

Wildlife Program

Week of February 3-9, 2014

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Washington Connected Landscapes Project Workshops: The Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group sponsored two workshops during last week's The Wildlife Society and the Society for Northwest Vertebrate Annual Conference: (1) Implementing Wildlife Habitat Connectivity in Washington State, organized/moderated by J. Schuett-Hames (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife). J. Lowe (Bureau of Land Management) presented "Integrating connectivity into eastern Washington BLM Resource Management Plans"; M. Schroeder (WDFW, co-authors Leslie Robb – independent, and A. Shirk – University of Washington) presented "Case studies of the Greater Sage-Grouse, and Sharp-tailed Grouse in Washington State"; and J. Watkins (Conservation Northwest) presented "Connectivity implementation in the private realm". K. Halupka (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) led an audience discussion regarding connectivity implementation. (2) Habitat Connectivity Model Evaluation, was organized/moderated by B. Gaines (Washington Conservation Science Institute). A. Shirk (University of Washington) presented "Overview of methods used to evaluate habitat connectivity models – Sage-Grouse example", followed by presentations regarding evaluation of connectivity models as follows - R. Long (Woodland Park Zoo) Black Bear"; H. Ferguson (WDFW) White- and Black-tailed Jackrabbits, and S. Spear (Orianna Society) Western Rattlesnake. P. Singleton (U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest) presented "Lessons learned to carry forward".

Western Gray Squirrel Action Plan: Biologist Wiles worked on a first draft of the 2-year action plan for this species after obtaining input on planned activities from Research Scientist Vander Haegen, Biologists Anderson and Bell (Habitat), and Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven. The next step in the process will be to engage additional regional biologists for additional insight and plan completion.

Bat Survey Grant Proposal: Biologist Wiles sat in on a conference call discussing western state participation in a Competitive State Wildlife Grant for conducting bat surveys under the North American Bat (NABat) Initiative. Follow-up discussions were then held among Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff and Biologist Greg Falxa about potential activities that could be performed with funding from the grant.

Caspian Tern: Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan reviewed a draft Environmental Assessment on proposed nesting habitat reduction at the East Sand Island Caspian Tern colony in the Columbia River estuary. The proposed action would reduce the colony from 1.58 acres to 1.08 acres in an attempt to achieve a reduced breeding population that was agreed upon in a settlement agreement. The draft Environmental Assessment for the proposed activity is available

for public review and comment on the Corps' Website at <http://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/Media/Announcements.aspx>.

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

Division Staff Recognition: Diversity Division Biologists David Hayes and Ann Potter along with Karen Holtrop of Olympic National Forest were recognized with a Foresight Award by the Washington Chapter of The Wildlife Society at its annual Awards Recognition Banquet. The Foresight Award recognized work by these biologists to identify three new areas of habitat occupation by the Taylors checkerspot butterfly on the Olympic Peninsula including the highest elevation locations known for the species. These biologists also have promoted active management to benefit this at-risk butterfly well in advance of federal listing of the subspecies. At the same meeting, the Washington Chapter of The Wildlife Society recognized past Section Managers in the Wildlife Diversity Division with prestigious awards. Elizabeth Rodrick (retired) was given a Special Achievement Award for her career-long work garnering substantial funding and promoting collaborative approaches to fish and wildlife habitat conservation statewide. Harriet Allen (retired) was given the Leadership in Conservation Award for career-long dedication to developing the framework and substantial status and recovery documentation for state-listed species in Washington.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Northeast Washington Moose Survey: District Wildlife Biologist (DWB) Dana Base along with Project Wildlife Biologist Sara Hansen and District 2 Assistant Wildlife Biologist Mike Atamian resumed helicopter surveys for moose along pre-determined line transects within District 1. A follow up survey of bighorn sheep at Hall Mountain and surrounding environs was also accomplished. A new winter range area was identified and a minimum of 21 bighorn sheep were identified including 11 rams, 7 ewes and 3 lambs.

Cow and yearling calf moose observed by helicopter on line transect survey.





Three bighorn rams spotted at Hall Mountain.

Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep Coordination: District 3 Wildlife Biologist Paul Wik travelled to Boise on Monday to attend the semi-annual Hells Canyon Bighorn Sheep Restoration meeting. The discussion focused on the direction of the research occurring this winter in the Black Butte, Asotin, and Lostine sheep herds. Field and Research staff is attempting to identify the individual animals that are chronically shedding the *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* bacteria, the likely animals that are continuing the disease cycle in these herds.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wolf Conservation and Management

Lookout Pack: The planned effort to aerial dart members of the Lookout Wolf Pack was cancelled due to the inaccessible location of the pack and deteriorating weather. Another potential attempt is scheduled for the end of the month.

Wildlife Management

Swakane Bighorn Sheep: District 7 conducted an aerial capture of bighorn sheep in the Manson Herd along the north shore of Lake Chelan. Net gunning was done by Leading Edge Aviation. Fourteen sheep were captured and outfitted with GPS collars. Sheep captured were dispersed along the known range of sheep on the lake and will allow us to better understand seasonal movement. The other benefit will be the ability to find sheep during aerial surveys and to develop assessments of lamb production and survivorship. Thanks go out to all the volunteers that assisted with the effort.

A 6-year old bighorn ram being transported to the processing site following capture.

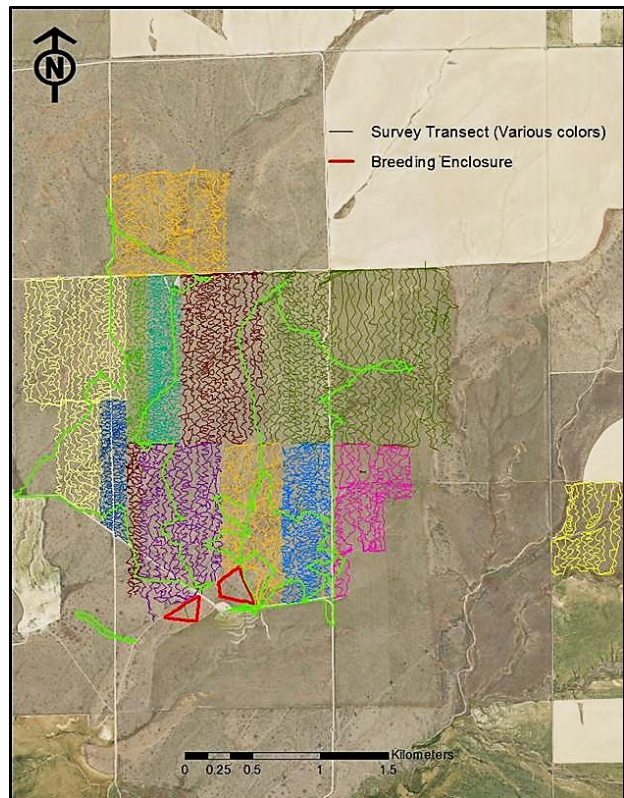




Sinlahekin Bighorn Sheep Management: Since 2012 the Sinlahekin California bighorn sheep herd has declined significantly. However, the reasons for the decline are still undetermined. Biologists Heinlen and Fitkin led a successful effort to capture, radio-collar, and disease test several members of this herd. We captured and collected samples from 11 bighorns, and fitted 8 of the 11 with satellite/VHF collars. Psoroptes mites, first found in the Sinlahekin sheep in 2011, were evident in eight of the sheep and found to be distributed throughout the herd. Animal condition varied considerably ranging from poor, to excellent and full of energy. The helicopter capture crew observed a total of 39 bighorn sheep which is comparable to the 38 observed during WDFW surveys in December 2013. Biological samples will be screened for diseases and parasites, and collared sheep will be monitored to catch any unusual movements and determine mortality causes. The assistance of District 6 staff, Olympia staff, Wild Sheep Society volunteers, and other volunteers made this capture successful, and we thank you.

Capture helicopter with study subject inbound. Photo by J. Heinlen

Pygmy Rabbit Surveys: The snow has persisted and accumulated on Sagebrush Flats (SBF), making for ideal survey conditions. We have been able to complete the target areas and expand survey efforts to the north and east (see map). The area to the east was involved in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) mid-contract management practices this fall and therefore in accordance with the Safe Harbor Agreement needed to be surveyed. That survey produced a hit for a pygmy rabbit (PYRA), but unfortunately there was no sign of rabbit activity this winter. There was a great deal of habitat manipulation in the area this fall which may have had an effect on PYRA presence. In addition to our regular survey team (Technician Duvuvuei and Biologist Gallie), we were grateful to have help on the project from PhD student Steph Demay and Private Lands Biologist Comstock.



Wildlife Areas

North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team: Revisions to the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Cecile 2 and Spike 2 and 4 prescribed fire burn plans were submitted for final editing. These burn plans should be close to receiving signature approval by Swedberg, Okanogan Lands Operations and Prescribed Burn Program Manager. Fuels Manager Leuschen, and Dry Forests Restoration Specialist Guse attended the Okanogan Lands Senior Staff Meeting. Leuschen, Guse and Swedberg met to discuss the prescribed burn program and plan for the future. Now that there's a little snow on the ground, slash piles in the Mill 2 Burn Unit on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area are being burned by Guse under Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Rules Burning category. Burning one pile at a time when Guse drives into work and allowing it to burn down before another is lit the next day allows this burning to be completed without a permit. All piles will be burned before an under burn in the unit is conducted this spring. The team worked on a 2013 fire management report documenting accomplishments over the past year. A request to have the Redmond Interagency Hotshot Crew to come to our spring burns for training and to bolster our resources was created and will be submitted.

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

Private Lands/Access

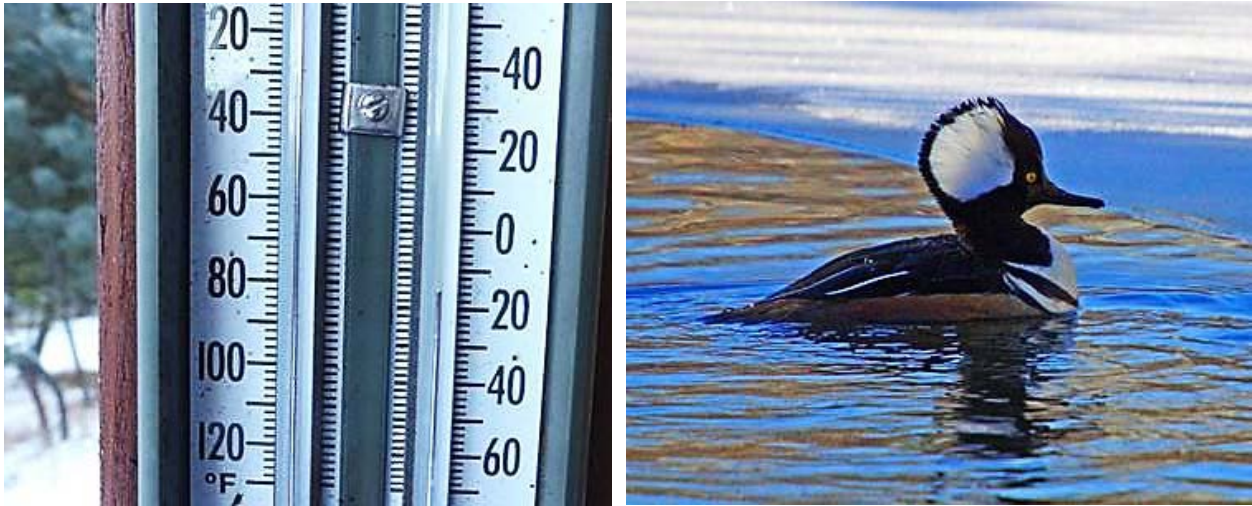
Cropland Hunter Access Initiative (CHAI): Biologist Dougherty prepared a summary of the 2013-14 Columbia Basin Cropland Hunter Access Initiative hunting program. Based on hunter reporting, overall the changes were a great success and very well received by the hunters using the sites. Hunters' average rating of the program at the sites was four out of five. Additionally, based on hunter reporting there were factors identified that will need to be changed for the next hunting season in order to improve the program. Since the funding for the 2014-15 hunting season has not been identified, Biologist Dougherty submitted a Duck Stamp Proposal in the hopes that the program can be expanded.

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

Wildlife Areas

Okanogan Lands Operations Senior Staff Meeting: Okanogan Lands Ops senior staff met and discussed issues covering safety, mandatory training, understanding Fast Track reports and managing budgets, review of a few policies, followed by discussions on planning, prioritization, communications, cooperation, and coordination of Okanogan Lands Operations staff. Lands Ops Manager Swedberg thinks it was well received, but only two individuals indicated such. Lands Operations staff will continue coordination meetings in conjunction with District Team Meetings and Regional Meetings and will supplement with additional meetings as necessary if needed.

Weather: Coldest weather of the season settled into the district this past week. For perhaps the first time all winter, precipitation is expected every day for the coming week.



Left: Welcome to a Winthrop winter – Photo by Scott Fitkin. Right: Hooded Merganser spotted on Sinlahekin Creek, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area – Photo by Justin Haug.

REGION 3

None.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Elk Clover Trapping:

Biologist DeBruyn worked with a cooperative of members from the Point Elliot Tribes to establish and operate large live traps to collar elk. The effort is part of ongoing work to monitor population levels of the North Cascades (Nooksack) elk herd. Three traps that were operational captured four elk, two bulls and two cows.

Bull Elk near trap prior to being captured and fit with a radio collar.





Biologist DeBruyn and tribal biologists lower trap onto cow elk in preparation for installing a radio collar.

Winter Marine Waterfowl Surveys:

Assistant District Biologist Cyra, Waterfowl Survey & Sea Duck Specialist Evenson and Assistant District Biologist Murphie completed the winter sea duck and marine bird aerial surveys. This is the 22nd winter that these surveys have been conducted and is the longest data set documenting trends of winter marine bird distribution and population indices in the Puget Sound. In addition, these surveys are used to document population index levels of sea ducks that will be used to determine next year's harvest limits. A total of 19 days of surveys were flown covering nearly 6,800 kilometers. Transcriptions of survey data were completed and submitted for quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC), and amounted to over 16,000 observations. We were fortunate again to retain the services of Kenmore Air and their Chief Pilot for these technically challenging surveys and they are a large part of the success of this project. Information on these surveys along with past data can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/psamp/>.



Rock Climbing Season: Assistant District Biologist Cyra surveyed the Index Town Wall for peregrine falcon activity in anticipation of the upcoming rock climbing season. Voluntary route closures are established by Washington State Parks and the climbing community around nesting areas to protect from disturbance and abandonment.



Swan Mortality and Morbidity Study: Biologist Anderson recorded 15 trumpeter swan mortalities in Island, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties. These trumpeter swan mortalities consisted of 13 carcasses and 2 feather piles. This week freezing temperatures and high winds were observed to shift swan habitat use patterns resulting in more swans in Skagit County and mortalities diminishing in central Whatcom County. Biologist Anderson is continuing to coordinate with Environment Canada personnel regarding swans on Judson Lake.

Wildlife Areas

Samish Unit: Skagit Wildlife Area staff took advantage of frozen ground to roll down standing corn at the Samish Unit to increase availability for waterfowl. A majority of the corn had been fed on during the waterfowl season.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw reviewed adaptive management and monitoring plans of other estuary restoration projects in the area, and began compiling a list of methods to use for post-project monitoring associated with the Fir Island Farm project.

Tennant Lake Water Level: Manager Kessler monitored the water levels at Tennant Lake. He met onsite with the Whatcom County Parks managers and our Habitat biologist to discuss

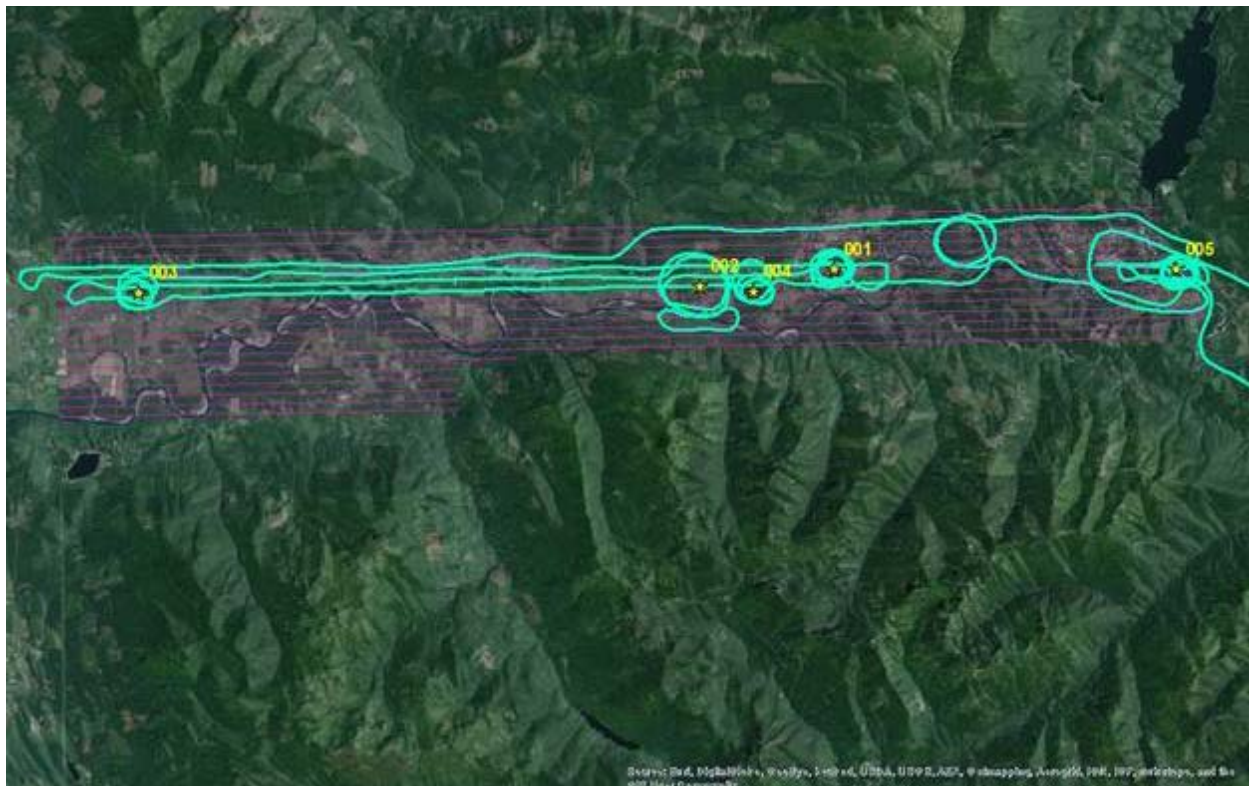
replacing a plugged up culvert in the watercourse leading to Tennant Lake. The blocked up culvert is causing water to flow across an access road causing damage to the surface.

Intalco Unit Archery Course: Manager Kessler coordinated with the Custer Sportsmen’s Club rep on the Intalco Unit archery range. The range will reopen for use at the end of March. The club plans on installing more ADA improvements to the course before it opens. Manager Kessler worked to make news signs for the start of the course for increased safety.

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

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Elk Survey: Biologist Danilson conducted a brief test survey flight for elk using forward looking infrared (FLIR) video technology from a fixed-wing aircraft. This was the initial trial run for using this aircraft and technology for elk survey, following weeks of planning. The FLIR equipment and aircraft were furnished by Washington State Patrol (WSP), a sister agency that has been working closely with WDFW on elk-vehicle collisions on State Route 20 and is participating in the North Cascades Elk Management Work Group. The objectives of the flight were to test proposed flight protocols, evaluate how well the technology discriminates between various mammals, and determine whether imagery could be used for determining group size and composition. Five different elk groups were detected (both in open fields and various cover types). The video footage will be analyzed in greater detail to determine how well the FLIR performed in getting accurate group size and composition counts.



Map displaying flight transects, track log, and elk group locations for elk test flight in Skagit Valley.

Wildlife Areas

Samish River Unit (Welts) Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw completed a wetland rating form to determine the wetland category that is currently on the project site, and submitted the draft with Washington Department of Ecology for review. The wetland category influences the amount of mitigation that will be required to compensate for the impact of constructing a parking area on a portion of the site.

Skagit Delta Waterfowl Replacement Lands Proposal: Regional cross-program staff met to discuss the progress made on this proposal and next steps to move forward. WDFW staff is investigating the benefits and drawbacks to different tools that can be used to provide waterfowl forage and recreational hunting access in the Skagit delta, including acquisition, leases, permanent access easements, and management changes on existing WDFW lands.

Region 4 Lands 20/20 Projects: Projects Coordinator Brokaw responded to comments and questions received on the “Skagit Recreational Hunting Replacement Lands for Estuary Restoration” proposal through the Lands 20/20 process. Information on both Region 4 proposals, including the proposal referenced above and the “Ebey Island Access” proposal is available online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/acquisitions/>.

Lake Terrell: Due to frigid weather, Lake Terrell is almost completely frozen over. Small areas of the lake are being kept open by the waterfowl using them. Manager Kessler has had to warn several people that walking out onto the lake is not a good idea. That includes a couple individuals attempting to ice fish the middle of the lake, in the dark, late at night.



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 and King County Elk Conflict: Conflict Specialist Griffith spent time this week self-learning the CAPS program and successfully entered most of his active Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements (DPCA) into the system.

Griffith met with two landowners in the Pinelli Rd. area this week regarding elk damages to their property. Damage permits were issued to the landowner and arrangements were made for tribal participation in lethal elk removal on the two properties.

Griffith worked with a local vendor to setup proper accounts for the purchasing of elk exclusionary fencing materials. Material orders will be placed by the beginning of next week.

Conflict Technician Pinjuv retrieved a remote camera located near a scare device deployed last week on private lands. Pinjuv moved the scare device and camera to a new location on the property.

Pinjuv worked with landowners on two fencing projects putting together a timeline for fencing material delivery, construction, and volunteer needs.

Pinjuv assisted Griffith in surveying elk in the Skagit Valley from the ground during an experimental aerial survey using FLIR technology conducted by District Wildlife Biologist Danilson in partnership with Washington State Patrol.

Biologist Smith responded to complaints of elk damaging fences in the Green Valley area. A Master Hunter with the hunt #2710 damage permit was dispatched.

Edison Bird Festival: Biologist DeBruyn gave a talk on Monitoring North Puget Sound Waterfowl Populations at the annual Edison Bird Festival.

Wildlife Areas

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with the grazing lessee to develop the grazing plan for the 2014 season. Manager Boehm is pleased to announce that agreement has been reached on the requested revisions to the agricultural lease. These include continued access locations for 2014, no grazing on East Lobe WDFW land, and improved fencing and watering infrastructure. The lessee also agreed to provide watering and fencing assistance and maintenance in place of growing barley for wildlife and grazing credits.

Manager Boehm also continued discussions with a local farmer who wants to grow crops on the East Lobe portion of the unit. This will provide increased productivity on the agricultural land and provide forage and cover crops for wildlife.

Island Unit: Natural Resource Specialist (NRS) Greg Meis and Natural Resource Tech (NRT) Curran Cosgrove checked the hinges on the south tide gate on the Island Unit prior to the site visit of the engineer, construction and permitting staff from the Capital and Asset Management

Program (CAMP) from Olympia. The gate and hinges appeared to be functional but some water movement is still occurring with each tide. Meis and Cosgrove attempted to remove stop-logs from the Albert's Place tidegate on the Island Unit, but was unable to due to water levels. Waterfowl use is high in the various fields on the Island.

Engineer Ray Berg, Construction Supervisor Ralph Tosland, and Permit Biologist Chris Gourley examined the structure, took measurements of the site, and discussed potential repair and replacement scenarios with Manager Rotton and NRS Meis. Engineer Berg suggested scheduling the dive crew to examine the structure and pipe from the water to get a better determination of the problem. Berg will provide a summary of the discussion and possible alternatives for consideration with cost estimates.

DeBay's Slough: Skagit Wildlife Area staff with the assistance of Access Area Manager Derek Hacker loaded and transported three man rock from Fir Island Farms site to DeBay's Slough Reserve turn around to secure the site from unauthorized vehicle entry into the fields for dumping trash and off-roading in the agricultural fields.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site Breakdown: Technicians Deyo and Otto performed quality hunt site breakdowns in Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom counties. All trash, parking lots, signs, and blinds are being removed. All units were photographed and organized following the unit breakdown protocol. Site breakdowns were completed at all Thomle and Miller units (seven total), Francis West, Kelleher North, Bayview/Edison, and Downy #3. Signs and blinds were removed at Clearbrook, Old Guide #2 and 3, Rayhorst, Norman (unable to complete garbage clean-up due to frozen temps), Chillberg (unable to remove layout blinds due to frozen ground) and Fisher Slough sites. Technicians disassembled unit signage in preparation for storage at the La Conner warehouse and delivered all blinds to Lake Terrell for drying and storage.

Private Lands Access Program Site Enrollment Evaluations: Technician Otto evaluated habitat attributes among properties at Loomis Trail/Stein road and Kickerville/Tarte roads in Whatcom County to assess potential enrollment in the Private Lands Access Program for 2014.

Invoice Payment Vouchers for Private Landowners: Biologist Caldwell finished coordinating and delivering all A-19 payment forms to private landowners enrolled in the Snow Goose and Waterfowl Quality Hunt Programs in Skagit, Whatcom and Snohomish counties. Follow ups will be conducted regarding future enrollment during 2014.

Acme Elk Conflict Stakeholders Meeting: Biologist Caldwell and Wildlife Conflict staff met with stakeholders in the Acme area regarding elk conflict and the potential for utilizing the Private Lands Access Program to help reduce elk related conflict on their lands. Program options were introduced and contact information was exchanged to facilitate future communications. Stakeholders expressed interest in the management opportunities presented. All stakeholders said they would consider the options presented and that they would contact WDFW to facilitate future meetings regarding the issue.

Private Lands Access Program Site Enrollment Candidate Follow-Ups: Biologist Caldwell met with a new candidate landowner to discuss enrollment options in the Private Lands Access Program for Skagit County. In this case, the landowner has expressed interest in the management capabilities of the Hunt by Reservation option. The landowner's land consists of 25 acres of high quality habitat. This site is being considered due to, but not limited to, the following site attributes: corn harvest height (36+ inches) is optimal for enhanced forage and attractant opportunities for waterfowl species throughout the waterfowl hunt season), water coverage and ability to hold water throughout the hunting season, ease of access, and high frequency waterfowl use throughout the year. The landowner has indicated that he will contact WDFW when he has reached a decision about enrollment in the 2014 season.

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

Lands Budget Training: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm participated in the Region 4 Lands Budget training opportunity. The training provided guidance and understanding of the biennium, annual and monthly budget reports that are released. This will enable managers to track funding sources more closely and to make sound spending decisions.

Staff Support: Staff prepared for renewal of Pesticide License and signed up for continuing education credits.

International Swan Symposium: Biologist Smith attended the 5th International Swan Symposium (a joint conference of The Trumpeter Swan Society and the Wetlands International/International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Swan Specialists Group) held February 3-6 in Easton, Maryland. The Conference included swan experts from around the world who presented papers discussing the latest in swan research, conservation, management and protection. Smith represented cooperators in presenting results of efforts to reduce swan lead poisoning in Western Washington State and the Sumas Prairie of British Columbia. Cooperators include WDFW, Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service, USFWS, the Trumpeter Swan Society, Washington



Tundra Swans foraging in an agricultural field on the Eastern Shore of Chesapeake Bay, Maryland during the 5th International Swan Symposium.

Waterfowl Association, the Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Washington and various other organizations. Cooperators have established a swan exclusion zone at Judson Lake on the Washington-British Columbia border. Judson Lake is a shallow water lake and is a historic waterfowl hunting area. Relict lead shot in the lake is believed to be one of the major sources of lead poisoning of the overwintering population of swans in this area. Since the exclusion zone was introduced in 2006-07, swan lead poisoning has been reduced by approximately 70% in the area (Sumas Prairie of B.C.; Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish counties of Washington State) compared to the previous 5-year average.

Radio Training: Assistant District Biologist Cyra assisted staff with obtaining radio training, answering questions, and assigning radio call numbers.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Columbian White-Tailed Deer Translocation: Biologist Miller and Natural Resource Technician Sample assisted USFWS with the first day of trapping Columbian White-Tailed deer from Puget Island to the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Three deer were captured under a drop net; the mature male was released on site. Deer were tranquilized, ear tagged and placed into crates for transport to Ridgefield NWR. A review of capture processes from last year yielded some changes in methodology that seemed to improve the process and yielded a safer environment for both the deer and the staff. Deer were transported to Ridgefield NWR and released into BOMAs to acclimate to new the environment. Trapping will continue into March to help build the population on the Ridgefield NWR to suitable levels to be considered as a viable sub-population.



Three deer were captured (left) under a drop net for the 2014 Columbian White-Tailed Deer capture and translocation.

Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area Elk Survey: District Biologist Miller conducted the third monthly winter elk survey on the valley floor of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area. The survey is conducted early every month, December through April, to assess the number of elk using the Wildlife Area, survey for elk carcasses, and evaluate winter conditions. A total of 43 elk were observed on the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area, mainly in the riparian strips in the trees and some were observed moving into the forested habitats as the count began. No mortalities were observed on valley floor and elk appeared in good condition from a distance. Weather conditions were very harsh, cold, and windy.

Western Pond Turtle Management: Regional Wildlife Program Manager Jonker and Biologists Anderson and Holman met with Endangered Species Section Manager Becker, Species Lead Hallock, and Region 6 staff to coordinate annual activities associated with western pond turtles. The gathering allowed Regional staff and Wildlife Diversity Division to identify key work activities for 2014 including ongoing work on the shell disease issue, population monitoring, Head-starting, habitat maintenance, environmental education, etc. Field related activities for western pond turtles will start towards the end of March in Region 5.

Wildlife Areas

Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area -- Hall Road Wildlife Area Tree Plantings: Technician Sample replaced plastic tree tubes with wire cages on 30 young trees that were planted on the Hall Road Wildlife Unit last spring. The tree tubes help protect the trees from deer, elk, and rodent browse damage as well as help to retain moisture. The wire cages that replaced the tree tubes provide the same protection against deer/elk browse, but also provide a larger growing space.



Hall Road Wildlife Unit Planting

Klickitat Wildlife Area -- Grazing Permit: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven met with Rangeland Specialist Burnham to look at two parcels that are being considered for addition to an existing grazing permit on the Fisher Hill Unit. Although there was a little snow, we were able to get a fair sense of the condition of the resources there. The best water source on the property is



the creek in Mud Spring Canyon. The streambed was almost completely dry. Van Leuven and Burnham made a short excursion onto other state land nearby that is currently under lease and then met with the current permittees to discuss the history of the property. They were able to provide important details which will help Van Leuven and Burnham develop a management strategy for the property.

Mudspring Canyon, Fisher Hill Unit, Klickitat Wildlife Area

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

Wildlife Management

Klickitat Youth Hunts: Biologist Anderson talked with two different hunting parties interested in the late season youth hunts for Game Management Unit (GMU) 382. This late season has been popular with youth hunters and was designed to provide private landowners some relief from deer depredation. We would like to thank Officer Bolton and Conflict Specialist McDonald with their assistance in putting youth hunters in contact with private landowners willing to allow access.

2014 Big-Game Hunting Season Review: Biologist Holman reviewed the Washington Administrative Codes (WACs) related to implementing the 2014 big-game hunting seasons. Two needed edits were found and passed along to Deer and Elk Section Manager Nelson. Those interested in the [2014 Big-Game Pamphlet](#) should check the WDFW website in April.

Regional Waterfowl Hunting Closures Review: Biologists Anderson and Holman reviewed maps and historical information regarding two Columbia River waterfowl hunting closure areas in Region 5. Both locations are long-standing closures (already found in the [Migratory Bird and Small Game Hunting Pamphlet](#)). Regional biologists have recommended retaining both closures as they protect populations of wintering waterfowl, clarify hunting regulations, and have little impact on hunting opportunity.

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

Wildlife Management

Pacific Northwest Sportsman's Show: Biologists Miller, Bergh, Holman, St. Helens Wildlife/Shillapoo Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald, and Natural Resource Technician Sample helped staff the Northwest Sportsman's Show in Portland, Oregon. The show was well attended and many members of the public took the opportunity to stop by the WDFW booth and discuss various topics. Of particular interest were hoof-disease in Southwest Washington elk, management of the St. Helens elk population, upcoming spring-Chinook salmon seasons, upcoming razor clam digging opportunities, and regulations and fees surrounding out-of-state hunting and fishing in Washington.

District 10 and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: December and January temperatures and precipitation were below normal, with little snowfall below 2,000 feet, and the Cascade snowpack being below average. February has started off cold with snow accumulating to the valley floor. The lower elevations in the region received 5-10 inches of snow February 6-9, with light freezing rain.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will be around 4,000 feet for the upcoming week, with heavy snow in the upper elevations. The 6-10 day forecast is for above normal temperatures and precipitation, and the 8-14 day forecast predicts below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The February forecast is for below normal temperatures and an equal chance for either above average, below average, or normal precipitation. The three month forecast predicts an equal chance for above average, below average, or normal temperatures and precipitation.

Habitat: Forage is available in areas with lower snow depths.

Snow Depths: All areas currently have snow cover, with heavy snow expected the rest of the week in the higher elevations. Snowpack is below normal, but is expected to increase in the coming week resulting in close to average depths.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The third monthly winter elk survey was conducted on February 5. Only 43 elk were observed due to the cold and windy conditions on the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area.

Animal Condition: No reports of animals in poor condition that can be attributed to winter conditions. Animals observed to date appear to be in good to fair condition.

Mortality: None reported.

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.

The Public is reminded the portion of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle, and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30, 2014, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: This week winter conditions returned to southern Washington with colder weather and snow at all elevations. Snowpack improved in the South Cascades but it is still below normal. Areas in eastern Klickitat County received precipitation and snow this week although abnormally dry conditions continue.

Winter Severity: By the end of this week all elevations had some snowpack. Snow depth remains low and there are no concerns for the current severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County. Those portions of Klickitat County east of Rock Creek have little snow accumulation and deer are reported in good condition. Additional snowfall is projected for the next few days so winter severity could continue to increase.

Habitat: Habitat is generally open and continues to be available throughout District 9.

Animal Concentrations: Deer are bunched in normal concentrations in good habitat at mid and lower elevations east of Highway 97.

Animal Condition: Deer and elk appear to be in good condition and no winter stress/mortality has been reported.

Mortality: None reported this week.

Public Contacts: No concerns raised by the public this week.

MOUNT SAINT HELENS ELK HERD
 2013/2014 WINTER CONDITIONS - SNO-PARK SNOW DEPTH,
 NRCS SNOTEL DATA, AND SNOWPACK

From web page <http://www.fs.usda.gov/activity/giffordpinchot/recreation/wintersports/?recid=31178&actid=91>
http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/sno_narr3.pl
<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snotel/Washington/washington.html>

SNOWPARKS:									
Name	Elevation		12/6/2013	12/13/2013	12/20/2013	12/27/2013	1/3/2014	1/10/2014	1/17/2014
MARBLE MT	2,700'		No report	4" new snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	No new snow, 2" base	Slush. No new snow.
WAKEPISH	2,800'		No report		1-2" snow	1-2" snow	2" snow	2" base	No new report

SNOWTEL STATIONS:

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
		Avg Snow							
JUNE LAKE	3,340'	Depth (inches)	0.66	5	5.3	7	6.7	7.9	22
		Min Temp (F)	14	19	23	29	31	26	31
		Max Temp (F)	45	27	50	54	51	47	55
		Avg Temp (F)	30	22	36.2	38.3	39.5	36.7	39.8
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	27	27	27.7	30.9	31.3	36.6	43.5

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
		Avg Snow							
SPIRIT LAKE	3,520'	Depth (inches)	2.43	3	0.86	0.86	0	1.3	3.5
		Min Temp (F)	11	18	21	29	30	20	31
		Max Temp (F)	46	27	52	51	52	46	54
		Avg Temp (F)	29	25	36.8	36.8	39.2	36.8	38.5
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	17.5	17.9	18.3	22.1	22.7	25.5	30.5

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
		Avg Snow							
PEPPER CREEK	2,140'	Depth (inches)	0.31	2	0.3	0.42	0	0	0
		Min Temp (F)	14	16	24	28	29	25	29
		Max Temp (F)	48	26	46	46	51	46	51
		Avg Temp (F)	31.5	22	34.5	34.8	36	35.2	37.3

		Year to date precipitation (inches)							
		11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17	
		13.1	13.5	13.6	15.3	15.6	17.9	21	
Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
SHEEP CANYON	3,990'	Avg Snow							
		Depth (inches)	4		7	8.6	7.9	11.7	25.5
		Min Temp (F)	12		20	28	29	23	30
		Max Temp (F)	43		50	51	50	50	59
		Avg Temp (F)	26		35.3	36.8	38.8	35.8	39.3
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	23.1		24.4	27.8	28.4	32.5	38.5

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
		Avg Snow							
CALAMITY	2500'	Depth (inches)	1	5.5	0.1	0	0	0	0
		Min Temp (F)	16	18	27	32	33	30	34
		Max Temp (F)	47	27	55	52	53	48	56
		Avg Temp (F)	31	23	39.2	41.2	42.3	39.8	43.3
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	18.8	22	20.3	23.2	23.6	27.4	32.7

Snowpack % of Avg Snow Water Equivalent	12/6/2013	12/13/2013	12/20/2013	12/27/2013	1/3/2014	1/10/2014	1/17/2014
JUNE LAKE	5%		13%	21%	14%	23%	33%
SPIRIT LAKE	122%		100%	48%	33%	73%	77%
SHEEP CANYON	20%		20%	27%	22%	38%	55%

1/24/2014 1/31/2014 2/7/2014 2/14/2014 2/21/2014

No new report No new report 6" new snow
No new report No new report 5" new snow

1/18-1/24 1/25-1/31 2/1-2/7 2/8-2/14 2/15-2/21

19.7 18.7 30.3
32 31 5
57 60 37
43 40.2 21.2

43.6 48.6 51.4

1/18-1/24 1/25-1/31 2/1-2/7 2/8-2/14 2/15-2/21

0.1 2.5 7.6
34 31 7
54 60 45
42.3 39.7 21.5

30.6 33 33.4

1/18-1/24 1/25-1/31 2/1-2/7 2/8-2/14 2/15-2/21

0 0 2.1
30 28 11
56 55 38
35.8 35.5 25.5

21 22.9 23.2

1/18-1/24 1/25-1/31 2/1-2/7 2/8-2/14 2/15-2/21

24.1 22.8 32.2
33 30 3
54 56 37
43 40.2 20

38.6 42.3 43.4

1/18-1/24 1/25-1/31 2/1-2/7 2/8-2/14 2/15-2/21

0 0 1.1
32 34 9
54 54 37
43.3 42.2 24.2

32.7 36.2 36.7

1/24/2014 1/31/2014 2/1-2/7 2/8-2/14 2/15-2/21

27% 29% 30%
42% 29% 44%
47% 44% 48%

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Black-tailed Deer Study -- Pysht Deer Monitoring: Six does, two fawns and one yearling continue to be monitored in the Pysht cluster.

Black-tailed Deer Study -- Capitol Forest Monitoring: Biologist Michaelis spent time this week monitoring deer in the Capitol Forest Cluster. One adult doe died this week from an unknown cause. She appeared to have died in her bed and was mostly intact, with only minor scavenging by coyotes. A necropsy also did not reveal any explanation for why this doe died. This brings the total number of deer being monitored in the Capitol Forest cluster to four adult does.

Black-tailed Deer Study -- Satsop Deer Monitoring: Biologists Murphie and Skriletz tracked the Mortality Event signal for doe collar 12475 and located the carcass of the recently killed deer. Although a cougar neatly fileted the meat from the skeleton, the radio collar was still around the neck. The bone marrow in the femur indicated the deer was in good health when taken.



Left: Doe carcass located in the Satsop Unit. Right: Healthy bone marrow in doe's femur.

Marking of Power Lines by Public Utility District (PUD): Biologist Ament has been working with the Clallam County PUD to have some power lines marked in the Sequim area that are hazardous to trumpeter swans. She had various meetings and met with Senior Electrical Engineer Kelli Carr to identify specific lines where electrocutions and line strikes had been documented last season. The PUD has been



Flap marker installed on one of the lines.

very cooperative and was willing to mark some lines in high-use swan areas. They purchased a supply of flap markers and a special tool used to install them recently. On February 7, PUD Lineman Rolf Mitchell installed flap markers on lines at the Delta Farm off Towne Road and along Port Williams Road. The markers will hopefully make the lines more visible for swans that are regularly seen flying in these areas. Biologist Mel Walters from Puget Sound Energy, Martha Jordan, and the 2012 document “Reducing Avian Collisions with Power Lines” were all consulted to help determine the number of markers per span and the appropriate spacing of the flapper devices.



Left: Public Utility District Lineman Rolf Mitchell displays a flap marker. Right: Mitchell preparing to attach the flap marker.

Trumpeter Swan Monitoring: On February 7, the volunteers reported observing 71 swans in the field west of Ward Rd. and north of Woodcock Rd. There were 67 adults and 5 juveniles present. There were also 12 swans seen in the field west of Schmuck Rd. Biologist Ament did observe a group of 39 swans (34 adults, 5 cygnets) south of Anderson Rd. on February 5.

Carrot Protection: The swans seen on February 5 were feeding in a field of fava beans planted as a cover crop. The swans had finally found the rows of remaining Nash’s Organic Farm’s prized carrots late last month. Nash’s crew covered the carrots with solid white mesh to protect the carrots from the swans.



Left: Nash’s carrots covered for protection. Right: Swans in field finding alternate forage.

Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly (TCB) – Habitat Improvements: Biologist Dave Hays had requested that Biologist Ament join him on February 5 to meet the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew that will be working on some Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lands to improve TCB habitat. The crew will be conducting the removal of trees and shrubs at designated site areas that have been determined to be non-habitat at two known TCB population locations. The work will be completed to improve conditions for specific host and nectar plants used by this newly listed endangered species. The sites are very steep and the crew has to take safety precautions and can only work in suitable weather conditions. A priority of the Action Plan for the species is “Assess and enhance larval food and nectar plants at occupied, proximate, and unoccupied sites.” Biologists Ament and Hays took the crew to one site to outline the work to be completed there. They left them to initiate work on the chilly morning (with snow on the ground) and then proceeded to hike into another TCB site to review some work completed by a WCC crew last month. Biologist Hays was pleased with the work completed at the site. There were two other areas at this location that are proposed for future habitat improvement work.



Left: Area cleared to meet existing Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly habitat. Right: Biologist Hays looking over the project site.



Left: Some larger trees cut and limbs piled. Right: Biologist Hays talking with Washington Conservation Corps crew.

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

Wildlife Areas

Lake Tarboo Public Access, Jefferson County: Due to vandalism and theft, WDFW has had to replace two sets of windows, two steel doors, two urinals, three toilet seats, two stainless ADA handrails, and two gates over the past 10 years at this site. There have also been several concrete repairs as well as repairs due to many wood and oil fires started inside of the restroom.

The restroom was not only unsafe for public use, but it also put the access crew in a hazardous working condition during every site visit. Prior to cleaning, vapor masks were

needed to shovel concrete chips covered with lead shot and lead dust. As a result of uncontrolled vandalism, and to ensure public safety, the restroom was finally removed.



View of the vandalized Lake Tarboo restroom before removal.