Wildlife Program

Week of April 7-13, 2014

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Fisher: Biologist Jeff Lewis met with BC Ministry of Environment Biologist Rich Weir to coordinate capture activities for fishers in central British Columbia for the Cascades fisher reintroduction project. Ministry officials will help Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) target captures in areas where beetle kill damage to fisher habitat is less severe and where fishers are expected to be more abundant. Lewis, Mt Rainier National Park Biologist Mason Reid and WDFW volunteer Mitch Lewis conducted field visits to seven proposed fisher release sites in the southern Cascades that were identified south of Highway 12. Most sites were currently accessible and can accommodate public gatherings for release events.

Teanaway Community Forest Advisory Committee inaugural meeting in Ellensburg: Section Manager Wilkerson joined Regional Director Livingston, Land Division Manager Sprague, and Public Affairs staff Dunlop at the inaugural meeting of the Advisory Committee. Eighty people were in attendance, the interaction included a good introduction to the committee (including a presentation by Director Anderson and Commissioner of Public Lands Goldmark), body of work, interim management of the land, and structural interactions. About eight public comments were voiced, including a very constructive presentation of written comments by a set of 20 adjacent land-owners.

Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GNLCC): Section Manager Wilkerson and Division Manager Pierce participated in the GNLCC Steering Committee. We received an update on the GNLCC Strategic Science grant application and review process. A total of 72 proposals were submitted, totaling $5.8 million for the pool of $720 thousand. We also discussed the status of the GNLCC “thinker’s proposal” and preparation for the in-person Steering Committee meeting in Waterton, Canada, May 14-15.

Regional Open Space Strategy: Section Manager Wilkerson participated in the Biodiversity Taskforce meeting of the Regional Open Space Strategy for King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties. Discussion surrounded development of a white paper to describe the relationship between open space and biodiversity, to describe the major regional challenges to biodiversity, and to develop a set of regional recommendations to conserve biodiversity through the open space strategy.

Enhanced Descriptions of Butterfly Distribution: Biologist Ann Potter completed evaluating existing and developing new maps to identify the hydrologic units (HUCs) within Washington where four butterfly species of conservation concern occur today, historically, and potentially. Statewide HUC maps for the Valley Silverspot, Oregon Silverspot, Mardon Skipper, and

Taylor's Checkerspot will be used, along with similar products for many other species as a tool in the development and implementation of the WDFW Habitat Conservation Plan for WDFW lands.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Project: Biologist Atamian summarized the capture and lek surveys completed over the past two weeks and sent this information and a thank you to Craig Foster, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) district wildlife biologist for the area WDFW captured the translocated sage grouse from. Biologist Atamian reviewed the GPS locations for the 20 recently translocated males with satellite transmitters looking for signs of mortality or loss. Four of the transmitters indicated little if any recent movements, their last known locations were forwarded to volunteer Thorburn for field investigations. Thorburn found three kill-sites and retrieved three transmitters, though one was very badly damaged. At the fourth site there were only a few feathers, no carcass or transmitter, so potentially a malfunctioning transmitter or the transmitter was dragged off and destroyed.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologists Wik and Vekasy, Technician Lowe, and Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) Biologist Cassirer spent a full day attempting to ground classify every sheep in the Asotin herd. WDFW chose not to aerial survey the Asotin herd this year, in exchange for spending the money on surveys in a different herd, with the hopes of being able to conduct a ground count. The survey went well, but we will try to survey the female portion of the population one more time this coming week. During the survey we counted 29 ewes, 9 lambs, and 27 rams.

Wildlife Areas

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Prescribed Burning: Natural Resource Technician Jerry "Chris" Christensen performed daily checks to three field units that were prescribed burned last week. There are still four spots where fire is smoldering well within the bounds of

This photo shows the consumption of decadent bitterbrush – Photo by Daro Palmer.

the last unit that was burned. Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer walked the last unit burned to assess the disturbance effort. Fine fuels and decadent bitterbrush consumed very well, reducing fire fuels in the unit. We anticipate the fire dependent evergreen ceanothus to germinate in the unit. It is a choice food source for wintering ungulates on Sherman Creek Wildlife Area.

Private Lands/Access

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Pollinator Test Plots: Biologist Earl worked with regional private lands biologists to line out the equipment use and a work party to conduct spring seeding for the Conservation Reserve Program Demonstration Plots in Walla Walla, Garfield, and Whitman counties. Earl also spent several hours getting his tractor and truck ready for the project. Earl then spent two days delivering his tractor and seeding the Demonstration Plots with Biologists Thorne-Hadley, McCanna and Merg. It was a rough start for the equipment, but everything was repaired in the field. The plots were successfully seeded. The project continues this week. These plots are designed to demonstrate a variety of management techniques to get forbs established in CRP fields.

End of a long day (Biologists Merg, Thorne-Hadley and McCanna).

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

Wildlife Areas

WT Wooten Wildlife Area – Post Spring Break: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman checked the campgrounds and outhouses, and cleaned up garbage. The campgrounds were

surprisingly clean for spring break for the area schools having been the last couple weeks. She found four outhouses that are in need of pumping and scheduled Doug's Septic to come out and pump them.

Garbage cleaned up from the campgrounds and lake parking areas.

Private Lands/Access

Garfield County Helicopter Elk Hazing Effort: Conflict Specialist Rasley coordinated with local Fish and Wildlife Enforcement, Wildlife Area staff and several farmers to assist in hazing elk out of crop lands and back onto U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land. Our efforts paid off and we were able to push 43 head off of the private farm lands and through the one-way gates in the WDFW elk fence. All the farmers were very pleased with all the extra effort we all put into this project. We still have a little over 50 elk left to push through the elk fence though.

The end of a successful elk herding day.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wolfe Conservation and Management

Okanogan Wolves: Specialist Heilhecker along with Officer McCormick and Sergeant Christensen investigated a report of missing goats south of Chesaw. The reporting party (RP) has lost four young goats in a 30 hour period. All the goats are locked up at night and the RP states the goats are being killed during the day. There were no carcasses to examine or evidence to determine what is killing the goats. Trail cameras were placed in the area of the disappearances.

Wildlife Management

Rattlesnake Monitoring: Biologist Fitkin and USFS Biologist Rohrer visited four known dens last week to gauge snake activity and deploy a remote camera to assess snake numbers at one den. Given the cool spring, snakes are just now coming to den entrances to bask. This activity is part of a multi-year effort to gather data on Northern Pacific rattlesnake ecology and document hibernacula distribution.

Northern Pacific Rattlesnake – Photo by Jeff Heinlen.

Deer Surveys: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen continued spring deer surveys. To date we've classified 3,000 mule deer and fawn:adult ratios are running about 25% above the 20 year average, which is not surprising given the mild winter. Final numbers will be available by the middle of next week when the last couple of routes have been completed. This sizeable and well distributed sample will give us a good estimate of over-winter fawn survivorship. A much smaller incidental sample of white-tailed deer suggests fawn numbers similar to mule deer.

Methow mule deer – Photo by Scott Fitkin.

Mule Deer: Biologists Gallie and Bridges have been conducting spring green up counts for mule deer in both Chelan and Douglas counties. Final numbers and ratios will be tabulated next week, but so far the mild winter is evident with high fawn survival. Fewer deer in Chelan County were observed exhibiting hairloss syndrome this spring.

Mule Deer in Chelan County – Photo by J. Gallie.

Wildlife Areas

North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team: The burn team finished prescribed burning the available portions (those not under grazing lease obligations) of the Forde 2 and 7 Burn Units on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. They also assisted Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Manager Haug with burning two agricultural fields bringing us to 100 blackened acres for the week. The team worked the later part of the week installing a challenging water delivery hoselay around the steep Mill 2 Unit that is just across the Sinlahekin Road from headquarters. We intend to begin igniting Mill 2 on Monday, April 14. To take advantage of the favorable weather the team has worked 11 straight days since burning at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area last week. They will be taking a long weekend before we begin several multiday prescribed fires on the Sinlahekin. Since March 20 the team has burned a total of 478 acres.

Sinlahekin Forest Restoration Project: Project Forester Jamie Bass worked with the prescription fire crew to focus on at-risk trees in units burned this week. To reduce the chance of fire mortality to mature (100+ years), "cat-face," legacy, and/or pitchy Ponderosa Pines, they had duff and organic litter pulled back to expose a one to two foot boundary of bare soil around the bole to reduce residence time of fire and heat in the cambium. Though some trees will inevitably be lost due to fire stress and other biotic factors, reducing burning at the bole will increase the likelihood they will remain standing to turn into snags for valuable cavity nesting habitat for bats, insects, owls, woodpeckers, etc. Forester Bass also tracked down and flagged out cultural resources throughout the current treatment sale for this summer so that heavy equipment doesn't disrupt cultural sites. Finally, the FPA amendment to include new areas for treatment was sent off to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) consultant for review and comment.

Methow Forest Rehabilitation Project: Project Forester Jamie Bass continued to familiarize herself with the details of the Methow restoration project's stipulations, goals and progress. This included doing research on fire effects, riparian habitats, and insect behavior in dry mixed conifer forests. Forester Bass also wrote a draft to change the scope of the current Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant to include funding for prescribed fire, so that the areas that are mechanically or hand thinned also get fire on the ground soon thereafter to stimulate the fire-dependent ecosystem, and protect it from catastrophic wildfire.

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

Private Lands/Access

Parking Barrier – Access Manager Graves planted Great Basin wildrye plugs at the Road 3 Access Site on the Winchester Reservoir Unit. The plugs area set in place to create an east barrier at the parking area, while also providing habitat for wildlife.

Winchester Lake Great Basin wildrye – 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

Private Lands/Access

Chelan/Douglas/Okanogan Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Local Working Group (LWG) Annual Meeting: Private Lands Biologist Braaten attended the annual meeting and discussed funding options and voted on area priorities and resource concerns for 2015. The 2015 resource concern priorities: soil condition was voted number one priority voted on by most members. There is a high interest in farms changing over to no-till wheat farming on several Douglas County operations. The second priority was wildfire hazard; third priority was plant range productivity and fourth was water quality sediment. Due to large available wildlife programs such as sage grouse initiative and wildfire restoration funds most members wanted to focus on other resource concerns/priorities within the three county area. Private Lands Biologist Braaten stayed after meeting with NRCS staff and discussed range issues, sage grouse projects and SAFE projects.

Photo by Eric Braaten

Sunland Boat Launch – Access Managers Harmon and Graves are exploring options to get the Sunland Boat Ramp properly repaired. The Wanapum Pool drawdown offers an ideal opportunity to repair and reinforce the toe of the boat ramp. In response to requests to install a floating dock adjacent to the boat ramp, Manager Fitzgerald conducted a preliminary look at the feasibility of installing the dock. Sunland Estates' residents have offered to apply for funding for purchase and installation of the ADA compatible dock. Issues left to be addressed include maintenance responsibility and the future of the two existing floating docks (marina style) installed on Grant Public Utility District (PUD) lands but land locked by private property.

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

Wildlife Management

Water Ditching Course: Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei completed a Water Ditching Course (A-312) in Portland that was taught by the U.S. Forest Service. Folks interested in this training or other aviation training should visit the interagency aviation training website at https://www.iat.gov/Training/logon.asp. This valuable course taught students how to react if an aircraft unexpectedly crashes in the water. The training was pertinent to Finger and Duvuvuei as they routinely fly waterfowl surveys over the Columbia River and other large bodies of water.

By completing the course, the biologists learned a seven-step procedure focusing on preparation for impact, remaining calm while waiting for water pressure to equalize, checking egress path while maintaining a reference point in the aircraft, and safe egress. In addition biologists learned how to survive until rescue help arrives by working as a team to avoid heat loss and improve locomotion through the water by swimming together as an interlocked group. Lastly, we learned how to operate a life raft and technique to bring victims into the craft. Finger also completed an online course 'A-113_USFS Crash Survival for R-10 Employees' to learn how to survive after ditching in cold environments.

Biologist Duvuvuei receives pre-duck training to learn how to properly exit a sinking aircraft at the Water Ditching Course – Photo by R. Finger.

Now Biologist Duvuvuei has to recall the steps learned to exit the simulation. An observer in the water carefully watches the exit technique of the student pair to inform students where they could have improved. Photo by R. Finger

Wildlife Scenes:

Left: *Spotted Towhee* – Photo by J. Heinlen. **Right: *Ruffed Grouse* –** Photo by Scott Fitkin.


Left: ***A common garter snake (Thamnophis sirtalis) momentarily finds itself out in the open.***
Right: ***A member of the Lily Family, the yellow bell (Fritillaria pudica) is one of the Methow Wildlife Areas' earliest bloomers.***


A pair of Hooded Mergansers **(left)** ***and Mountain Bluebird*** **(right)** ***around Forde Lake, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area –*** Photos by Justin Haug.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Burrowing Owls: Biologist Gregory organized and inventoried artificial burrow materials. Approximately 25 of the 120 artificial burrows have been refurbished with four-inch tunnels. Work on this project is suspended for the breeding season and will resume later this year after the owls have reared their young. Biologist Gregory got familiarized with some of the technical

administration of the burrowing owl webcam. The camera has been programed to capture motion activated photos. This has resulted in more detailed monitoring of breeding events and owl movement in and out of the burrow.

Golden Eagles – District 4: Biologist Gregory conducted the second occupancy survey at the territory in eastern Franklin County. As was the case during the first survey, no activity was observed at the nest sites, but eagles were flying within three miles.

Golden Eagles – District 8: Biologist Bernatowicz continued to survey priority one sites. No occupied sites found. This is turning out to be a strange and poor year for Golden eagles in the district. Assistant District Biologist Moore continued the second round of occupancy surveys for priority one sites. Moore visited Tekison, Cape Horn and East Dry Gulch territories. The Cape Horn site was occupied with a pair of adults, but Tekison and East Dry Gulch were unoccupied.

Bighorn Sheep observed during the east Dry Gulch golden eagle survey.

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Manager Lopushinsky walked about 4.5 miles of boundary fence recording fire damage. About 9 miles of fence was damaged by fire. The floods after the fire also damaged the fence and created deep gullies that will be difficult to cross with fencing. John compiled the information on a map and sent it to Ray Berg in Engineering.

Left: ***Fire damaged fence corner on Colockum Wildlife Area boundary fence.*** **Right:** ***Colockum Wildlife Area boundary fence damaged by flooding.***

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman toured the lower portion of Oak Creek with Yakama Nation Habitat Biologist John Marvin. They looked at access to the creek for wood replenishment and areas that were in high need for wood. They also looked at source sites adjacent to the creek. Marvin is currently working on the SEPA, HPA and FPA. The plan is to start wood placement on a small scale this summer following permit approvals.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Natural Resources Tech Kyle treated the shop compound and the Watt compound for weeds, sprayed white-top and other broadleaf weeds in Hell's Kitchen, and checked weed growth at Cayuse spring, Whiskey Dick Bay, and Parke Creek. Kyle spent time with Marc Eylar of the Kittitas Noxious Weed Board to look at weed treatment areas and practice weed identification.

Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area: On Tuesday night around 5:50 p.m. another controlled burn from the south side of the Yakima River jumped the river again onto the wildlife area. This fire consumed another 328 acres making a total of 578 acres of habitat that has been burned in the last 3 weeks from controlled burns that got away. Assistant Manager Sak stayed on the fire until 2:00 a.m. Wednesday morning and then was back at 6:30 a.m. to close up gates and to check for hot spots. By mid-afternoon on Wednesday there was a sizeable flare-up in a cove of trees next to the river bank. The wind shifted and the fire had the potential to jump back across the river into some heavy brush, so the District 5 fire crew came back in and started a back fire to contain the fire and reduce the risk of jumping back across the river. Assistant Manager Sak stayed on the fire until 5:00 p.m. and then was called back in at 8:00 p.m. because another flare up was reported. This one was inside the black and was no threat to get away. Assistant Manager Sak finally left the wildlife area around 9:30 p.m.

View of Wednesday's flare-up on the Sunnyside Headquarters Unit.

Elk on the Bailie Youth Ranch – Photo by Phillip Buser.

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

Private Lands/Access

ADA Access: Private Lands Biologist Stutzman spoke with Jennifer Diaz from the Wildhorse Wind Farm near Vantage about implementing the Hunt by Reservation System as a means to provide access to ADA eligible hunters. Puget Sound Energy (PSE) is interested in using the system and we plan to meet soon to discuss specifics.

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

Wildlife Areas

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Hunt worked with Leah Hendrix from Real Estate on some permitting issues, talked with a representative from the Alpine Lakes Trail Riders Chapter of Back Country Horsemen regarding their May ride, and met with the owner of Mountain High Sports to get a signature and receive the fee for her permit.

Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom coordinated a meeting with Mike Lesky – BOR to discuss DFW management of BOR properties in Benton and Franklin counties, coordinated sample collection of debris at the Sunnyside HQ shop for asbestos testing, visited Sunnyside HQ to survey the latest fire that occurred on Tuesday evening, assisted Biologist

Gregory with inventory transfer of materials to the Windmill Ranch facility, and began framing in a door to the shop.

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

Wildlife Management

Training: Assistant District Biologist Moore spent a day training Central Washington University Graduate Student Lewis Meyers on use of our GPS collar system, mortality investigation and VHF telemetry.

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Education Corp: Manager Huffman, Assistant Manager Berry and Habitat Technician Kass attended the end of the year awards dinner for the Oak Creek Wildlife Education Corp. Huffman thanked the volunteers for their continued support and dedication to the visitor's center and the department, and then presented service award belt buckles to two volunteers for 5 years of service and certificates to two volunteers for 10 years of service volunteering at Oak Creek. Assistant Manager Berry provided the group a summary of winter feeding statistics including, total hay fed and peak elk counts. It was a very nice evening with about 90 in attendance counting both volunteers and their spouses.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Peregrine Falcons: Assistant District Biologist Cyra returned to the Index Town Wall peregrine falcon site to attempt to determine nesting chronology and ledge location for this pair. Index Town Wall is a popular rock climbing destination and working together with Washington State Parks that manages the wall and the local climbing community, temporary volunteer closures of climbing routes are

Index Town Wall: The vertical relief provides for a multitude of nesting locations and challenging climbing routes in a spectacular setting.

established to reduce disturbance to the nesting birds. Activity this year appears to be centered in a less popular climbing area and the previous route closures have been lifted.

North Cascades Elk Work Group Meeting: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn and Conflict Specialist Griffith planned for and implemented the fourth meeting of the work group. The group was formed to provide public input towards finalizing the North Cascades (Nooksack) Elk Herd Plan. Danilson prepared and gave a PowerPoint presentation highlighting accomplishments of four committees (public safety, forage enhancement, damage, and population monitoring) in the last six months. Members of the committees presented their respective objectives for the plan and challenges faced during the process. Danilson and DeBruyn helped prepare them for their presentations. The meeting was chaired by Program Manager Link and highlights included perspectives by Regional Director Everitt and Chairman Yanity of the Stillaguamish Tribe. Next steps include incorporating input into the plan and working with the co-managers towards agreement.

North Cascades Elk Work Group Meeting in Sedro Woolley.

Species of Greatest Conservation Needs (SGSN) surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra began equipment preparations for SGCN surveys in the San Juan archipelago this summer. Surveys for multiple species are planned throughout the season on a number of different islands with several cooperating partner organizations.

Low Elevation Pika Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra obtained credentials for base access for the second year of surveys for pika in low elevation areas in Snohomish County. A meet and greet visit is being arranged with the new Base CIO to discuss access and explain the survey. Surveys this year will likely concentrate on better defining the populations found last year.

Island Marble Planning meeting follow-up: Biologist Milner looked into permit requirements on behalf of San Juan Island National Historic Park and consulted with a spider expert at the Burke Museum regarding potential survey techniques and specimen preparation options for spiders in the park. Milner and the expert also discussed the likelihood that spider predation may be a serious impact to the very-reduced Island Marble butterfly populations.

Caspian Tern Nesting colony Assessment: Biologist Milner conducted a follow up visit to look for Caspian Terns that nested on the empty Kimberly Clark Building last year, but will be

unwelcome guests this year. No terns were back yet, but approximately 40 gulls were at the site, many of them roosting in pairs on the huge gravel pad that has been laid down at the site.

New gravel pad adjacent to the Kimberly Clark building that could turn into a Caspian Tern Colony.

Volunteer coordination: Steven Dazey met with Washington Ornamental Game Bird Breeders to suggest community service project at the Cherry Valley barn to repair pheasant pens. Initiated contact with the Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group. They are currently mostly a volunteer group of master hunters assisting in the North Bend area.

Wildlife Health – multiple songbirds found dead: Biologist Anderson, working with Wildlife Health Staff State Wildlife Veterinarian Mansfield, Wildlife Health Biologist Rowan, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff received results of a strange die-off of songbirds from one spot. The National Wildlife Health Center reported that the multiple American Robins and one Dark-eyed Junco appear to have died off from elevated levels of yard insecticides that are used at times. Products that have organophosphates and carbamate insecticides can have toxic effects on the body. More tests are being run to confirm this potential cause or factor related to death of these individuals.

Regardless, it goes without saying that in keeping wildlife stewardship in mind, annual fertilizers with “weed and feed” type chemicals, many of which include carbamates, may not be the best for our ground foraging bird friends. Learn more about how to create a wildlife friendly yard, reduce yard work, and encourage more wildlife use of your property at our Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/backyard/.

Wildlife Management Consultation/Information/Permitting Requests; Municipal, Private Utilities, other: Biologist Anderson fielded requests and issued alternative management plans, where appropriate. Permits included osprey nest removal of inactive nests, heron management with private entities and public such as the University of Washington, eagle nest activity confirmation, explanation of urban coyote ecology and providing resources to a Green River Community College student working on an urban coyote project, explaining amphibian

management to complaints regarding Pacific tree frog chorusing, bullfrog management and legalities, directing public to our Wildlife Observation website as well as our Aquatic Invasive Species website, among other weekly outreach and direct jurisdictional or informal consultation requests.

King County Elk Damage: Biologist Smith used a trail camera to monitor intermittent elk activity on agricultural properties in the Enumclaw area. Damage has occurred to various crops near Enumclaw and the Green Valley. Smith also attended a public meeting in Enumclaw to discuss Elk damage issues in the Enumclaw-Buckley area. WDFW was also represented at the meeting by Region 6 Wildlife Program Manager Cope, Wildlife Conflicts Section Manager Simek and Region 6 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Novak. The meeting was well attended by the agricultural community and other concerned citizens.

Recent Elk activity in an agricultural field near Enumclaw.

Snoqualmie Valley Elk Damage: Biologist Smith met with a landowner near Fall City to discuss elk damage to agricultural properties and future harvest strategies. Plans for temporary and permanent exclusion fencing were also reviewed.

Washington's East-West Bear Research Project: Biologist Smith hiked in to document a den location used by one of the collared bears. This den was a "bird nest" under a large Hemlock tree, on relatively flat ground surrounded by steep slopes. Various measurements were collected at the den site and surrounding area.

Wildlife Areas

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Planner Brian Williams, and Habitat Engineer Bob Barnard met with the project consultant and an Independent Technical Review (ITR) Team to discuss the review and comments from the ITR Team on several project study and design documents. The ITR Team consists of engineers and scientists that are hired to review project documents to minimize the chance WDFW, the project consultant, and the project steering committee have overlooked any important elements and to recommend improvements

that can be made before finalizing the documents. At this meeting, the group discussed review of the Coastal Engineering Report, Hydrodynamic Modeling Analysis, Geotechnical and Hydrogeological Data Report, and Interior Drainage Report. The ITR Team found no serious issues with the studies and made several recommendations on how to improve the reports.

Snow Geese head into the Fir Island Farm Snow Goose Reserve.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton attended a meeting and site visit with Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), which is the organization that will complete the hydrodynamic modeling analysis for potential design alternatives at Leque Island. PNNL visited the Leque site and the Matterand site across the river owned by the Stillaguamish Tribe to get a better understanding of the current on-the-ground conditions. The model developed by PNNL will predict how forces from tidal currents, waves, and wind will affect the area under different dike configuration scenarios on Leque Island and the adjacent Matterand property.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw circulated a save-the-date announcement to the project Stakeholder Committee for the next committee meeting, which will be on April 30. The Stakeholder Committee consists of recreators, jurisdictions, and adjacent landowners who are interested in the project and will provide feedback to WDFW throughout the design and alternatives analysis process.

Wiley Slough Pump Station: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton attended a Skagit County Hearing Examiner meeting that reviewed the WDFW permit application to install a pump station on Wiley Slough.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with two volunteers to continue spreading mulch on the access roads within the unit. The mulch was donated by Kemp West and a tractor and loader was donated by one of the volunteers for the task. Approximately 130 truckloads of free mulch have been placed on the access roads so far.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Frohning Dairy to discuss planting plans for the Cherry Valley and Stillwater units. Corn and barley will be planted at the two units with one-third of the crop retained for wildlife forage and cover. Last season approximately 30 acres of grain was planted. This season, an additional 20 acres is planned for Cherry Valley and 42 acres at the Stillwater Unit. Additionally, Sound Salmon Solutions continued with restoration planting at the Waterwheel Creek Project. Approximately 1,000 livestakes were planted between the mouth of the creek and the steel bridge.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm completed the livestock exclusion fencing on the middle portion of the unit. Manager Boehm also met with Sno-Valley Farms to discuss the planting plan for the new Ebey Island agricultural lease. Approximately 90 acres will be planted with grain and grass this season.

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

Wildlife Management

Urban Beaver Management – Seattle Parks and Recreation: Biologists Anderson was requested to make a site visit with Seattle Parks and Recreation Conservation staff and park horticulturalists regarding the new (second season) beaver colony at Golden Gardens. This site is well loved by many at a very popular park. Seattle is gathering biological consultation from WDFW and USDA Wildlife Services, both of which are relaying that the beavers are just doing their thing and can be managed in this park situation. Some park users have been taken aback at the loss of trees at the man-made ponds that catch slope runoff. Parks will be working with collaborators, including Anderson, to develop outreach materials outlining the commonality of urban beavers in Seattle, the benefits of managing them rather than direct removal in most cases, and their role as a keystone species that will alter and ultimately diversify habitat at the site and area. The beaver are working on standing alders and willows, many of which are already resprouting. Seattle will be working to provide exclusion where appropriate, take plantings, flexible levelers to manage the colony directly. As the habitat, which is now opened up and receiving more sun, responds to the disturbance with undergrowth, etc. it is hoped that complaints will subside along with outreach to promote understanding.

Beaver bank den.

More information regarding how to manage the ubiquitous beaver in our urban areas, rather than trap, trap, trap, trap, trap…etc., can be found at our Living with Wildlife: Beaver page at http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/beavers.html.

Private Lands/Access

Spring Bear Hunt Coordination Meeting and Opener: Biologists Caldwell, Milner and Danilson, WDFW Enforcement, DNR Forester Hurd and private timber company stakeholders met with North Skagit and Monroe Spring Bear Hunt permit hunters to discuss access rules and regulations on private lands for the 2014 Spring Bear Hunt. Hunters signed access agreements and were provided educational packets to inform them on topics such as: methods of take, hunt area/boundary, pre-molar tooth removal and submission, a guide to identifying bear peals/damage on trees, contact information for area staff, and a map with directions showing hunters how and where to access areas where black bears have historically caused damage on private lands.

Wildlife Areas

Island Unit: Natural Resources Specialist Greg Meis and Natural Resources Tech (NRT) Curran Cosgrove checked water condition and identified an area for corn plantings on the site. NRT Cosgrove disked fields on Friday.

Cosgrove toured the Island with volunteer Reb Broker to outline upcoming volunteer projects, including brush and downed tree clearing and removal of old barbed wire fence.

Manager Rotton prepared for this season's Island Ditch Maintenance Project work by contacting permitting agencies to notify of upcoming work and determine other tasks to complete before receiving the green light for work this season.

Samish River Unit (Welts) Access Facility Funding: Projects Coordinator Brokaw continued work on a grant application to the Recreation and Conservation Office for a project that involves creating a parking area and vehicle turn-around pad to accommodate a portable restroom on the Samish River Unit in the Skagit Wildlife Area. WDFW's Capital Asset Management Program provided drawings and budget information to include in the application.

Agricultural enhancement program: Natural Resources Tech Cosgrove monitored field conditions on the Samish and Island units this week, both areas received heavy rains on Tuesday which could delay field prep and weed control activities.

Nooksack Unit Wood Duck Boxes: Manager Kessler coordinated with a volunteer who takes care of eight wood duck boxes installed on the Nooksack Unit along Silver Creek. He reported two boxes occupied by wood ducks, and one box with a common merganser in it.

Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association (NSEA) Planting Project: Manager Kessler coordinated with managers from NSEA who held several native tree and shrub planting projects

on the British Petroleum Unit. The plantings were performed by students from local schools. Manager Kessler posted signs and monitored recreation on the area of the planting projects.

Rainbow Pond Beaver Deceiver: Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo installed a temporary beaver deceiver pipe onto the water control at Rainbow Pond. This pipe will help drop the water level in the pond to prep the adjacent area for wild rice and millet plantings.

Lake Terrell and Intalco Wild Rice and Millet Plantings: Natural Resource Tech Deyo prepped three areas adjacent to wetland ponds, then planted 25 pounds of wild rice, and 25 pounds of wild millet on the Lake Terrell and Intalco units. These plantings will provide food for many species of waterfowl. The seeds for this project were purchased using Duck Stamp grant funds.

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

Wildlife Management

Skagit County Elk Conflict: Conflict Specialist Griffith met with two property owners this week regarding elk damages. Both are new contacts and Griffith gave them technical guidance on preventative measures to discourage elk from entering their properties.

Specialist Griffith received notice from a local fence vendor that elk exclusion materials have arrived and are ready for delivery. Griffith is working with the property owner to schedule delivery next week.

Whatcom County Deer Conflict: Specialist Griffith met with two berry farmers in the Lynden area experiencing deer browse damage to over 2,000 acres of commercial berries. The main concern of each is springtime damage to smaller hybrid test plots. In both cases, the farmers are taking great measures to prevent damages to include weekly repellent spraying, hazing and herding. Griffith issued kill permits to assist them in their hazing efforts.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Natural Resources Specialist (NRS) Meis and Natural Resources Tech Cosgrove removed footbridge debris that had floated up from an old field crossing from Headquarters. With the assistance of volunteers they were able to remove the debris from the marsh and salvage the large materials from the bridge to create other footbridges for elsewhere on the Wildlife Area.

Natural Resources Specialist Meis developed an updated draft of the Emergency Action Plan for the Skagit Wildlife Area. Manager Rotton completed and submitted updated safety review matrix to Regional Wildlife Program Manager Link and Olympia Safety staff.
Natural Resources Specialist Meis cleaned a 20 gallon spray tank for spraying season. NRS Meis and NRT Cosgrove sprayed weeds with backpack sprayers on the Leque Island, Jensen, and

Headquarters units. Targeted weeds include poison hemlock, Canada and bull thistle, and blackberry.

Leque Island: Manager Rotton attended a meeting with Ducks Unlimited staff and representatives from the Stillaguamish Tribe and Battelle Environmental to discuss the alternatives analysis modeling project. The group identified needed data for the process and visited the Matterand and Leque properties.

Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park: Manager Kessler attended the monthly meeting of the Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm submitted a draft Wildlife Area Management Plan update to program managers and Wildlife Area Advisory Committee for review. The final plan is due April 30. The Wildlife Area Plan was last updated in 2012.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Biologist Caldwell and Technician Otto coordinated efforts to utilize Migratory Bird Enhancement funding in Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish counties.

Volunteer Coordination and Hunter Harvest/Success Monitoring: Biologist Caldwell and Hunter Education & Volunteer Coordinator Steve Dazey coordinated with a volunteer to begin construction of survey boxes for the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program (WQHP). These survey boxes will be implemented at all WQHP sites in 2014. The survey boxes will be equipped with survey cards that collect data on hunter harvest and success. Additional data will be collected on habitat and hunt quality components.

Contract Payment Follow-up for 2013 Waterfowl Quality Hunt Sites: Biologist Caldwell continued performing landowner contacts to confirm Waterfowl Quality Hunt site payments for the 2013 season. Nearly all landowners contacted have received payment. A follow-up will be conducted in one week to clarify payments for all landowners who were not available or who stated that they did not receive payment.

Washington Waterfowl Association Meeting: Biologist Caldwell participated in the quarterly Washington Waterfowl Association meeting in Skagit County to discuss current and upcoming actions by the Private Lands Access Program in the Skagit Area. Topics at this meeting included: Hunter Surveys in 2014 at Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites, utilization of Migratory Bird Enhancement funding to improve habitat quality at hunting sites, WQHP site additions and deletions, rule violation notifications, and the use of the reservation system for hunting waterfowl across Region 4. Overall, this meeting went well and hunters were pleased with WDFW efforts for the upcoming 2014 waterfowl season.

Landowner Meetings: Biologist Caldwell and Technician Otto met with two Skagit County landowners to discuss the use of Migratory Bird Enhancement crops on their lands, hunting access options and farm management plans over a three year timespan. One of these two

meetings resulted in success. It was agreed that WDFW would work with the landowner and his farmer to apply approximately 10 acres of barley on a current Skagit County Waterfowl Quality Hunt site (Riverbend Site) in 2014. For the other landowner, it was decided that particular crop factors needed to be further addressed and that WDFW staff would re-connect with the landowner in the upcoming weeks.

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

Equipment Needs: Biologist Anderson took inventory and organized loon capture equipment. He boxed up and sent the "robo-loon" to the Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) which needs it to trap loons in other western states and elsewhere this 2014 season. Anderson sent a bat detector off for warranty work.

Consultation with U.S. Forest Service: Biologist Danilson responded to an inquiry from the Baker District biologist regarding salmon carcass disposal behind gated wildlife closure areas. Danilson also responded to staff from the Mount Baker Snoqualmie National Forest regarding their intent to potentially expand guiding and outfitting opportunities in the Mount Baker Wilderness Area.

Radio Communications: Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued to be involved with discussions concerning the future of radio communications within the program, as well as providing radio support to program staff.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle Management: Biologists George, Stephens and Holman, Conflict Specialist McDonald, and Scientific Technician Doorly all participated in the initial week of the 2014 study of western pond turtles at the Sondino site. Priorities for this year include continuing to evaluate the shell disease condition among the population, collecting specific individuals for veterinary biopsies related to the shell disease condition, capturing sufficient individuals to generate a population estimate for the Sondino site, collecting young for the head-starting program, and conducting bull-frog control. The capture effort currently involves 28 traps set in three of Sondino's primary water bodies.

Through the initial four days of trap checks, 22 total captures have occurred comprised of 20 individual turtles. Additionally, two hatchling pond turtles were captured by hand. Also, two bull frogs were captured in hoop traps and removed.

Another highlight of the first week of captures was the recapture of a female turtle treated by Veterinarian Dr. Storms of the Oregon Zoo during 2013. The animal was held and Dr. Storms was able to visit Sondino, re-evaluate the individual and generally review WDFW field procedures for dealing with the compromised animals. Thanks to Dr. Storms for his availability to help with the disease situation in the western pond turtles and to the Oregon Zoo in general for their ongoing support of all facets of the project.

Sondino Western Pond Turtle Effort – April 2014.

Oregon Spotted Frog Surveys: District Biologist Anderson and Conflict Specialist McDonald conducted this season's final Oregon spotted frog egg mass survey for the Trout Lake Area. Although the preliminary results for 2014 indicate a slight drop from record 2013 levels, total eggs mass numbers for the overall area are very good.

Oregon spotted frog egg mass survey.

Willapa Hills Elk Herd Surveys: Aerial elk surveys were conducted in sampling units within Game Management Units (GMUs) 506 and 530. These are the first elk surveys conducted in these GMUs since the 1990s and are a result of objectives outlined in the forthcoming Willapa Hills Elk Herd Plan. Approximately 1,300 elk were seen in the sampling units and ratios of 38 calves:100 cows and 17 bulls:100 cows were observed. The raw survey data will be run through a sightability model which uses covariates such as vegetation cover and group size to correct for elk that may not have been observed. The weather was mostly cooperative and excellent flying was done by pilot Jess Hagerman of Northwest Helicopters. With the onset of the warm spring weather several black bears were seen as well.

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Experimental Weed Control: Biologist Merg visited the test plot on the Soda Springs Unit this week with Wildlife Area Manger Van Leuven to evaluate the early spring vegetation there. The original plan was to apply an herbicide to suppress seed production in the target species, medusahead. However, staff found an abundance of desirable native forbs that would have been killed by the proposed treatment,

Vegetation plot

and decided that the benefits would not offset the adverse effects. Instead, staff will wait until fall to do a more target-specific herbicide application when the native plants are dormant and not susceptible to the herbicide.

Lewis and Clark College Volunteer Project: Nine student volunteers from Lewis and Clark College (Portland) came to the Klickitat Wildlife Area to remove derelict fencing around fields on the Soda Springs Unit. The fencing had not been maintained since WDFW purchased the property in 1990, and was in very poor condition. Since the fence is no longer needed and it presented a tripping hazard for people and wildlife, getting the old wire off the property is a significant improvement. In about a half day of work, the volunteers rolled up approximately 3/4 mile of old four-strand fence. The farmer who holds the agricultural lease on the Soda Springs Unit helped out by transporting rolls of wire to the WDFW pickup truck using his ATV and a trailer. Many thanks to this energetic group for helping clean up the Klickitat Wildlife Area!

Lewis and Clark College volunteers

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

Private Lands/Access

Access sites: Nice weather and a Salmon season made for fairly high use on the access sites. Access staff Spangler and Rhodes were kept busy with cleaning, removing graffiti, herbicides application, sign replacement, and trash removal.

High use at Langsdorf Landing.

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

Wildlife Management

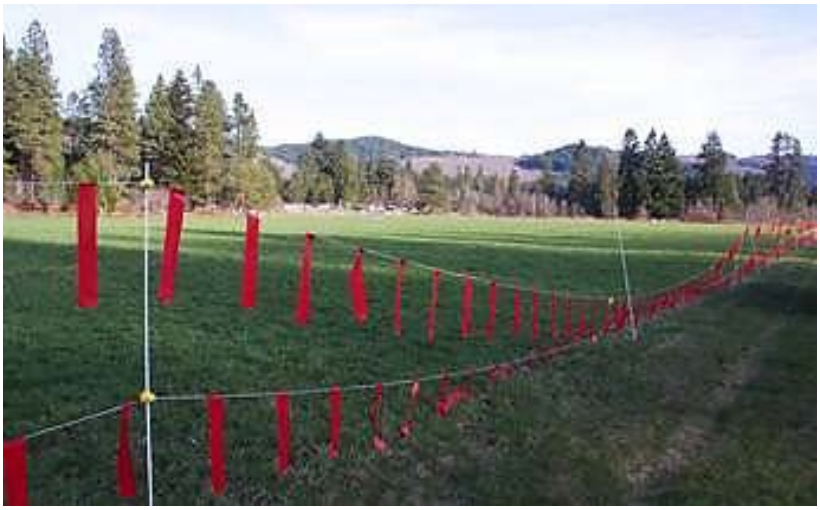
Western Pond Turtle: District Biologist Anderson gave a presentation to the White Salmon Community as part of the April Nature Series at the community library. The presentation was an

overview of WDFW's 25 years of western pond turtle conservation in the Columbia River Gorge.

Wildlife Conflict – Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA): Officer Loc Do and Conflict Specialist Conklin met a Skamokawa land owner experiencing elk damage on hay fields. The land owner explained he has approximately 60 acres of hay that he feeds 30 head of horses and 28 sheep. He commercially sells the sheep and the horses when the market is favorable. He allows public hunting and practices non-lethal herding techniques. He could not give Conklin a true loss value of his hay crop due to elk depredation because the elk are on his hay field all year round. This is a frequent comment Conklin hears from land owners in the Wahkiakum County area.

Conklin explained to the land owner that the WDFW Conflict Program has various tools that can be used to assist him in deterring elk damage. Specifically, utilizing Master Hunter volunteers to assist him with fence repair and also hunt/haze the damage property. Conklin talked about noise devices such as cannons, bird bangers, and hazing with bird shot. The criteria for Land Damage Prevention Permits and Kill Permits were covered and the WDFW Hunter Access programs were explained as well. Officer Loc Do answered questions the land owner had on law enforcement-related issues.

The land owner was very happy with the contact and appeared excited to work with WDFW in the future. They signed a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement and a Pyrotechnic waiver form and Specialist Conklin issued them a bird banger gun and projectiles. They also requested more information on WDFW access programs and are most interested in the Hunt by Reservation access program. Conklin will be working with Biologist Stephens to better determine which access program may be best for the land owner given the lay of their property and to best meet their needs.



Fladry fence repaired.

Deterrents: Conflict Specialist McDonald maintained the turbo-fladry fencing installed around a dairy's hay field last week; wildlife likely knocked down two sections of the fladry. In addition, Specialist McDonald hazed 40 elk off of a Trout Lake dairy's hay fields with cracker shells. The dairy has a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement with WDFW and has tried several preventative measures in an effort to keep elk off of the fields.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Taylor's checkerspot butterfly (TCB) reintroduction: Biologists Linders and Randolph conducted three rounds of post diapause larval surveys at release sites in the Puget lowlands. Based on preliminary analyses of control plots, survival at the WDFW/Thurston County site was 60 percent (n=2) as opposed to 22 percent (n=3) at the Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) site in spite of the latter having better habitat (i.e., more abundant host plants in better condition). This is thought to be due in part (or whole?) to bird predation (see photo). Both the scientific literature and professional opinion have repeatedly indicated that birds don't eat checkerspots because they sequester plant toxins and are spiny. Large flocks of starlings and robins were also observed in the release areas, although photos of robins only showed worms being consumed. Bluebird boxes have been removed and efforts were underway to trap and relocate the bluebirds as part of the translocation to the San Juan Islands. Nearly all larvae had entered diapause by March 27.

Female western bluebird with a Taylor's checkerspot larvae – Photo by Rod Gilbert.

Biologists Walker and Randolph flagged all sites in anticipation of distance sampling surveys for adults, which are scheduled to begin on Sunday. No adult checkerspots have been observed yet, although an abundance of flowers are already present.

Captive propagation of Taylor's checkerspot: The attached photo of a caterpillar shows it webbing up to pupate at the Mission Creek rearing facility. Many larvae have already pupated and the rest are getting ready to do the same, showing reduced activity and hiding under their paper towel mounds.

At the Oregon Zoo, 374 larvae were retained to rear through to adulthood in order to examine the meconia for evidence of pathogens in the colony. Mortality was not particularly high (5%) among these larvae, although there was a fairly high rate of return to diapause (32%). Two hundred and twenty-five individuals pupated and the remaining larvae, 92% of which had entered multiple diapauses, were humanely euthanized on Apr 3, 2014 due to uncertainties about

the health of these stock. Morphometric data is being collected on these animals, although we will need to use caution in interpreting it as the rearing conditions for these bugs was very different than our typical post diapause rearing. Butterflies began enclosing Wednesday (April 2, 2014) and collection of the meconia samples and slide preparation has begun. The zoo hopes to begin reading the slides next week, but is waiting on materials necessary for staining. They are also in the process of developing a list of chemicals the colony may have been exposed to in order to move forward with the toxicology screening. They are also making plans for how best to re-work, clean and disinfect the lab and mezzanine areas once the meconia screening is complete.

Taylor's checkerspot larvae webbing up to pupate at Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women in Belfair, WA, March 2014. Photo by Lindsey Hamilton

Sequim Site – Biologist Ament conducted her second survey of the season at the site on April 7, 2014. There were full sunshine and prominent shadows for the survey. The temperature was 55 degrees. There was a fairly constant breeze from the west with some gusts > 10 mph. Two adult TCBs were observed during the survey. A high volume of larvae were observed along the survey route. Surveys will continue this week. Biologist Ivan Stocker was planning to conduct another survey on April 11, 2014.

West of Port Angeles Site – Biologists McMillan and Ament explored transects routes off the main roads to establish repeatable survey routes for ongoing monitoring. Jenny Balke (Conservation staff for Canada, Denman Island Population) participated and provided some good input relative to how they are surveying the TCB population in Canada.

Western Snowy Plovers: Biologists Sundstrom was scheduled to begin weekly monitoring and surveying for snowy plovers this week. Only one day was dedicated to that effort. Eleven snowy

plovers were observed but only 4 adults were paired (2 pair); the rest were observed grouped together, an indication that nesting is in its infancy.

Community volunteers and State Parks staff after completion of the realigned beach trail at Midway Beach.

Biologist Sundstrom spent the weekend working with Washington State Parks and Recreation personnel and a group of volunteers from the community of Midway Beach to realign the foot trail at

Midway Beach Road to a straight path. Eight community members and two State Parks personnel assisted in the project which was completed on Sunday, April 13. Many thanks to those who volunteered on a beautiful warm and sunny day at the beach!

Western Pond Turtles: District 11 staff concluded their trapping effort of western pond turtles for annual biometrics and attachment of radio transmitters on adult females in order to monitor nesting activity. A total of 141 individual turtles were captured with 408 recapture events. In addition, 10 adult females were released from captivity where they spent the last 7 months being treated for ulcerative shell disease. An investigative research project occurred simultaneously during the first week of captures wherein biologists and veterinarians collected shell biopsies and blood samples on 12 turtles. Those 12 turtles are recovering at PAWS Wildlife Center in Lynnwood and will be returned to the wild once the biopsy sites heal.

Western Pond Turtle Nest Monitoring: Three pond turtle nests that were left to hatch naturally at the Pierce County recovery site (all others having been excavated and eggs taken to Woodland Park Zoo last fall), continue to remain unhatched. No signs of hatchling emergence are visible at the nests. Biologist Tirhi will continue to monitor for hatchling emergence; nests will be excavated in May to determine contents.

Western Pond Turtle Disease Monitoring: Biologist Tirhi conducted the monthly water quality testing at the Pierce County recovery site as part of general pond management and specifically Shell Disease monitoring.

Rehabbed turtles released in the Puget Sound area.

Wildlife Areas

Willapa Hills Elk Surveys: Biologist Hoenes spent most of the week participating in aerial surveys of the Willapa Hills Elk Herd. Region 5 Biologists Bergh, Miller and Holman, Region 6 Biologist Harris, and Deer and Elk Specialist McCorquodale were also observers during these surveys. Surveys were completed by flying all open habitats within sampling units that were located in GMUs 506 (Willapa Hills) and 530 (Ryderwood). Aerial surveys had not been completed in these GMUs since the late 1990s, so every sampling unit within each GMU was sampled so biologists could better predict the density of elk within each sampling unit when they incorporate a stratified random sample design in the future. In addition, raw counts will be corrected for sightability bias using a sightability model that was recently developed in the Mount St. Helens Elk Herd Area. Corrected estimates are still pending, but 3.5 days of flying resulted in biologists observing approximately 1,300 elk. Resulting calf-to-cow and bull-to-cow ratios were 38:100 and 17:100, respectively, and 12% of the bulls observed were classified as adults.

Two groups of elk observed during Willapa Hills Elk Herd surveys.

Left: ***Do you see the elk?*** **Right:** ***Black bear observed during survey.***

Season Preparation: During the past week summer work got started on the elk forage areas in the Wynoochee. Unit 2, the area to be reseeded this fall, was cleared of down limbs and other

material. Assistant Manager Gallegos and Denny VanBlaricom took advantage of the sunny weather and sprayed the area with herbicide to kill weeds and existing vegetation. The area will be cultivated throughout the summer and seeded this fall.

Manager Gerchak and Robert VanBlaricom assisted prairie specialist at Scatter Creek, spraying herbicide to control tall oat grass in select areas.

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

Wildlife Management

Prairie Mitigation Reserves: Biologist Tirhi reviewed and provided comments on the USFWS draft criteria proposed to determine sites worthy of inclusion as prairie mitigation reserves. Tirhi suggested a series of criteria a site could meet as well as a minimum number of criteria required. Comments were sent to USFWS for consideration, as requested.

Prairie Design: Biologist Tirhi represented District 11 at the WDFW/USFWS prairie design working meeting. The meeting was intended to allow both agencies to discuss prairie and species management in light of recent federal listing of streaked horned lark, Taylor checkerspot butterflies, and Mazama pocket gophers (as well as other federal candidate species). Considering both agencies now manage/regulate these state and federally listed species, it is necessary to have the agencies "get on the same page." Although some local level of project coordination has occurred, this working meeting provided an avenue for more collaborative work and understanding of each agency's role.

Streaked Horned Lark Surveys and Management: At the request of Federal Avian Administration (FAA) and USFWS, Biologist Tirhi is assisting WDFW Region4, Seatac International Airport, Tacoma Narrows, and Thun Field verify the presence/absence of federal and state listed streaked horned larks. Tirhi and staff conduct lark surveys each year at all lark occupied airfields/federal lands in the South Puget Sound. Now that larks are federally listed, FAA sought USFWS consultation on larks as regards to airport operations. In order to rule out larks as breeding on the airfields, surveys were required. Each of the three airfields is not expected to support breeding larks, which surveys are intended to confirm.

Problem Bears: Biologists Hoenes and Harris assisted Enforcement with the relocation of two 1.5 year old bears from a residence in Illwaco where a local resident has been intentionally

feeding bears. The two yearlings were caught using a baited culvert-trap. Unfortunately, the sow did not go inside the culvert-trap with them and was very defensive when officers arrived. Although the ideal situation would have been to relocate the entire family group, the sow would not go into the other trap. Although the two yearlings would have spent an additional few months with the sow before they dispersed, they are not dependent on her for their survival. Thus, the decision was made to go ahead and relocate the two yearlings rather than release them. This situation is unfortunate because in these types of scenarios the bears are not at fault, but rather it's the person feeding them. This story should also serve as another example of why it's never a good idea to feed bears because in the end, you are not doing them any favors and the bear will always come out on the losing end.

Yearling bears inside the culvert trap at the trap site with the aggressive sow guarding the trap and the two yearlings after they were anesthetized.