

Wildlife Program

Week of February 17-23, 2014

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Sage-grouse and Sharp-tailed grouse: Biologist Stinson and Research Scientist Schroeder drafted a letter with updated information for Washington sage-grouse for Deputy Assistant Director (AD) Schirato's signature in response to a request from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to update their candidate review and priority ranking form. Biologist Stinson worked on the Sharp-tailed Grouse 2-year action plan, and reviewed data categories for modeling by Intern Plumley.

Brown Pelican: Biologist Stinson completed revisions to the Brown Pelican Status Report, and identified several potential peer reviewers.

Bat Survey Grant Proposal: Natural Resource Scientist Buchanan, Section Manager Thompson, 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 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). Section Manager Thompson participated in a six-state conference call to coordination preparation of the joint proposal.

Pacific Coast Joint Venture (PCJV): Section Manager Wilkerson attended a Washington State Steering Committee for the PCJV along with Deputy AD Schirato and Section Manager Kraege at the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge. PCJV staff and representatives presented refreshed vision and mission statements as well as their core service pillars and organizational strategy. The new mission is to "create the ideal environment for bird habitat conservation." We discussed next steps in sharing these concepts with a wider array of partners. Wilkerson and Kraege committed to providing an initial assessment regarding landscape level bird conservation needs within the PCJV geography as a starting point for a workshop to develop a partner needs assessment within Washington State sometime late spring/early summer 2014.

Climate Change: Section Manager Wilkerson participated in a meeting of the Joint Implementation Working Group for the National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy. Current priorities include developing a report on the status of implementation and initiating several work groups. Wilkerson will be coordinating with Climate Coordinator Helbretch and other Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and state agency reps to put forth one or two relevant case studies for this report. Wilkerson specifically committed to coordinating with the state Natural Heritage Program and to participating in the Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach Working Groups.

Arid Lands Initiative (ALI): Section Manager Wilkerson coordinated with USFWS representatives and ALI Sonia Hall to develop an initial draft proposal concept for integrating the ALI landscape conservation design into partner actions for the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GNLCC). The concept includes incorporating the ALI landscape conservation design into WDFW's State Wildlife Action Plan, the management plan for Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area, and the work of our private lands biologists.

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

Wildlife Management

University of Washington (UW)/Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) Meeting: Director's Office staff member Bill Tweit, Diversity Division Manager Eric Gardner and Science Division Manager John Pierce met with Julia Parrish of UW and Executive Director of COASST to discuss future partnering opportunities.

Audubon Washington Meeting: Diversity Division Manager Eric Gardner and Science Division Manager John Pierce met with representatives of Audubon Washington to discuss opportunities for collaborative partnership as well as potential avenues to incorporate legacy birding data (e.g., hand-written notes, etc.) into eBird.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Meeting: Assistant Director Nate Pamplin, Diversity Division Manager Eric Gardner, Listing and Recovery Section Manager Penny Becker and Research Scientist Steve Jeffries met with NOAA staff to introduce new personnel from both agencies and to discuss marine mammal priorities and opportunities.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Golden Eagle monitoring and capture: Assistant District Biologist (ADB) Vekasy reviewed golden eagle priority territories for monitoring, and developed estimate of effort and timing of incubation and fledging. Vekasy assisted Raptor Specialist Watson with capture of adult male golden eagle on the Tucannon River for GPS monitoring of territory use in relation to wind turbines located within the territory.



Wildlife Areas

Bald Eagle: The Sherman Creek Wildlife Area (SCWA) received a phone call from an Addy, WA resident who reported a bald eagle in their yard that appeared to be dead. As Palmer was on his way back to SCWA from the West Branch Little Spokane Wildlife Area, he stopped to pick up the eagle which turned out to still be alive.

Palmer contacted Enforcement Officer Dan Anderson, who collected capture equipment. The eagle was captured by Officer Anderson, Officer Parkert, and Palmer. The eagle was transferred to Sgt. Pam Taylor who delivered it to the Mt. Spokane Veterinary Hospital.



REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wolf Conservation and Management

Lookout Pack: Remote cameras deployed by a volunteer and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) contract biologist Robertson documented multiple wolves in traditional Lookout Pack winter territory in early February. Recent heavy snowfall even at lower elevations has improved prospects for a potential collaring attempt in this pack next week.



Lookout Pack wolf – Remote camera photo by David Moscowitz

Wildlife Management



Wolverine Research:

Biologist Fitkin assisted the seasonal crew in the third and finally successful attempt to reach and service the furthest Twisp River Trap following a week of heavy snowfall. With fresh bait we're optimistic for a capture soon. In the meantime, we're making due with entertaining photos of other carnivores at run-pole sites.

Bobcat at a wolverine run-pole camera site – Photo courtesy of U.S. Forest Service

Columbia Basin Caspian Tern: Biologist Duvuvuei continued refining methods and protocols to monitor Caspian Terns and other piscivorous birds at the Frenchmen Regulated Access Area. This pilot study is examining whether wildlife managers can focus feeding efforts of piscivorous birds, by concentrating fingerlings with a drawdown, in order to alleviate foraging pressure at more sensitive locales. If successful, this project could be implemented as an adaptive management approach to managing tern impacts on salmonids on the Columbia Plateau.

Washington Ground Squirrels: Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei continued preparatory work for Washington ground squirrel translocations. Translocations are planned for May. The Sage Hills Golf Course will be the source for the translocation and squirrels will be released on the Columbia Refuge and at a historic release site at Steamboat Rock, Banks Lake in need of augmentation. The Steamboat Rock site was visited but no activity was observed. Approximately 30 active burrows documented at end of active season last year. This should not be cause for alarm however as this area is usually a couple weeks behind the lower latitude sites where breeding season has already been underway.

Finger began coordinating with Sage Hills Golf Course and will meet with the manager this week to discuss areas in need of focused effort and ways to avoid impacting recreational activity during a busy time of year. A quick visit was made to the Warden Middle School where a proportion of squirrels were removed (some were released after capture to ensure the population was not eliminated) to reduce impacts to a softball field. Two squirrels were observed, one of which was ear-tagged, and so it was captured and released during 2013.

Bighorn Sheep Management: We received the results of the disease testing of the 13 sheep captured in the Sinlahekin herd. *Psoroptes ovis* (ear mite) still resides within the herd, but surprisingly no antibodies for *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (pneumonia) were found. As a result, the reason for the significant herd decline since 2012 still remains somewhat of a mystery.

Biologist Heinlen continues to monitor the recently collared sheep which are currently moving throughout their traditional range.

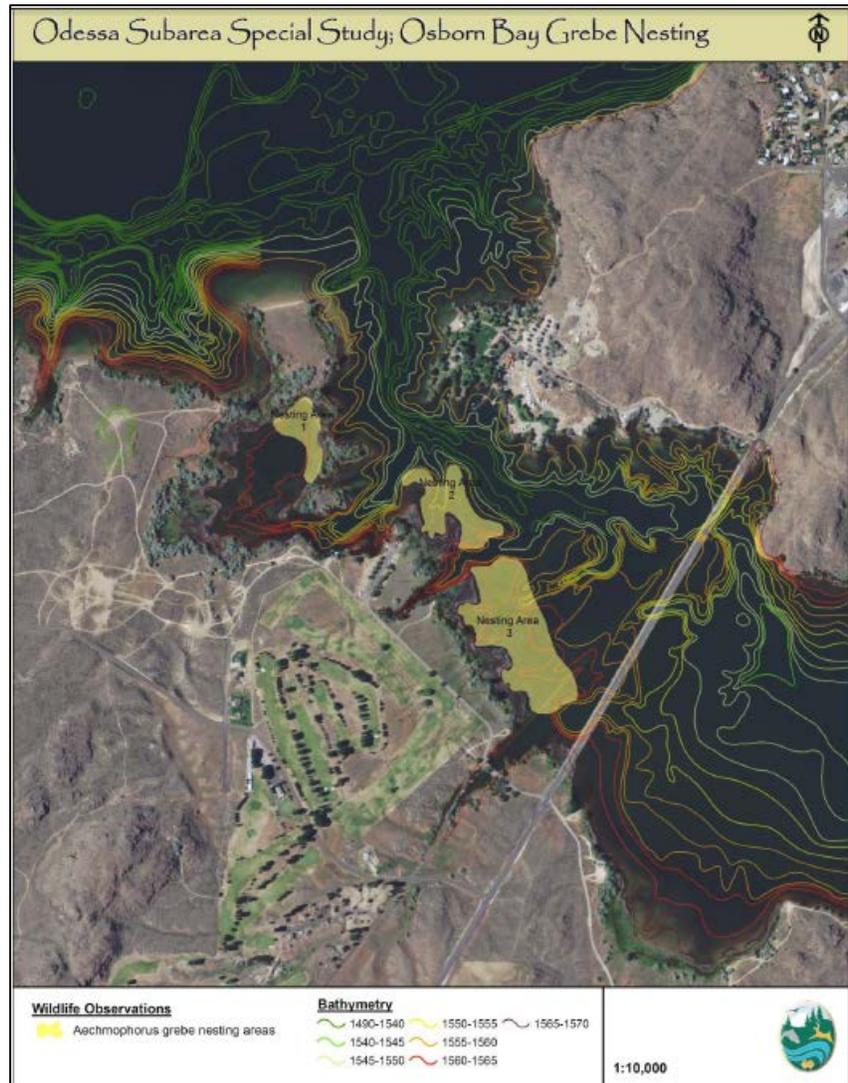
Aechmophorus grebes:

Biologist Finger met with Natural Resource Specialist Lesky (Bureau of Reclamation) to discuss grebe management options at Banks Lake in association with fluctuating water levels associated with the Odessa Subarea Special Study. Finger and Lesky reviewed survey data collected by Odessa Wildlife Surveys Team and identified some locations to evaluate floating nesting platforms.

The current plan is to deploy approximately 20 platforms to evaluate use and nest success rates at Banks Lake. Banks Lake drawdowns related to the Odessa Subarea Special Study (OSSS) will not be occurring during 2014, which allows us to place platforms in the traditional nesting area at Osborn Bay, just east of the airport.

Finger researched designs for floating platforms and developed a plan for an alternative, primarily to reduce weight, costs, and ease of deployment and retrieval. A prototype will be constructed soon and if deemed to be suitable, will be vetted through folks with experience using these platforms.

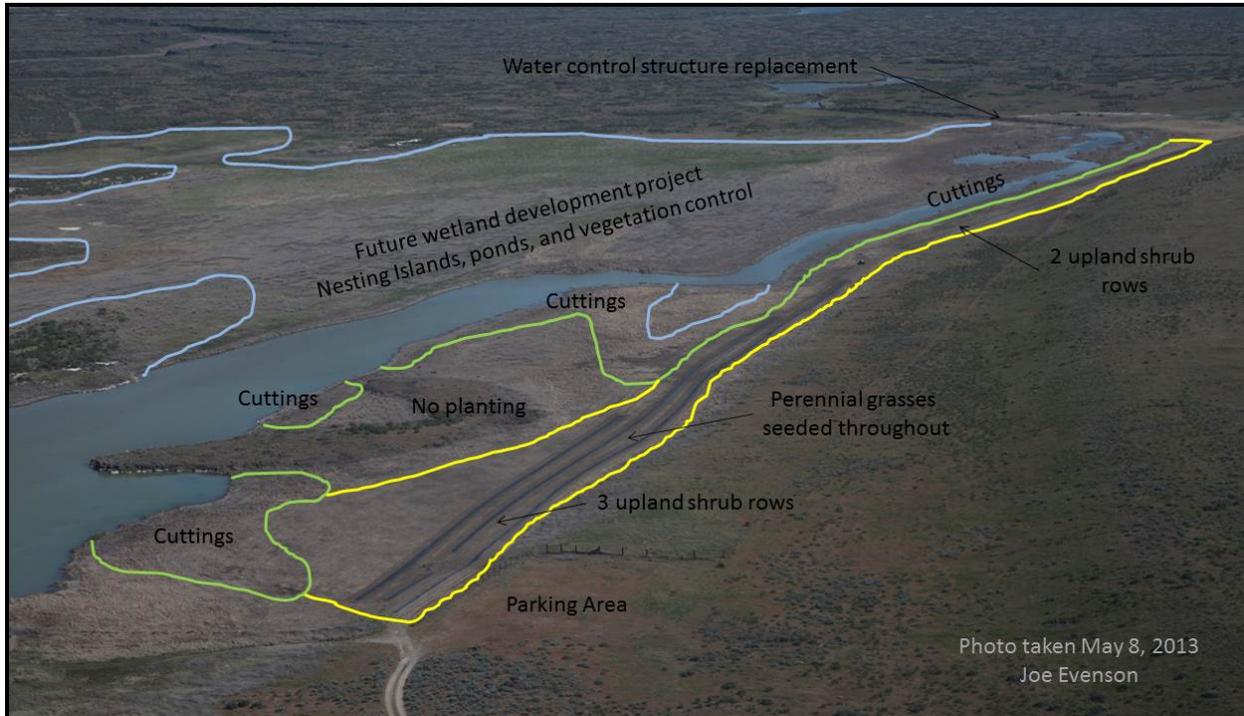
In the meantime, Finger will be reviewing hydrologic modeling data and aerial photography from the maintenance drawdown during 2011 to determine the most likely areas to implement this project once Banks Lake drawdowns occur. The concern is that drawdowns and fluctuations will be severe enough that bulrush nesting areas will become dewatered, thus grebes must be encouraged to nest in deeper waters to be successful.



Osborn Bay nesting area identified during Odessa surveys. Nesting area 1 will be used to evaluate floating platforms.

Wildlife Areas

Columbia Basin Spud Field Project: Biologist Duvuvuei flagged the area of recent willow plantings at the Spud Field in preparation for grass seeding. Private Lands Biologists Cotton and Dougherty will drill seed the grasses once the ground thaws and some moisture evaporates. Biologists have been working diligently to make this area more attractive to waterfowl, deer, and upland game birds. While flagging the area, Duvuvuei observed approximately 200 geese and 100 ducks loafing in the creek and on the bank, which used to be covered with dense reed canary grass. It appears efforts are beginning to pay off.



Spud Field Project site displays locations of cuttings (willows and dogwoods), shrub rows (diversity of upland shrubs), and grass (primarily basin wildrye for nesting cover) planting.
Photo by Joe Evenson

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

Wildlife Areas

Frenchman Coulee Climbing Area: Assistant Manager Eidson spent time this week helping with the installation of a Vault Toilet at the Frenchman Coulee. Digging the hole for the vault in basalt made for slow going, but the project was completed by weeks end. This project was accomplished with cooperation from several different climbing groups who were the driving force behind bringing these facilities to the climbing area.



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

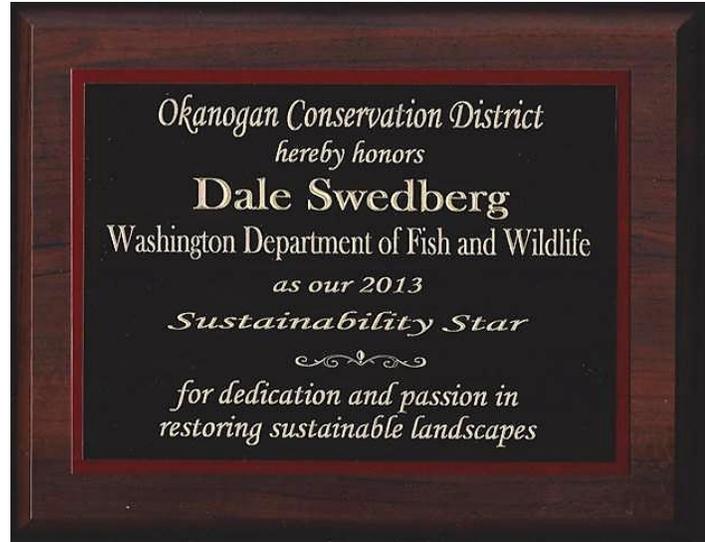
Wildlife Areas

Observed Environment – Continued heavy snowfall has raised the snow pack at the crest to average for this time of year and even the valley floor in the Methow now has significant snow cover. The Okanogan Valley floor has remained largely snow-free due to slightly warmer temps.



Winter finally settles into Winthrop. Photo by Scott Fitkin

Okanogan Conservation District (OCD): Manager Swedberg attended the OCD Annual Celebration Dinner. During the awards and recognition part of the dinner, Manager Swedberg was surprised at being honored as the OCD “Sustainability Star.”



Winter Wildlife Viewing:



Left: Bohemian Waxwings in spruce tree near Sinlahekin Headquarters. Above: Trumpeter Swan and Great Blue Heron. Below: Trumpeter Swans, Great Blue Heron and Ring-necked Duck on Forde Lake – Sinlahekin Wildlife Area.
Photos by Justin Haug

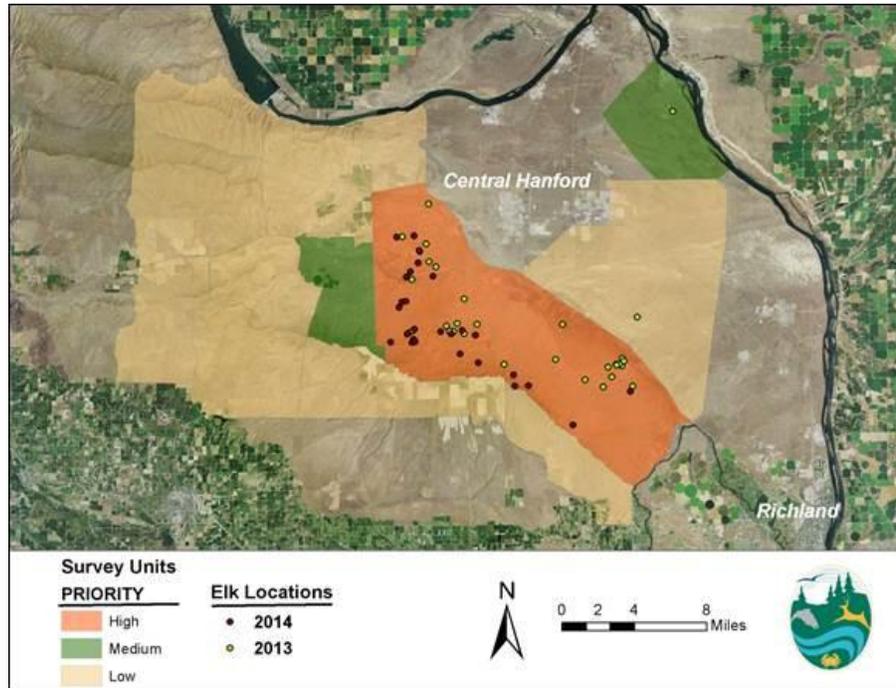


REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Hanford Elk: Biologist Gregory and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Biologist Newsome conducted elk surveys on the Hanford/Arid Lands Ecology (ALE) properties. The survey followed the Idaho sightability methods. A population estimate as well as herd composition is forthcoming. This year, no animals were observed on Central Hanford or private land and elk were further up Rattlesnake Slope than in previous years.



Locations of elk counted around Hanford in 2013 and 2014.



A group of elk (including several large bulls) observed on the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve south of Hanford. Photo by Sara Gregory



An example of the modeling results for the Quilomene bighorn sheep population.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Moore completed work on modeling all of District 8's bighorn sheep populations. The objective of this project was to determine the area of each bighorn population as a step in better estimating carrying capacity. Moore used 95th percentile isopleths resulting from Kernel Density Estimations using GPS collar data as well as survey data. The isopleths were combined with the Idaho Bighorn Sheep Habitat Model to estimate the usable habitat area of each population.

Burrowing Owls: Dedicated volunteers Rocky Ross and Larry Martin completed much needed maintenance on 120 artificial burrows around the Tri-Cities. This year they were able to use a shop vacuum to expedite removal of excess soil and debris from the tunnels and nest chambers. Owls were observed at six of the sites and we hope that more will be arriving as spring arrives.



Volunteer Larry Martin conducting annual maintenance at a burrowing owl nest box.

Photo by Rocky Ross

Wildlife Areas

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area: L.T. Murray Wildlife Area staff Winegeart and Schnebly attended a Mule Deer Foundation meeting, and then participated in a weekend volunteer work party along Taneum Creek where 15 volunteers removed a mile of old fence.



Left: Mule Deer Foundation work party volunteers. Right: Mule Deer Foundation volunteers removing old stock fence.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Snoqualmie Bear Project: Biologist Smith assisted Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil and Carnivore Specialist Maletzke with ongoing bear den work. This portion of the project entails locating dens, placing cameras to document emergence and cub numbers, recollar/adjust collars on sub-adult males, and potentially collar yearling cubs. Work where newborn cubs are known to be present is limited (camera placement only) to avoid den abandonment.

Activities are occurring on the Westside of the state initially (as den emergence is likely earlier), then will proceed to the Eastside portion of the study area. A total of 29 collared bears are currently denning within the study area (both sides of the state).



Vacated bear den in and under a large root ball of old wind-thrown tree in the western portion of the study area.

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Study: Swan Tech Anderson recorded 17 swan mortalities from Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties (16 trumpeter and 1 tundra swan). These mortalities consisted of 14 carcasses and 3 feather piles. This week showed central Whatcom County to again produce the largest number of sick and dead swans.

The breakdown by county:

- Skagit County – (3 total) 2 unknown Cause of Death (COD), 1 power line strike
- Snohomish County – (3 total) 2 feather piles, 1 trauma
- Whatcom County – (11 total) 9 unknown COD, 1 power line strike and 1 feather pile

North Cascades Elk Working Group Meetings: Biologist Danilson attended/facilitated meetings of the damage, forage enhancement and population/science committees. The committees are working towards having completed objectives for the herd plan ready for an April meeting of the whole work group.

Sea Duck Joint Venture (SDJV) Pacific Coast Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued day to day travel preparations for this year's continuation of the SDJV Pacific Coast marine bird surveys until continuing marine storm conditions finally precluded surveys. This multi-year survey is attempting to perform wintering surveys for marine birds along the entire pacific coast of North America. SDJV has contracted multiple state, federal, and provincial agencies to perform the surveys, and the remaining areas contracted to WDFW are hoped to be completed this season. Discussions will be held in the coming months to decide whether to further pursue these surveys.

Diversity species data support: Assistant District Biologist Cyra provided data support in the form of locations, dates, and occurrences for a number of diversity species to the Wildlife Program's data system.

WDFW – Woodland Park Zoo Annual Citizen Science Amphibian Monitoring Training: Biologist Anderson worked on a 12 page tutorial for volunteers regarding how to enter amphibian data using the WDFW General Wildlife Observation website. This is going out to volunteers for electronic data entry reference. Anderson has been working with city of Bellevue, Renton, Redmond and King County to gain approval and access for volunteers on their public lands. Anderson has worked with Volunteer Coordinator Redmond to provide information to municipal risk management, city attorneys, parks management, etc. regarding volunteer L/I coverage, protocol for surveys, meeting any specific needs, etc. There is now just one team still waiting for the collaborative "GO". We all look forward to it! Anderson is also assisting with a blog and video outlining this citizen effort. Find out more about Report Wildlife Observations at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/viewing/observations/>.

Various Wildlife Management Consultation/Permitting Requests; Municipal, Private Utilities, other: Biologist Anderson fielded requests for heron management plans to assist in local code needs under Growth Management Act; state wildlife take authorization requests and ongoing consultations; bald eagle nest reports/status updates and explaining changes to management of this species. Anderson assisted Olympia staff with questions regarding some of these areas posed to them by other states (California).

Wildlife Areas



Whatcom Wildlife Area received 6-12 inches of snow over the weekend.

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

Wildlife Management

Elk Clover Trapping: Biologist DeBruyn continued trapping elk with a consortium of biologists representing the Sauk-Suiattle, The Upper Skagit and the Swinomish tribes. Trapping of North Cascades (Nooksack) elk is being done as part of a long term capture-mark-resight study designed to monitor animal numbers in this herd. Collars put on augmentation animals from Mount St. Helens in the early 2000s are expiring and there is a need to maintain a base number of marked animals in the herd.

The group is also cooperating with members of The Tulalip and Stillaguamish tribes and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to install GPS satellite collars on some animals to investigate habitat use and highway crossing issues. Four elk were trapped last week, one bull and three cows. The first of the WSDOT GPS collars was put on a cow trapped near Highway 20 on Saturday, Feb. 22. The collar is functioning properly and WSDOT Biologist Kelly McAllister is monitoring the elk's movements.



Mike Wolton (left) of the Sauk-Suiattle and R.J. Schuyler of The Upper Skagit Tribes release bull from trap.

Public Presentations: Biologist Milner participated as a speaker at the Port Susan Snow Goose & Birding Festival. Partnered with Gary Slater, Milner taught a basic shorebird identification class to 40 participants. The class was taught in the morning so that those who wished to could go on a field trip to practice their skills and see birds. In the afternoon, Milner was the featured speaker helping to celebrate the acceptance of Skagit Bay into the National Audubon society Important Bird Area Program. This is the 9th year of the festival and at least 1,000 people were expected during the weekend. Read more about the festival at <http://www.snowgoosefest.org>.



Skagit Audubon members collected data that was used to designate Skagit Bay as Important Bird Area of Global significance.

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw reviewed information related to grants used for original land purchases on Leque Island and compiled a summary of how different design alternatives may or may not be consistent with language in the original grants. Once design alternatives for Leque Island are drafted and are in the alternatives analysis phase, WDFW will work with agencies that issued the original grants to assure compliance with contract requirements.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw continued 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.

Harris Creek and Waterwheel Creek Riparian Plantings: Sound Salmon Solutions (SSS) received a grant award to complete riparian planting work along Harris Creek in the Stillwater Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area and Waterwheel Creek in the Cherry Valley Unit. Projects Coordinator Brokaw reviewed project information and is working with SSS and regional WDFW staff to facilitate implementation of these projects.

Leque Island Unit: Natural Resource Tech Curran Cosgrove checked the Leque Island and Big Ditch Access for litter and appropriate signage in preparation for the Port Susan Snow Goose and Birding Festival held in Stanwood.

Island Unit: Skagit Wildlife Area staff monitored drainage and field conditions on the Island. Waterfowl use is still high as sheet water conditions have improved with the recent rain and snow. Birds are utilizing agricultural and native seeds and invertebrates.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with Werkhoven Dairy on developing the planting plan for this coming season.

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.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to work with Sno-Valley Farms on developing an agricultural lease on a portion of the unit. Manager Boehm continues to work with the grazing lessee to finalize the grazing plan for this season.

South Padilla Bay Unit: Manager Rotton completed the agricultural lease for the South Padilla Bay Unit on the Skagit Wildlife Area.

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 can dry out.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk: Manager Kessler met with WDFW Engineers and Construction Managers at Tennant Lake to discuss the project to repair and improve the Tennant Lake wood boardwalk. We were successful in obtaining Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) funds to make part of the boardwalk ADA Accessible, and raise sections of the loop trail that is under water in late winter early spring each year. The work may proceed as soon as we can obtain the permits for the work.

Samish River Unit (Welts) Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, and Program Manager Link met to discuss plans to complete the restoration elements of the project and the parking lot element of the project in



Corn rolled after hunting season is heavily utilized by waterfowl on the Island and Samish units on the Skagit Wildlife Area.

different phases because the permitting timelines for each are different. Brokaw and Rotton will meet with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) next week to further discuss this.

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

Wildlife Management

Skagit County Elk Conflict: Conflict Specialist Griffith, Biologist Danilson, and Conflict Technician Pinjuv facilitated the seventh meeting of the North Cascades Elk Damage Committee. The meeting was well attended by local landowner and Tribal constituents. The committee provided input to the remaining three herd plan objectives and strategies. Griffith is working closely with a damage committee member to compile the input for presentation and adoption at the March 19 committee meeting. Pinjuv finalized and submitted fencing contract attachments including property maps, fencing specifications and materials lists for three projects. Griffith input all three into CAPS. Pinjuv and Griffith worked with one landowner to discuss volunteer options for their upcoming fencing project.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Manager Rotton reviewed Duck Stamp proposal for the mid-cycle project submissions in preparation for the conference call discussion and ranking process. Region 4 had submitted five projects for consideration.

Samish River Unit Wetland Enhancement Project: Manager Rotton continued to coordinate with Restoration Projects Coordinator Loren Brokaw regarding the permitting for the Samish River Unit Wetland Enhancement Project. Brokaw and Rotton updated Regional Wildlife Program Manager Russell Link on the status of the project.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm collected the lease excise tax payments from three agricultural leaseholders and submitted them to Olympia for payment. All of the rental and tax payments for the 2013 growing season are now completed. Additionally, Manager Boehm attended the Lake Stevens Cub Scout Pack 360 winter Award Ceremony. Merritt badges, cheers and applause were handed out to many scouts for completing various activities. Many of the scouts and parents participated in the Manager Boehm's native plant potting party earlier this winter as an exercise in community volunteering. The scouts and parents are interested in developing another volunteer opportunity.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site Breakdown Update: Technicians Deyo and Otto continued performing quality hunt site breakdowns in Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom counties.

Private Lands Access Program Migratory Bird Habitat Enhancement Site Enrollment Evaluations: Biologist Caldwell and Technician Deyo performed potential Migratory Bird

Enhancement site evaluations in Skagit County. In conclusion of this survey, five sites were identified to fit the program criteria for enrollment. As a follow up, Biologist Caldwell will be contacting the landowner to coordinate planting efforts in 2014. There are an additional six properties that still need to be evaluated.

Western Washington Pheasant Release Program Meeting and Summary Report: Biologist Caldwell met with WDFW retiree Huddle regarding historical efforts of the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program (WWPRP). From this meeting, Biologist Caldwell began drafting a summary report on the WWPRP from 2010 to present in Skagit County. Highlights of this report will summarize historical and present day site enrollment, property descriptions, status updates, reasons for not enrolling, follow-up actions and their results, conclusions, and the requirements to obtain sites. As of 2014, six sites are currently under review as potential pheasant release sites.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Use Survey Analysis and Summary Report: Biologist Caldwell and staff finished compiling use data from the 2013 season and began conducting the analysis for reporting.

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

Wildlife Management

Training: Skagit Wildlife Area staff attended two days of continued education training for noxious weed recertification in Mount Vernon. These continuing education credits are earned to keep their Pesticide Applicator license current and renewable.

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

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Golden and Bald Eagles: Biologist Anderson initiated golden eagle surveys in Klickitat County for 2014. Surveys are being coordinated with consultants from the Juniper Canyon wind project and biologists from USFS. Private land owners are being contacted for permission to access sites on their lands. This year's priority surveys include six golden eagle territories as part of the second year state-wide effort. In addition, this week a new bald eagle nest was located near the town of White Salmon adjacent to the Columbia River. Both golden and bald eagles are currently in the early stages of their breeding cycle prior to egg laying, which means spring is near.

Columbian White-Tailed Deer Translocation: Biologists from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) participated in two days of capture effort for the Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed deer this week from Puget Island to the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Biologists Stephens and George attended Tuesday morning's very early attempt during very heavy wind and rain that reduced deer movement and consequently no deer were caught. Biologist Miller attended on Wednesday and an adult doe caught was caught and relocated to Ridgefield NWR. All recently released animals with radio collars are transmitting live signals and three of five deer have been observed visually on the Ridgefield NWR. Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) surveys are scheduled for next week to help evaluate the number of deer on Julia Butler Hanson National Wildlife Refuge and nearby areas.

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Sondino

Unit: Recent runoff from rain and snowmelt has re-filled the ponds on the Sondino Unit. The wood duck nest box in this photo was mounted 12 feet above the ground when it was installed. Water levels were very low at the beginning of the month, but are now normal for this time of year.



Klickitat Wildlife Area – Sondino

Unit Barn: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis worked on removal of wood and other debris from the interior of the condemned barn in preparation for the final demolition work. In consultation with WDFW construction project planner Tosland, the preferred method for disposal of the cinder block wall material is to bury it in a mound within the footprint of the building.

Sondino Unit Pond C Box

This type of block crumbles when it is subjected to pressure from heavy equipment, so the fill material is expected to be a mix of rocky chunks and coarse sand which is ideal for turtle nesting habitat. The concrete slabs forming part of the floor will be added to the fill, leaving all ground surface presently occupied by the building available for use by turtles. An additional benefit will be a significant savings to the program by not hauling the material away for disposal. Large posts and beams will be salvaged for future use.

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

Wildlife Areas

Shillapoo Wildlife Area – Vancouver Lowlands Watchable Wildlife: With the increased abundance of water in the low lying fields these past couple of weeks, the amount of waterfowl using the area has also dramatically increased. Shillapoo Wildlife Area staff observed the following waterfowl species this past week while conducting other tasks: Dusky Canada goose, Snow goose, Ross goose, pintail, mallard, wigeon, canvasback, gadwall, ring-necked duck, scaup, shoveler, bufflehead, and ruddy duck. Several Sandhill cranes and Bald eagles are in the area along with one pair of eagles that appear to be building a nest in the South Unit. A few shorebirds were also seen and heard on the area this past week as well.

Private Lands/Access

Public Access: Conflict Specialist McDonald and Natural Resource Technician Sample installed a roof on an information signboard and removed trash from a parking area to a private timberland public access site in Western Klickitat County.



Information sign installed on private timberland public access site in Klickitat County.

Kress Lake: Beaver damage around the lake is at an all-time high. Some of the trees are quite tall and will likely fall across the trail during a wind storm. Access staff Spangler and Rhodes wrapped the trees with wire.

Access staff wrapped tress with wire at Kress Lake.





Martin Access Site: Someone hooked and dragged the large boulders that block off the east side road across the parking lot. Using chains, winches and snatch blocks Access staff Spangler and Rhodes put them back in place. The road is known as a popular spot to dump refrigerators, stoves, garbage, etc.

Replacing moved boulders at Martin Access Site.

Vancouver Access Site: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes found chopped up car parts that were dumped on Port property just east of the Vancouver Lake gate. If not removed by next week, staff will arrange help from the Larch Mountain Corrections Work Crew for help lifting the metal. Spangler and Rhodes also replaced a missing Discover Pass sign and picked up and hauled several bags of trash from the site.



Access staff found chopped up car parts at Vancouver Access Site.

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Wildlife Conflict

Landowner Contacts: Conflict Specialist McDonald spoke with a Clark County landowner who had concerns with coyotes visiting her yard and possible safety issues with her pets. Several nonlethal deterrent options were discussed over the phone and materials were mailed to her.

Conflict Specialist Conklin is working with a land owner who is trying to be proactive to deter bear damage this spring after suffering damage last year for the first time. His 20-25 year old trees are prime targets for damage.



Bear tree damage

Conflict Specialist Conklin met with several land owners in the South Rainier Unit reporting Elk damage and utilized several Master Hunters this week to deter elk damage on private lands.

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. February 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. Rainfall for the month of February has been above average.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will be around 2,500 to 5,500 feet for the upcoming week, with light amounts of snow accumulating. The 6-10 day forecast is for normal temperatures and precipitation, and the 8-14 day forecast predicts above normal temperatures and precipitation.

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

Habitat: Forage is available in lower and mid elevations.

Snow Depths: Lower elevations are snow-free. Snowpack has increased significantly in the past two weeks, but is still slightly 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 continued to increase the winter snowpack for the South Cascades. Water conditions for the basin have increased to over 80% of normal and have improved the earlier drought prediction of the Northwest. Conditions in eastern Klickitat County have also improved with additional rain this past week.

Winter Severity: Winter conditions overall are now moderate and more typical of a normal year. Snowpack is primarily above 2,500 ft. and there is currently no concern for 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 is now mostly available below 2,500 ft. as warmer weather and rain has improved conditions.

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)							
		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
CALAMITY	2500'	Avg Snow							
		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		14" new snow
No new report	No new report	5" new snow		12" 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		14.5
32	31	5		28
57	60	37		42
43	40.2	21.2		33
43.6	48.6	51.4		71.4

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		2.3
34	31	7		28
54	60	45		48
42.3	39.7	21.5		33.5
30.6	33	33.4		44.6

1/18-1/24	1/25-1/31	2/1-2/7	2/8-2/14	2/15-2/21
0	0	2.1		2.8
30	28	11		32
56	55	38		44
35.8	35.5	25.5		34.8

21	22.9	23.2		35
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		17.6
33	30	3		26
54	56	37		41
43	40.2	20		31.5
38.6	42.3	43.4		60.7
1/18-1/24	1/25-1/31	2/1-2/7	2/8-2/14	2/15-2/21
0	0	1.1		0.5
32	34	9		32
54	54	37		46
43.3	42.2	24.2		35.8
32.7	36.2	36.7		51.2
1/24/2014	1/31/2014	2/1-2/7	2/8-2/14	2/15-2/21
27%	29%	30%		57%
42%	29%	44%		107%
47%	44%	48%		87%

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Black-tailed Deer Study – Satsop/Mason Deer Project: 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). This week, Biologist Murphie assisted Project Lead Dr. Rice with the collaring of seven adult does in the Mason Unit. Additional assistance was provided by Master Hunter volunteers Dan S. and Bill B. Northwest Helicopters conducted all the net-gunning operations.



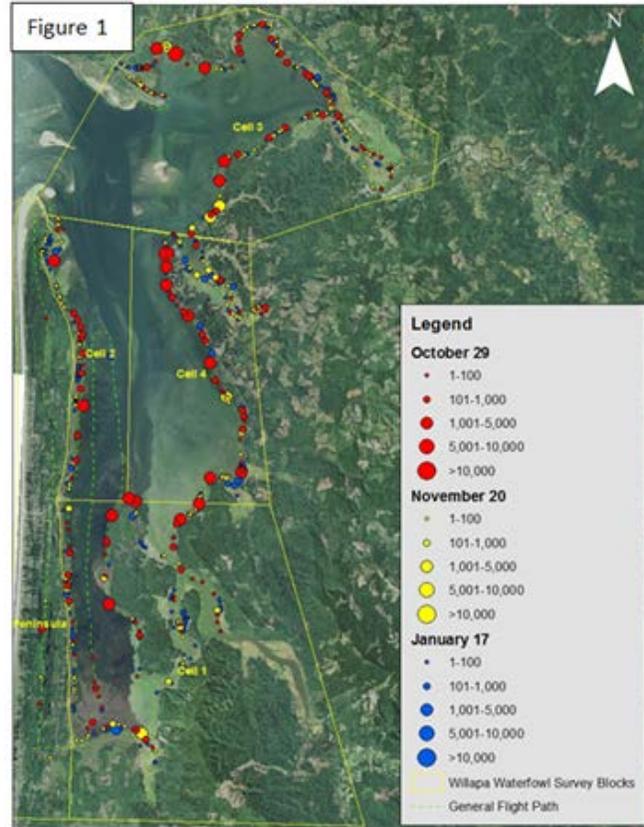
Adult doe collared prior to release.



Dr. Rice and Master Hunter volunteer Bill B. collecting data from captured doe in the Mason Unit.

Willapa Bay Waterfowl Surveys:

Biologist Hoenes finalized a report that summarized aerial waterfowl surveys that occurred in Willapa Bay during the months of October, November and January. A map showing the size and location of dabbling duck (e.g., mallard, wigeon, pintail, etc.) flocks observed during surveys is provided in Figure 1.



Matheny Habitat: Jack Smith with Eyes in the Woods (EITW) reported that EITW, The Back Country Horsemen, and USFS had their first work party improving elk habitat in the Matheny Game Management Unit (GMU) this past Saturday, Feb. 22. This project is an expansion of USFS efforts to improve elk habitat in younger stands of trees that were recently pre-commercially thinned. The concept is to create travel corridors and small ¼ to ½ acres openings in these stands. Additionally, trees that were felled by thinning crews are being cut into smaller pieces to shorten decomposition.

The Back Country Horsemen provided the certified chainsaw folks and they were very effective. They ran the chainsaws while members of EITW piled slash. They had a great time, moved a lot of wood, and it appears they cleared several acres of slash and cut several paths into other areas of the thinning for travel lanes and to allow creation of small openings.

Chainsaw certification training will occur next Friday and Saturday. This extensive two-day USFS training will allow EITW members to operate chainsaws on USFS projects.

Dusky Canada Goose Surveys: Biologist Sundstrom summarized monthly goose surveys that occurred in Grays Harbor County. The most recent survey shows an increase in the numbers of Dusky geese, which is typical for this time of year.

Grays Harbor County Only																
Month	Cackler	# Banded	Aleutian	# Banded	Tav/Lesser	# Banded	Dusky	# Banded	Western	# Banded	Vancouver	# Banded	GWF	Snow	Unk/Other	Totals
November	15	1	5	0	267	0	12	0	387	0	0	0	0	0	47	733
December	543	1	5	0	938	0	319	0	1048	0	0	0	1	1	48	2,903
January	2019	3	8	0	1152	0	292	1	441	0	4	0	27	2	52	3,997
February	284	1	0	0	588	0	542	1	745	0	0	0	18	0	3602	5,779

Of anecdotal interest is this single collared/banded Dusky that Sundstrom observed in Grays Harbor; this particular bird (and possibly its family group) has returned to the same winter location for the third year in a row.



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

Wildlife Management

Chambers Bay Regional Park: Biologist Tirhi is working with Pierce County at the Regional Park to move a Purple Martin colony from its current location on a derelict pier with creosote-coated pilings to a new permanent location. Additionally, Tirhi has advised on moving an osprey nest from the pier to a permanent osprey tower and platform. Both martin colony and osprey platform will be visible to public and provide a great watchable wildlife experience.

One Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Scout worked towards his Eagle Award this past weekend constructing martin boxes for the project (in addition to four peregrine falcon boxes, which will be used on projects elsewhere).



BSA Scouts constructing their peregrine falcon and purple martin boxes.