

Wildlife Program

Week of February 10-16, 2014

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Pygmy Rabbit: Winter surveys were completed on Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area this week, just as snow was leaving and a mud bog was forming. Approximately 2,600 acres were surveyed and all the samples have been sent to the lab. There are many samples to work through so results will be at least a month out. Surveys were completed by our core survey crew: Technicians Duvuvuei and Hastings and Biologist Gallie, with the assistance of Biologist Duvuvuei and PhD student DeMay. Biologist Wisniewski and Technician Duvuvuei downloaded and organized survey data. Biologist Wisniewski contacted one of the landowners in the Beezley Hills area who had previously agreed to sign up for a Safe Harbor Agreement (SHA) and arranged to begin baseline surveys on the property. This work is being coordinated with Private Lands Biologist Comstock who will assist the landowner with the SHA paperwork. Surveys will begin this week.



Fresh fecal samples from an active pygmy rabbit burrow. Photo by J. Gallie

South Puget Prairie Species: On February 13, Biologists Stinson and Linders met with Listing and Recovery Section Manager Becker, Resource Scientist Pearson, and Land Conservation and Restoration Section Manager Wilkerson to review and prioritize Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) proposals for Army Compatible Use Buffer Program (ACUB) funding, as funding levels have increased above that expected for 2014.

Bat Survey Grant Proposal: Natural Resource Scientist Buchanan, Section Managers Thompson and Becker, and Biologists Wiles and Hayes continued discussions on bat survey activities to be proposed in Washington under a multi-western state Competitive State Wildlife Grant. Proposed activities for Washington will likely focus on two Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) species, Keen's myotis and Townsend's big-eared bat, and several potential SGCN species (spotted bat, hoary bat, silver-haired bat).

Arid Lands Initiative (ALI): Jeff Azerrad, Cynthia Wilkerson, and Mike Livingston reviewed and edited a summary developed by ALI. The summary presented an overview of accomplishments made by the Initiative as well as next steps for working with partners to facilitate the use of tools developed by ALI for implementing conservation practices in Washington's arid landscapes. Their edited version was submitted back to ALI staff.

Priority Habitats and Species Riparian Update: Biologist Jeff Azerrad began working on the segment of the literature review chapter focused on water quality (WQ). Jeff outlined results of numerous studies related to the regulation of WQ parameters (e.g., nitrogen, phosphates) by riparian systems. He also went through a number of relevant review papers to see if others have observed patterns specific to the role riparian habitats play in regulating key WQ parameters.

Yakima Basin Integrated Plan: Section Manager Wilkerson participated in a video-conference with Mike Livingston, Jeff Tayer, Perry Harvester, Amy Windrope, Dave Price, and Tim Quinn to discuss WDFW priorities and implementation of habitat restoration efforts within the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. Windrope is taking the lead on organizing a workshop for WDFW staff to design a baseline monitoring program for the Teanaway Community Forest. The goal is a workshop the second week of March with a proposal to Department of Ecology (DOE) Office of Columbia River by April 1.

Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition (WWRC): Section Manager Wilkerson worked with Deputy Director Stohr and Lands Division Manager Clay Sprague to produce an overview handout of operational, management, and legislative, partnership, and strategic issues regarding our land acquisition program for the WWRC Quarterly Board meeting. Stohr and Wilkerson attended the Board meeting on February 13.

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

Partnership networking: Division Manager Gardner and Section Manager Wilkerson attended the Capitol Land Trust annual breakfast event, along with several other WDFW employees on February 11.

Cross-program coordination: Section Managers Becker, Thompson and Wilkerson as well as Natural Resource Scientist Buchanan participated in a meeting regarding coordination of WDFW's forest ecosystem work across Habitat/Diversity work units along with Gary Bell and Margen Carlson. One concrete next step is to work together on the upcoming Western Gray Squirrel Workshop (March 11). Another is to continue to coordinate efforts for Spotted Owl.

REGION 1

None.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wolf Conservation and Management

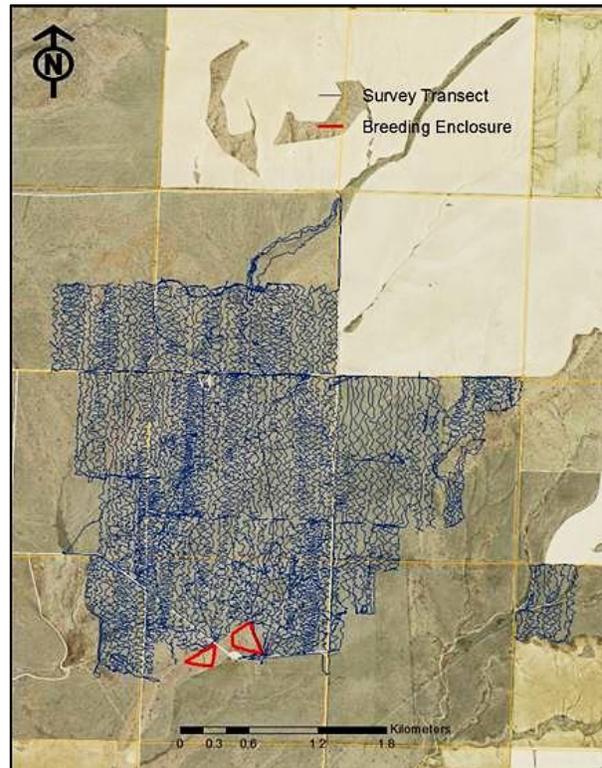
Wolf/Livestock: Specialist Heilhecker talked with a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) grazing permittee, who has an allotment in the Lookout pack territory, about the range rider program on February 11. Heilhecker attended a carcass removal meeting with representatives from Conservation Northwest and Okanogan Conservation District on February 12. Specialist Heilhecker made arrangements with the Forest Service to attend their permittee meeting on March 12.

Wildlife Management

Winter Surveys: Winter surveys were completed on Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area this week, just as snow was leaving and a mud bog was forming. Approximately 2,600 acres were surveyed (see map) and all the samples have been sent to the lab.

There are many samples to work through so results will be at least a month out. Surveys were completed by our core survey crew: Technicians Duvuvuei and Hastings and Biologist Gallie with the assistance of Biologist Duvuvuei and PhD student DeMay. Biologist Wisniewski and Technician Duvuvuei downloaded and organized survey data.

Winter Survey Routes – 2014





Short lived snow on Sagebrush Flats Wildlife Area. Photo by J. Gallie



Lake Chelan Bighorn Sheep:

In preparation for last week's bighorn capture on the Manson herd, Biologist Gallie was able to complete a count of the herd. A total of 106 sheep were counted, with 67 ewes, 15 lambs, and 24 rams. The lamb count is low due to the difficulty in determining composition from the boat. The addition of 14 collars will help with future survey effort and accuracy.

A group of Bighorn sheep along the north shore of Lake Chelan. Photo by A. Hastings

Sinlahekin Bighorn Sheep Management: Biologist Heinlen monitored the Bighorn sheep collared last week in the Sinlahekin herd. Seven of the eight sheep were found to be alive. However, one radio collar was found to be on a mortality signal. Access to the location is inaccessible until the snow is gone. Due to the poor physical condition of some of the sheep

captured it is suspected the stress of the capture in conjunction with poor health led the mortality. Hopefully the disease testing conducted during the capture will shed some light on the condition of this herd.

Wolverine Research: At the beginning of the week, Biologist Fitkin and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) staff temporarily closed most of our traps ahead of a series of major snowfalls that we knew would limit access. Higher elevations have received several feet of snow in the last few days and more is expected this week. Despite the short-term set-back, the new snow should extend the trapping season through March and potentially improve our success rate. Traps will be reopened as soon as access and avalanche conditions allow.

Caspian Tern – Biologist Duvuvuei began investigating the feasibility of using game cameras to monitor the foraging habits of Caspian terns in the Columbia basin. This method has potential to reduce the overall time spent surveying tern use and foraging attempts. Overall, we want to identify the amount of time terns spend foraging at the Frenchmen Regulated Access Area.

Wildlife Areas

Russian Olive Symposium: Assistant Manager Cole attended a two day Russian Olive Symposia in Spokane as part of the Northern Rockies Invasive Plants Council Conference. Successful and unsuccessful control efforts by federal, state, and county agencies throughout the Western U.S. and Canada were presented and discussed, including the current state of the bio control development effort. While two agents show promise, nothing will be approved for the near future. The take home was that the wildlife area’s control methods are effective and consistent with current standards.

Russian Olive was added to the 2014 Washington State C Noxious Weed List and has recently become a regular local topic of discussion. The wildlife area has been and will continue to evaluate and prioritize control efforts.

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

Wildlife Areas

Regulated Access Areas (RAA) – Biologist Duvuvuei examined hunter use and success at the Registered Access Areas for the 2013-14 waterfowl season. Although harvest was down compared to the 2012-13 season, hunters still did very well despite less than ideal hunting conditions. Hunters shot 649 ducks and 29 geese at Winchester and Frenchmen Regulated Access Areas during this past season.

Project Area	Season	Average Birds/Hunter
Frenchmen RAA	2011-12	1.11
Frenchmen RAA	2012-13	1.24
Frenchmen RAA	2013-14	0.57
Winchester RAA	2011-12	1.85
Winchester RAA	2012-13	2.79
Winchester RAA	2013-14	1.60

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

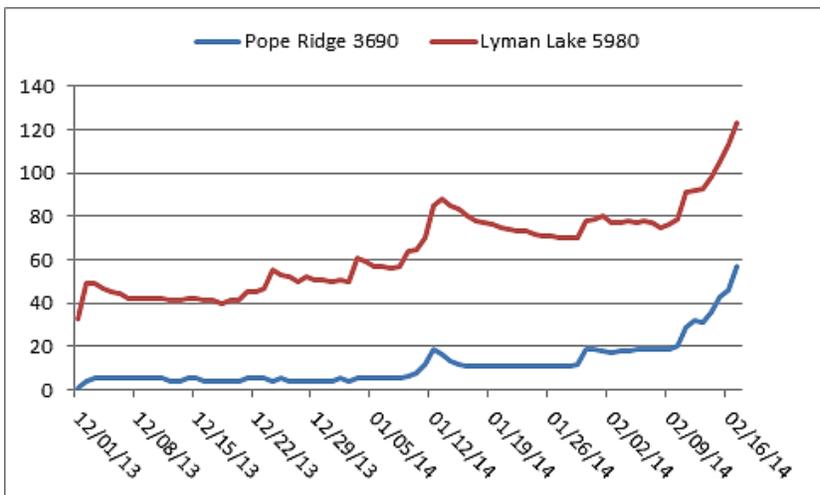
Wildlife Areas

Sinlahekin 75th – Manager Swedberg participated in the weekly 75th Celebration Planning conference call with Public Information Officer (PIO) Luers. As previously reported, “Continued planning with PIO Luers leading the charge things continue to move forward in planning the 75th Anniversary Celebration. The tentative Draft schedule for the weekend events is being refined on a weekly basis. Communications with presenters and potential presenters is ongoing.” Efforts are still being made to reach out to local interests (e.g., Colville Tribe, Okanogan Tourism Council, Okanogan Economic Development Council, Chambers of Commerce, etc.).

KOMW Radio Interviews – Okanogan Lands Operations Manager Swedberg completed his 16th and 17th interviews for the 5-minute Ask Dale news segment on Fridays between 12:30 and 12:45 p.m.

Observed Environment –

Variable conditions have dominated lately with a combination of sun, rain and snow. Snow accumulation during February has been high compared to a relatively snow free early winter at lower elevations. Mule deer winter range in Chelan County is generally characterized by elevations lower than 4,000 ft. When snow depths reach 15-18 inches, deer, in most cases, will move to areas of lower snow depths. Lyman Lake is along the crest of the Cascade Range, and Pope Ridge is roughly 15 miles northwest of the Columbia River.



Left: Prairie Falcon near the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Center: A rough-legged hawk near Whitestone Lake. Right: Golden Eagle near Similkameen-Chopaka Wildlife Area. Photos by Justin Haug

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Colockum Elk: Biologist Moore, Deer and Elk Specialist Scott McCorquodale, and Central Washington University graduate student Lewis Meyers worked together on a capture effort for the Colockum Bull Elk Study. We were fortunate to have minimal cooperation with the weather and captured 15 bulls over two days. Elk were accessible in most of the areas we were interested in and all the animals were processed without difficulty.

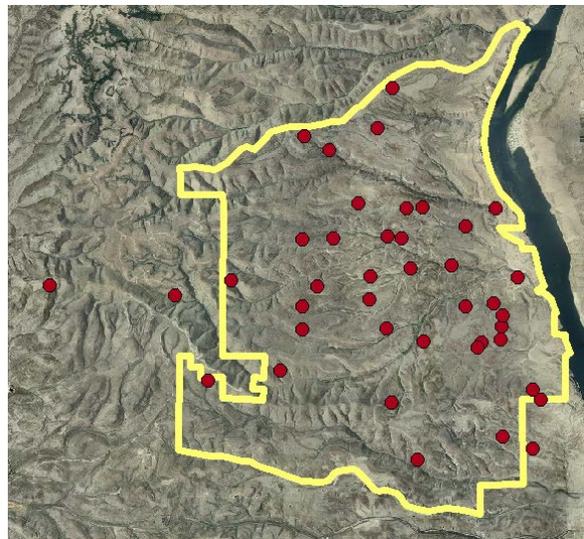


Bull elk captured during the Colockum Bull Elk Study.

Whiskey Dick Winter Range Survey: Biologist Moore completed a review of photos from the southern winter range distribution flight of the previous week.

A total of 1,931 elk were observed. Most all of these elk were in the Winter Range Closure Area. The two points to the west of the closure represent only 12 elk.

Map depicting the winter range closure area and elk observations on Feb. 6, 2014.



Burrowing Owls: In collaboration with the Director of the Global Owl Project, Biologist Gregory continued to research funding opportunities for upgrading the burrowing owl web camera. The focus of the upgrade will be enhancing opportunities for research and education. Gregory also began working on logistics for owl surveys that will occur this spring and summer. She imported archived locations from surveys conducted around the Tri-Cities by Dr. Conway of the University of Idaho in 2004 into GIS. These sites will be revisited for renewed survey effort.



Locations of point count stations for burrowing owl surveys around the Tri-Cities in SE Washington.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

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.

The mortality breakdown by County was:

- Island County – one unknown cause of death
- Skagit County – six unknown cause of death, two power line strikes and one feather pile
- Snohomish County – one power line strike
- Whatcom County – three power line strikes and one feather pile

Elk Clover Trapping: Biologist DeBruyn worked with a cooperative of members from the Point Elliot Tribes to establish and operate Clover 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).



This North Bend capture event features an example of the Clover Trap used in Skagit Valley.

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw compiled requested additions from the stakeholder committee to finalize the meeting summary

from the January 8 Stakeholder Committee meeting. These notes will be available on the project webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/skagit/leque_island_project.php.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw began drafting the body of the project adaptive management and monitoring plan. This plan outlines parameters that will be monitored in and near the project area before and after construction, such as groundwater levels and salinity. Monitoring helps WDFW and project partners understand the effects of projects, and results from monitoring can be used to trigger actions if there are unexpected results, called adaptive management.



NW Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Manager Bonnie Drafts and her father, Alan Drafts, released two rehabilitated swans onto Tennant Lake.

Tennant Lake Swan

Watch: The Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park held their annual Swan Watch at Tennant Lake. The public was invited to view swans on Tennant Lake at daybreak from the Tennant Lake viewing tower. WDFW Wildlife Biologist Paul DeBruyn gave a presentation on the status of swans in Whatcom County. After the presentation, NW Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Manager Bonnie Drafts and her father, Alan Drafts, released two rehabilitated swans onto Tennant Lake.

Tennant Lake Water Level and Boardwalk: Manager Kessler monitored the water levels at Tennant Lake. He cleared beaver dams and the beaver deceiver pipes on Tennant Creek to keep the lake water level down, so the raised wood boardwalk is high and dry. The Whatcom County Parks manager had a work crew clean off the boardwalk so that it can now be used by the public.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated dispersal of 20 truckloads of mulch used to fill in low spots on access roads within the unit. Two volunteers carried out the project. The mulch was donated by Snohomish County Roads Crew.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with agriculture lessee Frohning Dairy to discuss cropping plans for the 2014 growing season. Manager Boehm would like to increase crop acreage at the unit and the lessee is in favor of the action. Both hope to take advantage of last year's planting and mowing progress to facilitate expansion of the fields in the unit.

Beaver Damaged Cottonwood Tree:

Manager Kessler had a tree faller top a large cottonwood tree near the Lake Terrell dam structure. Beavers have completely girdled the base of the tree, and it was within range of the concrete vault holding the gate valve for the dam. If the tree had fallen, it could have landed directly on the vault. The tree was topped to leave the tallest snag tree possible with no more threat of landing on the vault should it eventually fall.

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

Wildlife Management

Public Presentation Preparation:

Biologist Milner worked on two PowerPoint presentations for speaking events. Milner will be speaking at the Port Susan Snow Geese Festival, helping to celebrate the acceptance of Skagit Bay into the National Audubon society Important Bird Area Program. Milner also gave a talk to 50 members of a local garden club about the value of snags and downed wood for wildlife.

North Cascades Elk Management Work Group:

Biologist Danilson spent much of the work week preparing for upcoming meetings with various committees and the larger North Cascades Elk Management Work Group. Next week, the Population Monitoring and Research, Agricultural Damage, and Forage Enhancement Committees will meet to continue to work on herd plan update elements that they have been focusing on for the past several months. The larger work group meeting has been pushed back to April to allow these committees another month to finalize their recommendations to the larger work group and WDFW as the herd plan is updated.



A large poplar that was girdled by beavers was topped to prevent damage to the nearby Lake Terrell dam. The bottom of the tree will remain as a snag for cavity nesting birds and other wildlife.

2014 Hunting Season Harvest Recommendations: Biologist Danilson and Section Manager Link met with Olympia staff to discuss proposed harvest recommendations aimed at addressing elk damage in Skagit County.

Wildlife Areas

Samish River Unit (Welts) Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw modified the wetland rating form for the project area after receiving feedback from Department of Ecology. 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. Brokaw and Wildlife Area Manager Rotton discussed conceptual mitigation project ideas to pursue on the adjacent Samish Unit property. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provided a letter for the permit package that describes how the project is designed to have no negative effects on endangered species.

Lake Terrell Hunting Blind Cleanup: The Whatcom County Chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association held a blind cleaning work party to pick up trash left in the hunting blinds. Seven members worked for several hours checking and cleaning all the hunting blinds. A barbeque was held at the Lake Terrell Headquarters office after the work was completed.

Samish Unit: Skagit Wildlife Area staff monitored drainage of agricultural fields on the Samish Unit and hand cleared debris from small surface ditches and culverts on the Samish Unit.

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

Wildlife Management

Volunteer Coordination: Region 4 staff met with Volunteer Coordinator Steve Dazey to learn more about Dazey's role in assisting with volunteer coordination. Upcoming projects that will potentially involve volunteers include several elk exclusion fencing projects in Skagit Valley and potentially some work with a volunteer group in Whatcom County that is interested in cooperating with WDFW on ongoing amphibian surveys.

Skagit County Elk Conflict: Conflict Specialist Griffith met with five landowners this week regarding elk damages to properties in the Skagit River and Acme areas. Griffith distributed damage permits and worked with the master hunter coordinator on four master hunter assignments. Conflict Technician Pinjuv established dates for material delivery on two fencing projects and began discussions with the Master Hunter Volunteer Coordinator about getting volunteers on the ground to assist in clearing and fence construction before the March 1.

Wildlife Areas

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to negotiate an agricultural lease with SnoValley Farms. Approximately 90 acres of pasture land will be

converted to crop land this season. This will provide a jump-start to agricultural production on the unit and provide much needed forage and cover for waterfowl and wildlife.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with three agricultural lease holders to coordinate payment of excise taxes and rent payments. Manager Boehm also discussed development of the planting plans for the 2014 growing season.

Island Unit: Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis and Natural Resource Tech Curran Cosgrove removed the boards on the water control structures on the Island Unit to begin the seasonal drawdown of the site. Waterfowl continue to be observed feeding in areas of yellow nut sedge, corn, millet and emergent grasses. Staff rolled down corn on accessible areas of the Island Unit to make it more available to waterfowl. Ducks began feeding extensively on the corn the last couple weeks of the season and continue to do so.



Post-season waterfowl use on Field 2 of the Island Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area.

Big Ditch Access: Regulation signs were reinstalled following removal of the signs by vandals a few weeks ago.

Private Lands/Access

Private Lands Access Program Site Enrollment Evaluations: Biologist Caldwell performed potential waterfowl enrollment site evaluations in the Acme area. In conclusion of this survey, no sites were identified to fit the program criteria for enrollment.

Private Lands Access Program Site Distribution Map: Biologist Caldwell performed cartography related tasks to provide a site distribution map for internal use related to the Skagit Delta area.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site Breakdown Update: Technicians Deyo and Otto continued performing quality hunt site breakdowns in Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom counties. All parking lot and boundary signs have been removed from all hunt sites.



Technicians Otto and Deyo recorded waterfowl use and presence at the Harksell hunt unit, and many other Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites, while performing site breakdowns.

Western Washington Agricultural Association Meeting: Biologist Caldwell met with the Executive Director of the Western Washington Agricultural Association to discuss land qualities, agricultural practices, Migratory Bird Habitat, crop values, farming logistics, and quality hunting opportunities within Region 4 related to pheasants. From these discussions, they negotiated a working agreement to formulate some current logistic parameters related to land lease rates and crop values. This information will enable WDFW to develop a more competitive, accurate and current payment scale for private lands properties where migratory bird money can be applied to enhance habitats. Furthermore, we discussed pheasant habitat related issues in the Sedro Wooley, Acme, North Skagit, and Eastern Skagit areas. The focus of these discussions was on identifying access points and parking lot accommodations for hunting opportunities.

Spring Bear Hunt Meeting: District Biologist Milner, Forest Manager Hurd and Biologist Caldwell met to discuss the 2014 timeline for the spring Black Bear hunt in Region 4. Timelines were established to contact and organize hunter and landowner information. Coordination and networking across groups is being handled cooperatively. Access changes for the 2014 season will include combination locks at all access points in the Monroe area and possibly some locations in the North Skagit area also. Pre-season emphasis in 2014 will be focused on researching changing land ownerships in the Monroe area and updating appropriate staff and hunters accordingly.

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

Waterfowl Quality Hunt End of Season Meeting: Regional Wildlife Program and Law Enforcement staff met on Feb. 2, 2014, to summarize and review the 2013 waterfowl season. Agenda items included Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program (WQHP) use survey protocol revision review, enrollment selection and rejection criteria into the WQHP, and suggestions for growth of the WQHP. Other agenda items included Skagit Wildlife Area updates, updates on the spring bear hunt and the role of the private lands program, elk issues and the private lands program, and discussion of Pheasant release sites in Skagit County. Highlights of this meeting included critical evaluations of site regulations and program limitations, cost and benefits of the Hunt by Reservation program option, volunteer service needs, and enhancements to internal communication structures.

Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Grant Training: Projects Coordinator Brokaw viewed a webinar training to learn more about RCO grant opportunities to be used for Region 4 projects, including the parking lot at the Samish River Unit.

Radio Training: Assistant District Biologist Cyra assisted staff with obtaining radio training, answering questions, and assigning radio call numbers. Cyra also communicated with program staff concerning the soon to be reconstituted Radio Committee.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Cascade Carnivore Project: Biologist Anderson continued to work with Biologist Akins on the Cascade Carnivore Project. This ongoing work was initiated in 2008 with the initial goal of documenting rare carnivores in the southern Cascade Mountains of Washington. Currently, Akins is working on her PhD through the University of California Davis determining the population structure and genetic diversity of the native Cascade Mountain Fox, found primarily above 3,500 ft. elevation.

In 2013 a total of 80 camera stations were run for a total of 4,300 days of surveys ranging from 2,500 to 6,400 ft. elevation. A variety of carnivores were detected during this past season including American martin, black bear, bobcat, coyote, mountain lion, short-tailed weasel, and the Cascade mountain fox. In addition, scat samples were collected for multiple animals that are currently being analyzed. Although no wolverines were detected this year, it is believed that three to four scat samples currently being analyzed are from wolverine.

During the 2013 field season a total of 340 genetic samples of Cascade Mountain Fox were collected. This information is being used to determine the number of individual animals detected

and to estimate the genetic diversity and abundance of the population. In addition, this information is being used to determine how the coyote population may impact the fox distribution across the landscape. To date, no detections of wolves have been recorded throughout the project area.

Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area Elk Survey: Natural Resource Technician Sample conducted a follow-up elk survey to the monthly winter elk count that occurred last week. A total of 133 elk were seen on the valley floor and no mortalities were observed. Temperature at the Forest Learning Center was 41°F with some wind, rain and low clouds. Snow was patchy and melting on the valley floor. These are average winter conditions and elk numbers in contrast to last week's cold temperatures and low elk count.

Columbian White-Tailed Deer Translocation: Biologists Miller and Holman assisted U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) with the second week of trapping Columbian White-Tailed deer from Puget Island to the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Two females (one adult and one yearling) were captured and re-located to Ridgefield NWR. Both females were equipped with radio collars so their movements can be monitored over time.

Black-tailed Deer Research Project: The Region 5 portion of the black-tailed deer research project is ongoing. Study does are still being monitored by a combination of remote (satellite) and field (VHF) methods. The does are located in two study clusters concentrated within the Washougal (568) and Coweeman (550) Game Management Units (GMUs). During 2014, eight does have been captured in GMU 550 and three have been captured in GMU 568. These study-does will be monitored and fawn captures will be attempted in May and June. During the effort in 2013, six fawns were captured from four does in the Washougal cluster. Fawn monitoring is currently being conducted. To date, three 2013 fawns remain alive in the Washougal study cluster and one fawn remains alive in the Coweeman study cluster.

Wildlife Areas



Klickitat Wildlife Area -- River Levels: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis monitored the Klickitat River for possible flooding. The water rose gradually and the river was mostly clear through Wednesday. On Thursday the streams in the upland areas were high, and by Friday the larger streams were also high and murky. There is no damage due to high water yet.

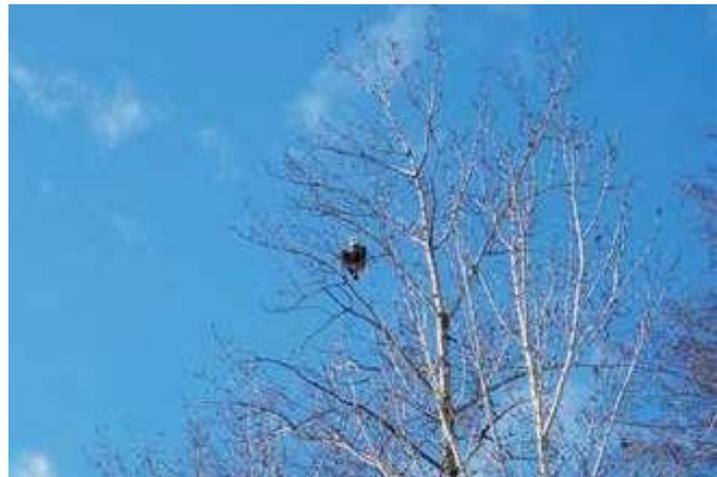
Klickitat River on the Fisher Hill Unit.

Shillapoo Wildlife Area -- Tree Plantings: Wildlife Area Staff planted about 4,000 trees and shrubs at three sites in the North and South Units of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area this past week, in order to create and enhance riparian, Oregon oak, and great blue heron habitats. The plantings were delayed by a week due to the cold and snowy weather, and all of the plants appeared to be in good condition at the time of planting. The initial plantings were completed at the Old Ag site in the North Unit, a year ahead of plans, but planting will still occur at the site next year to replace trees that did not survive from the previous seven years of planting. Tree survival rates are typically 75-95% survival after one year from planting.



Tree and shrub planting performed at the Shillapoo Wildlife Area.

Bald Eagles: Birders in Klickitat County have been observing about 40 eagles around the mouth of the Klickitat River recently. This many eagles concentrated in a small area are a spectacle enjoyed by even the most casual of birdwatchers. Eagles are also present upstream in the Klickitat Canyon, although in fewer numbers.



Bald Eagle spotted near the Horseshoe Bend Road Bridge over the Klickitat River.

Lyle Community Trails Proposal: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven attended a meeting of the larger landowners potentially involved with a community trail project. Many practical matters were discussed including parking lot development, where trails might go, what sensitive resources need protection, potential user conflicts, landowner concerns and desires, etc.

Wildlife Conflict

Beaver Habitat Assessment: Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald attended an informal presentation on a Beaver Habitat Assessment project for the lower White Salmon Watershed by the Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group (MCFEG). The ecological benefits by beavers

as a keystone species and potential nonlethal management techniques were discussed. The MCFEG will be working towards establishing beaver colony relocation sites in the White Salmon watershed.

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

Wildlife Conflict

Landowner Contacts: Conflict Specialist McDonald met with a Klickitat livestock producer who observed three coyotes near a bone pile on his property. He claims that one coyote was twice the usual size with very dark fur. Coyote and dog tracks were present at the bone pile. A trail camera was placed near the bone pile. McDonald toured his ranch and looked at a calf that likely had an eye pecked out by a raven.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald and Biologist Stephens met with a Trout Lake Dairy owner experiencing springtime elk damage. This landowner gave several Trout Lake Elk Area #5062 Master Hunters access to his land for hunting. He is open to trying nonlethal techniques to discourage the elk from browsing in his fields. Another meeting will be set up in early March to put this in action.

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 3,000 to 4,000 feet for the upcoming week. The 6-10 day forecast is for below normal temperatures and normal precipitation, and the 8-14 day forecast predicts above normal temperatures and below 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 lower and mid elevations.

Snow Depths: Lower elevations are snow-free. Snowpack is below average.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The 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. A second survey was conducted February 11, with 133 elk observed on the 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 there was considerable precipitation in southern Washington. Snowpack for the basin remains at around 60% of normal, but the recent weather trend indicates a pattern of improved water conditions. Areas in eastern Klickitat County received needed precipitation this week, which should improve spring green up.

Winter Severity: By the end of this week all elevations had some snowpack although warm weather caused melting below 1,500 ft. 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.

Habitat: Habitat was less available early this week with heavy snowfall and some crusting. Warmer weather and rain has opened many areas below 1,500 ft. and most important 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

Western Pond Turtle: Biologist Tirhi began water quality testing at the Pierce County Western Pond Turtle recovery site. Sixteen parameters are being tested as advised by DOE and Pierce County Health. Testing will occur on a monthly basis and was initiated in response to the emergence of Ulceration Shell Disease affecting the recovery program.

Regional Program Manager Cope and Region 6 biologists met with Region 5 and headquarters staff to discuss and plan for the upcoming activities related to Western pond turtles and create the 1-year action plan. For the 2014 nesting season, the decision was made to remove 70% of the nests (eggs) for head start and retain 30% in ground to hatch naturally. This allotment should meet capacity for head-starting and will also allow a stock of hatchlings to monitor for survival. Additionally, it will enable staff to dedicate time and resources towards shell disease. Tirhi and staff will monitor hatchlings of three naturally emerging nests laid in 2013 this season in order to acquaint themselves with techniques and be prepared for increase in 2014. No eggs will be collected at the Mason County site this year, but turtles will be captured and evaluated for shell disease.

District 11 staff began wrapping up the juvenile turtle survival study as radio-marked western pond turtles began emerging from their winter refugia. Nine turtles were captured and had their transmitters removed. Five additional radios remain on the air, four of them on turtles using upland habitat to overwinter. The remaining five will be monitored twice a week until the turtles resume activity at which time transmitters will be removed.

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

Wildlife Management

Black-tailed Deer: In 2009, WDFW initiated a study of the effects of forest management practices on black-tailed deer reproduction. Two of eight study sites are represented in District 15 (Mason and Satsop). Biologist Murphie checked the status of radio-collared deer in the Satsop and Mason clusters last week. No mortalities were detected. Nine does and three fawns remain “on-air” for this area (one fawn in Mason and two fawns in Satsop). Additional does will be added to the Mason cluster in February 2014.

Biologist Michaelis spent time this week monitoring black-tailed deer in the Capitol Forest Cluster. The total number of deer being monitored in the Capitol Forest cluster remains at four adult does.

Six does, two fawns and one yearling continue to be monitored in the Pysht cluster. Biologist Loafman conducted deer site visits to download data off doe collars.

Dusky Canada Goose Surveys: Biologists Sundstrom and Michaelis completed the monthly Dusky Canada goose survey in Pacific and Grays Harbor counties. Michaelis observed 717 duskies in Pacific County, and 29 of them were marked. This is the largest number of marked geese Michaelis has ever observed during a single survey. Michaelis also observed two marked Cackling Canada geese and one resident Dusky goose that WDFW marked during a capture on the lower Columbia River.

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

Wildlife Management

Olympic Peninsula Technical Working Group: Biologists Hoenes, Michaelis, Skriletz, McMillan, and Ament attended the Olympic Peninsula Technical Working Group Meeting in Port Angeles, WA. The group consists of state, tribal, and federal biologists and managers whose work responsibilities are focused on the Olympic Peninsula. The primary intent of the annual meeting is for each representative to update the group on current and future research projects, management challenges, and to identify opportunities for collaboration among state, federal, and tribal biologists. Discussion items during the meeting included deer and elk census and monitoring, mountain goat management, elk hoof disease, fisher monitoring, mid-winter waterfowl surveys, trumpeter swans, and black-tailed deer projects with focus on the 2014 fawn capture for both the WDFW study and for the Lower Elwha Tribe's deer study.