy.



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

Wildlife Areas

ADA Waterfowl Hunting Blind:

Biologist Duvuvuei and Wildlife Area Technician Carpenter met with ADA Manager Noyes to discuss the possibilities of constructing an ADA Blind at the Frenchmen Ponds Restricted Access Area. Once completed, the blind will provide quality waterfowl hunting opportunities for hunters with disabilities. The first step in this process will involve determination of blind location(s) and access routes and needs, followed by seeking funding opportunities, and if successful, construction will follow. Currently, it appears that a 1.25 mile sand dune road would need to be stabilized with gravel, a parking site would need to be constructed within wheelchair distance, and a turnaround would need to be constructed at the blind location. Duvuvuei and Carpenter will work together to seek funding opportunities and given the expense required to construct the road (~20k) we will attempt to locate two suitable locations for blinds, rather than just one.



Wildlife Area Technician Carpenter discusses the ADA waterfowl blind with ADA Manager Noyes.
Photo by Orrin Duvuvuei.

Private Lands/Access

Recreational Opportunities (Weekender): Sandhill cranes are migrating by the thousands through Douglas County and are readily seen resting in areas with potholes and croplands.



Sandhill Cranes in Douglas County – Photo by J. Gallie.



Cranes and deer feed alongside each other in Douglas County – Photo by J. Gallie.

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

Private Lands/Access

Depredation Investigation: Specialist Heilhecker, Officer McCormick and Sheriff's Deputy Yarnell responded to a call regarding an injured llama on October 2. This was the same llama injured the previous week. The reporting party (RP) stated the llama had been attacked in the face while penned in the barn with the sheep. The llama was in critical condition.

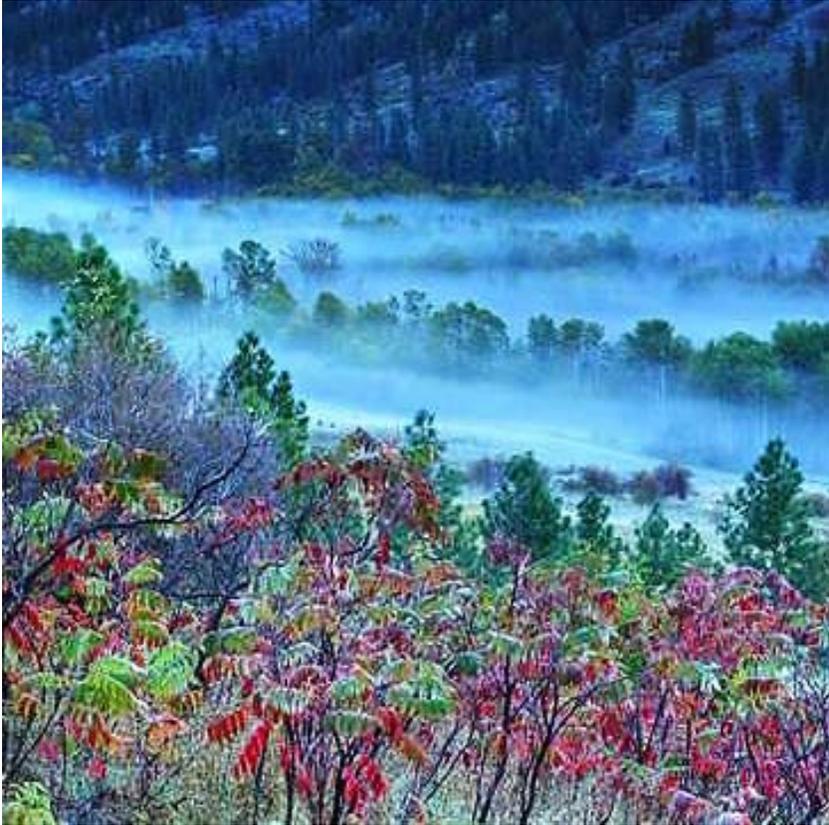
Injuries included a missing portion of the right lip and a cut above the right eye. Blood splatters were found at llama head height on the inside of the barn walls. There was also blood on the barn gates. The llama escaped the barn by pushing on the gates with enough force that it straightened the clasp used to keep the gates closed.

A veterinarian determined the llama was blind possibly due to blunt trauma to the head. The veterinarian euthanized the animal. It is possible the llama got spooked and injured itself. The blindness may be a result from last week's predator attack or a genetic abnormality.

Due to the rain and the activity of the llama, sheep and dogs, no tracks were found at the scene. A predator could cross the approximately four foot tall barn gates. The RP does not know if he is missing any sheep.

Officer McCormick and Deputy Yarnell walked the 40 acre electric, perimeter fence. They found the remains of a fawn on the outside of the fence. The officers noticed a low spot in the fence, due to the terrain, that could compromise the reliability of the fence. They found one large track on the outside of the fence at this location.

Officer Treser and Specialist Heilhecker returned to the residence late that evening to set a cougar trap. Trail cameras were placed on the trap and along the property fence. Officer McCormick planned to call a houndsman.



Hunter Access: In order to maintain positive working relationships, Biologist Dougherty posted approximately 5,000 acres for landowners concerned with trespassing. These landowners had voiced concern about hunters crossing property boundaries if the boundaries were not clearly defined. Biologist Dougherty continues working on renewing and enrolling Hunter Access acres. Biologist Dougherty enrolled approximately 13,000 acres into the Hunt by Written Permission program.

*Sumac fall colors and valley fog in Sinlahekin Valley.
Photo by Justin Haug.*



Left: Warbler in elderberry on McLoughlin Falls Unit. Center: Mallard drakes with widgeon in Sinlahekin Creek. Right: Chipmunk on Chiliwist Butte; Chiliwist Wildlife Area. Photos by Justin Haug.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Gregory and Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area Manager Bjornstrom completed a proposal to compete for \$50,000-\$100,000 in mitigation funds from the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. They outlined a plan to replant CRP ground with sagebrush in the southwest portion of the Thornton Unit and close a section of road. This should boost habitat productivity for a variety of species including elk and shrub-steppe dependent birds like sage grouse.

A schematic of the restoration plan for the WDFW Thornton Unit



REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Possible Future Avian Monitoring on Leque Island: Biologist Milner met with the president of Pilchuck Audubon and Restoration Ecologist Brokaw to discuss potential funds for a small contract that would consider monitoring options for Leque Island. Milner then facilitated a further discussion between Audubon and a local organization that might be able to accept the contract.

Great Blue Heron Management: Biologist Anderson met with a developer proposing to remove trees with heron nests in them. Anderson has asked the group to examine species biology, use of site, and WDFW management recommendations in providing justification to remove known nests. The sites consists of three nests used during at least the last breeding season and are in typical trees used for this species on a regular basis. Anderson will review the take request justification once submitted and provide next steps in order to meet Revised Code of WA (RCW) 77.15.130; Protected fish or wildlife – unlawful taking.

Anderson worked with a number of Seattle building applicants for heron management consultation regarding known Seattle colonies, per Seattle code and Growth Management Act.

Bald Eagle Management: Biologist Anderson provided information regarding known eagle nests and requested any status updates and new information from the Washington Department of Transportation regarding a project in King County.

North Cascades Elk Management Group: As part of the Public Safety Committee of the North Cascades Elk Management Group, Biologist DeBruyn helped graduate student Nathan Rice retrieve images from cameras monitoring elk crossing trails on State Route 20.



Bushnell

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A Game Management Unit (GMU) 418 bull preparing to cross State Route 20.

North Puget Sound Snow Goose Study: Biologist DeBruyn did preliminary age ratio counts of lesser snow geese returning to Skagit County. Early numbers indicate it was a good breeding season in Siberia with about 30% of the flock being young birds.



Lesser Snow Geese arrive in front of Mt. Baker.

American Pika and Mountain Goat GIS: Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued data work on this summer's American Pika surveys using GIS to create survey route maps for report presentation, and provided GIS/GPS support for Mountain Goat survey data.

Common Loon Efforts: Biologist Anderson coordinated with BioDiversity Research Institute regarding shipping of biological samples for contaminant analysis in Washington resident loons throughout the state. Biologist Smith prepped and shipped the samples. They are presently being worked up in lab.

Wildlife Areas

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with Werkhoven Dairy to complete the corn harvest for this unit. Approximately 15 acres of corn will remain on the unit for wildlife forage and cover. Additionally, Manager Boehm continued to oversee the construction of an ADA duck blind for the Crescent Lake Unit. A local high school student is building the blind as a community service project. The blind overlooks Crescent Lake at the west end of the lake. The blind is portable and can be removed from the unit after the hunting season. Signage will be provided describing the location of the blind, and that it has ADA user preference.



Left: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm oversaw the construction of an ADA duck blind for the Crescent Lake Unit. A local high school student is building the blind as a community service project. Right: Approximately 15 acres of corn will remain on the Crescent Lake Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area for wildlife forage and cover.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: 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.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: The Fir Island Farm Project Steering Committee met to receive project updates and discuss two draft technical reports that are now completed. The draft Geotechnical and Hydrogeologic Data Report is available on the project webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/skagit/final_restoration_study.php. This report establishes baseline soil, groundwater, and geologic conditions of the project area. Project consultants also presented an overview of modeling results that predict how coastal processes will affect the project area.

Lake Terrell Dam Water Flows: Manager Kessler adjusted the leak valve on the Lake Terrell dam to allow more water flow past the dam. This will provide water into Terrell Creek for salmon.

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. The roofed structure will provide a central location for informational and safety signage for the public. A map of the unit will be posted on the kiosk as well. Additionally, Manager Boehm dug set posts in concrete in preparation for the installation of agricultural and pedestrian gates to guide users to the public areas. Manager Boehm also worked with the grazing lessee to complete the roundup of the cattle on the unit. All cattle have been removed from the unit.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm completed safety and informational signage at this unit. Manager Boehm worked with WDFW Enforcement Officers to upgrade the signage around the barn facility as well as the service entrances that are off-limits to the public.

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

Wildlife Management

Region 4 Winter Waterfowl Coordination Meeting: Manager Link along with Biologists Danilson, Milner, Anderson, Cyra, and Smith attended a meeting with Waterfowl Section Manager Kraege to review proposed waterfowl research, surveys, and monitoring work to be conducted over the winter months. Since District 14 has a major waterfowl component with lots of aerial survey work, Danilson will follow up by preparing a flight schedule for District 14 staff and the fixed-wing vendor.

North Cascades Elk Herd Habitat Modeling: Biologist Danilson met with Central Washington University graduate student Anna Yost to review the current status of her project. Ms. Yost's project utilizes existing elk habitat models in conjunction with new and more localized geographic information systems databases to model current and proposed future habitat preferences for the North Cascades Elk Herd. The main goal of her project is to use this

modeling process to inform decision making about future “focus areas” where habitat enhancement projects would yield the greatest response in terms of improving habitat quality while minimizing the potential for conflicts with agriculture and public safety concerns. Ms. Yost was seeking direction and assistance on several components of her project, which Danilson provided or will soon follow-up on.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Acquisition Proposal: Region 4 staff is continuing to communicate with the Farms, Fish, and Flood Initiative (3FI) Oversight Committee and Skagit agricultural community representatives regarding the WDFW proposal to acquire additional property in the Skagit delta to manage as hunting land. The proposal will continue to be developed and refined in conjunction with local partners.

Whatcom Wildlife Area Hunting Paths: Manager Kessler mowed hunting paths on the Intalco Unit.

Whatcom Wildlife Area Pheasant Release: Manager Kessler received 390 pheasants for the pheasant releases. Birds were released by volunteers on the Intalco, Lake Terrell and BP units.

Lake Terrell Hunting Blinds: Manager Kessler coordinated with a volunteer who will repair some of the hunting blinds on the Lake Terrell Unit. The blinds were inventoried and a materials list made. Kessler will provide the materials, while the volunteer will provide the labor to repair the blinds.

Skagit Agricultural Enhancement and Lease Program

Fir Island Farms: Natural Resources Tech, Curran Cosgrove monitored the agricultural lease on the Fir Island Farms Reserve. Currently the lessee has not planted the cover crop on WDFW portions of the reserve. Manager Rotton will contact the lessee.

Island Unit: Manager Belinda Rotton received Army Corp of Engineers Nationwide permit 3 for the ditch maintenance project on the Island Unit. The permit had additional stipulations to coordinate with the Department of Ecology (DOE) and Stillaguamish Tribe. Contacts have been made with the DOE and Stillaguamish Tribe, more specifics related to the timeline should be available this week after further review.

Hunting Season Prep - Natural Resources Specialist Greg Meis and Natural Resources Tech Curran Cosgrove began closing water control structures on the Samish Unit and blocked an additional culvert to test concept of the newly proposed water control structures. All structures were not closed to allow sharecrop grower time to harvest potatoes in the upper fields.

Natural Resources Specialist Meis and Natural Resources Tech Cosgrove monitored field and crop conditions to include waterbird use on the Island, Samish, Johnson/Debay’s Slough and Leque Island units. Waterfowl and shorebird use is increasing as waterfowl are gathering in larger numbers and migrating birds are arriving in the area.

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.

Private Lands/Access

Private Lands Access Contracts: Biologist Milner renewed all existing outstanding contracts for Waterfowl Quality Hunts sites in CAPS. These were one year agreements that expired last year, but the landowners are willing to continue our agreements for this year.

Hunting Blinds: Private Lands staff painted the new layout blinds finishing their preparation for the field. Staff built multiple blinds for the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program in both Skagit and Whatcom County.



Bull Elk harvested in GMU 418.

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

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Elk Herd Work Group Informal Meeting: Biologist Danilson and Conflict Specialist Griffith met with two members of the North Cascades Elk Herd Work Group. The request for this meeting came from the president of the Skagit Farm Bureau, who has been quite

critical of the draft plan. The purpose of the meeting was to have a dialogue about a letter the other private landowner had sent to the director's office several months ago regarding his predator-prey theories and some informal modeling and whether predator management can/should be an objective for future management of the North Cascades Elk Herd.

Skagit County Elk Conflict: Conflict Specialist Griffith met with two landowners this week regarding elk damages to their hay fields and orchards. Both producers have been implementing hazing techniques with little to no effect for many months. Both will be issued damage permits after the public draw hunts come to a close.

Griffith worked with the Master Hunter coordinator to assign three Master Hunters to three properties in Day Creek, Concrete-Sauk, and Sedro-Woolley areas. All three properties have experienced elk damages throughout the summer and multiple permits and hunters have been issued and assigned to each one throughout the year.

Griffith extended the dates on two existing damage permits and issued out two new damage permits this week. All four affected properties are along State Route 20 dispersed from Minkler Road upriver to Dalles Bridge.



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

Conflict Specialist Griffith received information a few weeks ago about a possible injured elk in the State Route 20 and Helmick Road area. This week, Griffith was able to get a very good observation of the group of elk and found no behaviors indicating that any of them were injured.

State Route 20 and Helmick Road Elk – Photo by Brandon Griffith.

Wildlife Areas

Samish River Unit/Welts Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw submitted draft State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) permit materials to the WDFW SEPA Coordinator. When finalized, SEPA materials will be open for review and comment.

Tennant Lake Wetland Enhancement Project: Manager Kessler coordinated with Port of Bellingham managers on the Tennant Lake Wetland Enhancement Project. Maintenance on the planted trees and shrubs has been completed for the year.

Restoration Project Monitoring: Manager Rotton met with representatives from the Skagit River Systems Cooperative to discuss the South Fork Monitoring Report. The meeting outlined

current monitoring efforts from the tribe funded by the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP). The draft report from the monitoring should be completed in December.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area:

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm responded to a request for an interview with the outdoor editor for the Everett Herald. The brief interview focused on the pheasant release program and the Wildlife Units where pheasant are released. The interview was published in the Wednesday edition of the Herald.



Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm spent each morning at the pheasant release units greeting hunters, discussing the new Ebey Island hunting area, and reminding hunters that the Wildlife Units open at 8:00 a.m. and close at 4:00 p.m. In an effort to provide a safe hunting experience, hunters were asked to remain in the parking area until 8:00 a.m.

Wildlife Area Planning: Manager Rotton met with Mike Schroeder to discuss establishment of photo points on the wildlife area. Photo points will be part of the ecological integrity monitoring process and will involve citizen science in the data collection process. Existing photo points will be organized and posted online and additional points will be added as the project develops.

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

Wildlife Management

District 14 Seasonal Swan Scientific Technician 2 Recruitment: Biologist Danilson submitted additional materials to Human Resources for the recruitment of the seasonal swan technician for District 14. The role of this position is to work with project partners from Puget Sound Energy and the Trumpeter Swan Society to recover all dead, sick and injured swans and collect tissue samples for analysis for potential lead poisoning. The term for this position is November 15 to March 15.

Private Lands Biologist Position: Biologist Milner developed interview questions for the Private Lands biologist interviews that will take place this week.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Areas: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to recruit public citizens interested in volunteering their time on projects within the Wildlife Units.

This past week, six people signed up as volunteers for the pheasant release program, assisting with building sign kiosks, and providing maintenance services at the Cherry Valley barn.

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 met with Marine Waterfowl Specialist Evenson to begin formulating a proposed over-water component to the Aircraft Safety Program. In addition, provided egress training information to Deputy Assistant Director Schirato.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle Head Starting Program: Biologist Holman transported 13 additional western pond turtles from their nesting locations in the Columbia River Gorge to the Oregon Zoo in Portland. A total of 17 juvenile western pond turtles are currently being fed, incubated, and generally cared for at the Zoo. To date, 1,407 young pond turtles have now been released over the 23 year history of this undertaking. Thanks to the Oregon Zoo and Volunteers Kate and Frank Slavens for their ongoing effort on the project.

Western Pond Turtle Shell Disease Situation: Biologist Holman transported three adult female western pond turtles from veterinary care at the Oregon Zoo. The animals have been under the care of Dr. Tim Storms for approximately three months while recovering from loss of shell tissue, loss of body condition, and abscesses. WDFW is working cooperatively with veterinarians from the Oregon Zoo, Woodland Park Zoo, and private practices to ascertain the cause of this condition in the State Endangered western pond turtle.

Public Outreach: Biologist Holman gave a presentation to approximately 35 members of the Yacolt Burn Sportsman's Club. The talk featured the status of wolves in Washington, an update on the hoof deformity condition in southwest Washington elk, deer and elk harvest in Game Management Unit (GMU) 568 (Washougal), and the black-tailed deer research project. The Yacolt Burn Sportsman's Club has a membership base primarily in Clark County. The club is very active in maintaining hunter access to private industrial forestlands, conducting hunter education courses, and helping with wildlife surveys. Thanks to the Club for their efforts to maintain Washington's hunting opportunities and heritage.

Bonneville Power Administration I-5 Project District Team: Wildlife Biologists Anderson, Miller, Bergh and Holman participated with representatives from Habitat and Fisheries Programs in an effort to assess the impacts of new power transmission lines proposed for construction in the Region. A wide variety of impacts to terrestrial and aquatic natural resources are anticipated from establishment of the lines. Methods to quantify impacts, possible mitigation scenarios, and plans for next steps were discussed during the meeting.

Wolf\Livestock Program: Biologist Anderson organized training for Klickitat County livestock producers regarding wolf biology and methods for reducing wolf\livestock interactions. Region 1 Biologist Shepherd conducted the training highlighting WDFW's program in northeast Washington. Jeff Dawson, local Colville rancher, also attended and provided insight into how the program is working in northeast Washington where we currently have wolves. Region 5 is in the process of developing a program with the local livestock community to prepare for the eventual presence of wolves in our area.

First Signs of Fall: One of the sure signs of fall is the arrival of birds from the breeding grounds up north. Flocks of Cackling geese were heard this week in SW Washington as they come south to winter in the lower Columbia River and Willamette Valley of Oregon. Soon many other species of ducks and geese will follow as migrations get in full swing from places in Alaska, Canada, and other northern areas. Places to view these birds are the Woodland Bottoms near the town of Woodland along I-5, the Willow Grove area west of Longview, Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge near Cathlamet, and the Vancouver Lowlands near Vancouver. Please be careful not to scare or harass the birds as they have expended lots of energy reserves in their flight and they need time to feed and rest to recover.

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 568 (Washougal). Conditions featured cool, wet, winter weather. One hundred and thirty four deer were located during the effort. Data from this work 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.



Survey Boundary Marking: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Biologist Bergh spent time on the Mudflow Unit of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area marking the boundaries for the annual elk winter mortality survey. This survey is conducted in the spring to obtain an index of overwinter elk mortalities in the Mt. St. Helens elk herd. With new volunteers and staff in recent years, it has been difficult to determine the boundary of the survey area, so trees along the outer boundary were marked with paint.

Survey boundary marking

Deer Season Preview Newspaper Article: Biologist Holman was interviewed by Outdoor Writer Al Thomas of the Columbian newspaper in Vancouver regarding the upcoming modern firearm deer season. The interview featured discussions of populations, trends in hunter success, habitat conditions, etc. A second phase of the story will feature tips and pointers for successfully

hunting black-tailed deer in western Washington. Thanks to Al Thomas for his ongoing interest in wildlife topics in southwest Washington.

Black-tailed Deer Research Project: The Region 5 portion of the black-tailed deer research project is ongoing. Study does are still being monitored by a combination of remote (satellite) and field (VHF) methods. The does are located in two study clusters concentrated within the Washougal (568) and Coweeman (550) Game Management Units. During 2013, six fawns have been captured in the Washougal cluster. Fawn monitoring is currently being conducted. To date, four 2013 fawns remain alive in the Washougal study cluster.

Wildlife Areas

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area -- Forage Monitoring: Natural Resource Technician Sample surveyed six areas on the Mudflow Unit for elk forage this past week. She collected all available forage in ten 1000cm clip plots in each of the areas, three which were fertilized and three that were not, to determine if there is a significant difference in the amount of forage available to elk wintering on the area. The samples will be dried and weighed to determine if fertilizing increase the amount of elk forage on the area. Past survey samples have showed an increase of over 40% more forage in areas that were fertilized over areas that were not.



Forage monitoring

Shillapoo Wildlife Area -- Fence Removal: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Assistant Manager Loomis had help from the Fort Vancouver Vipers Youth Hockey team removing a fence in the South Unit of the Wildlife Area. The fence was originally constructed for cattle grazing, but had fallen into disrepair since grazing ended in this pasture of the Wildlife Area several years ago. About 750 feet of fence was removed separating a corn field from a pasture to improve sight distances for wintering geese. Hopefully with the removal of the fence more habitats will be available for wintering waterfowl. A special thank you goes to the team, coach and general manager of the Vipers for a job well done.



Fence removal with Fort Vancouver Vipers Youth Hockey team

Klickitat Wildlife Area -- Reed canary grass control on the Goldendale Hatchery Unit: The Fish Program received input from fishermen that Spring Creek is mostly inaccessible for fishing downstream from the Goldendale hatchery due to a heavy infestation of reed canary grass. District 9 Fish Biologist Weinheimer secured funding to control this invasive grass and made arrangements with the Klickitat Wildlife Area for a selective application of a wetland-approved herbicide to areas adjacent to Spring Creek between the hatchery and Hill Road. Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis worked an area downstream from the hatchery along the north side of the creek. This treatment extended to near the parking area at the east end of the pheasant hunting access road. The treatment area will be monitored for effect before resuming further herbicide application. Control of canary grass is a necessary first step in restoring a portion of the original biodiversity to this wetland, and should be a benefit to wildlife as well as an improvement for recreation access.



Treating Canarygrass at Spring Creek

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

Wildlife Management

Waterfowl concentrations: With the opening of waterfowl seasons only a week away, Biologist Miller made a quick survey of local areas for birds. Recent rains have created lots of ponding in agricultural fields which resemble a situation more like late November/December and birds are very widely distributed. A flock of several thousand ducks was seen on Grays' Bay, they were predominately Pintails and a few Widgeon. Hunters need to be careful to identify species that have reduced bag limits in early season ducks which have not developed full plumage after breeding season molt. Water levels in the Columbia River are very high and discolored which will affect where puddle ducks might feed. Please check the 2013 Waterfowl Pamphlet for rules

and regulations prior to the opening day on October 12. Goose hunting does not open until November in Goose Area 2A.

Private Lands/Access

St. Helens Land Access Program Volunteer Orientation: Private Lands Biologist Stephens and Natural Resource Technician Sample held the second volunteer orientation of the season at the WDFW Vancouver regional office. Biologist Stephens led a presentation outlining the purpose and importance of the St Helens Land Access Program as well as guided participants to review WDFW's policies. This program is a joint effort between WDFW and Weyerhaeuser to give permit holders the opportunity to access thousands of acres for their hunt while allowing Weyerhaeuser's harvesting operations to continue safely and unimpeded. We will be holding one more orientation for this program, which is mandatory for those who want to volunteer. The next orientation will be given at the Cowlitz PUD building in Longview on October 24 at 6:00 p.m.

Register to Hunt Kiosk Installation: Biologist Stephens along with Columbia Land Trust staff member Malone installed a Hunt by Registration kiosk at one of Columbia Land Trust's properties in Wahkiakum County. The registration kiosk provides a way for the land trust to know who is using the site and to collect some information about the species and numbers of waterfowl that are harvested there.

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 Season Related Public Requests: Regional Wildlife Biologists fielded lots of public contacts this week regarding the start of various hunting seasons. Particularly, common questions centered around the start of muzzleloader elk season, the upcoming modern firearm elk season, modern firearm deer season, fall permit turkey season, special deer permits in the Klickitat GMUs, etc. Those hunters lining things up for fall hunts should remember to visit WDFW's website and utilize the GoHunt feature at <http://apps.wdfw.wa.gov/gohunt/> and the Hunting Prospects feature at <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/prospects/>.

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

Wildlife Management

Wetlands and Waterfowl Workshop: Biologists Bergh, Hauswald, Loomis, Sample, and Stephens attended a workshop focused on wetland and waterfowl ecology and management. Topics covered included wetland hydrology, plants, invertebrates, reptiles/amphibians, waterfowl energetics, and invasive species. Two field trips to identify wetland species and see management strategies on the ground were also part of the workshop. One of the field trips was

to WDFW's Shillapoo Wildlife Area where manager Hauswald showed participants three sites. Two of the sites were given nearly identical treatments in order to remove large stands of invasive reed canary grass. One site had a positive response and was full of 5 foot tall smartweed (provides seeds and shelters invertebrate populations for waterfowl) while the other site remained mainly covered with invasive species. This showed that the subtle differences (topography, microclimate, hydrology, etc.) between sites can determine the effectiveness of a treatment.



Wetlands and Waterfowl Workshop

ATV Training: Staff from the Region 5 Wildlife Program attended training on ATV operation taught by Kevin Olson of DNR. The course was focused on the safe operation of ATVs with practical information on turns, hills, object avoidance, stopping, and maneuvering over obstacles. Everyone was able to spend a good amount of time operating the ATVs and practice skills like loading them into a truck. A big thank you goes out to Kevin and DNR for a great training opportunity for WDFW staff.



ATV Training

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Black-tailed Deer Project

Pysht Cluster -- Equipment and Gear Operations and Maintenance, Plus Updating

Databases: Biologist McMillan charged and maintained the PDA and Handheld Terminal. McMillan also updated the Pendragon database and the GPS Plus X database after Biologist Loafman conducted a field check on September 23.

Pysht Cluster – Monitoring and Mortalities: Six does, seven fawns and a single 2012 yearling continue to be monitored in the Pysht cluster. No mortalities this week.

Capitol Forest Cluster – Biologist Michaelis continued to monitor radio-collared deer in the Capitol Forest Cluster and there were no mortalities reported. However, he did investigate a mortality signal that was emitted from one of the collared yearling bucks. It turned out the collar had simply dropped as it was designed to do when the deer reached 1 year of age. Biologist Michaelis was also able to download activity and position data from two adult does; each contained over 71,000 data points.

With the yearling buck dropping its collar, the total number of deer being monitored in the Capitol Forest Cluster is now six does and one yearling. Biologist Michaelis was able to download activity data from two of the does and each contained more than 56,000 locations.

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

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Sites: District 15 Biologist contacted a landowner to possibly open two new Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites in Mason County. District 15 Biologist worked with volunteers Rich Bazzell and Greg Stairs to re-build Mason County and Jefferson County waterfowl blinds for the upcoming season. The sites will be available through GoHunt and through the Region 6 Waterfowl Hunting Opportunities publication.

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

Wildlife Management

New Conflict Specialist in Region 6: Conflict Specialist Anthony Novack joined the Region 6 team as the new specialist responsible for Thurston, Pierce, Kitsap, Mason, and eastern Jefferson and Clallam counties. We are excited to have him in the Region, and he has jumped into conflict issues in several areas already.