

Wildlife Program

Week of January 6-12, 2014

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Tufted Puffin Status Review: Biologist Wiles completed revisions to the external peer review draft of the tufted puffin status report. Section Manager Becker and senior author Thor Hanson provided additional comments on the report, which were incorporated. Biologist Wiles sent out copies of the draft report for external peer review. Copies went to 23 potential reviewers, including experts from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Park Service (NPS), Environment Canada, University of Washington (UW), University of Puget Sound, Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and others.

Puget Sound Pressure Assessment Model: Biologist Wiles participated in evaluating various stressors (i.e., threats) to long-legged myotis and Keen's myotis as part of this project, which is being conducted under the auspices of the Puget Sound Partnership. The purpose of the project is to assess pressures on Puget Sound's marine, nearshore, freshwater, and terrestrial resources, and identify the critical ecosystem vulnerabilities that should be addressed to ensure sustainable long-term protection and recovery for the region.

Brown Pelican Status Review: Biologist Stinson completed revisions to a draft and sent it out for internal review to Regions 5 and 6 as well as Fish Program staff involved in forage fish.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Bighorn Sheep Survey: District Wildlife Biologists Base and Prince did a ground-based survey for bighorn sheep at the Hall Mountain (Sullivan Lake) area, but did not see any sheep.

Blue Mountains Mule Deer Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy finished data entry from mule deer surveys and conducted preliminary analysis using the Aerial Survey software. Fawn:Doe:Buck ratios were 50:100:26, with an estimate of 11,420 mule deer in approximately 1200 km² survey area. This is the first baseline data for the north-central portion of the Blue Mountains District, although we will compare with 2010 survey results from the approximately 415 km² windpower survey area.

Columbia Basin Mule Deer Project: Biologist Atamian finished the data entry for 2014 flight and ground surveys. These aerial deer surveys are conducted in early winter in the Columbia Basin and for Region 1 include parts of Lincoln and Whitman counties. A summary of raw data is in the table below. Biologist still needs to run this data through a sightability model in order to be able to compare with past years' results.

Survey Type	Total	Does	Fawns	Bucks	Unk	Buck:Doe	Fawn:Doe
Aerial Phase 2	5939	2935	2219	687	102	0.23	0.76
Ground Phase 2	1841	952	647	242		0.25	0.68
Ground Phase 1	1627	870	598	159		0.18	0.69

Wildlife Areas

Grouse tracking at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA): Volunteer Dr. Kim Thorburn tracked two days this week. On Tuesday, January 7 she located 6 male sharptailed grouse with signals, 2 female sharptails with signals, and 10 sharptails without signals, while working in three general areas. On Saturday, January 11 she worked with two college students who have tracked at SLWA previously. They located two male sharptails and one female sharptail with signals as well as radio-located two male and two female sage grouse. In addition, they flushed seven sage grouse without signals.

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

Wildlife Areas

Spokane Area Access site repairs and maintenance: Access Manager Scott Young conducted routine maintenance at the access areas on Rock, Hog Canyon, 4th of July, Newman, Waitts, and Eloika lakes.



Four inches of new snow greeted Waitts Lake early in the week.

Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex – Access program: Terry Folkins serviced access sites on the lower Grande Ronde and Snake River this week. Terry also informed Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice of a washout problem at the Boggan Access Site driveway. Wildlife Area staff will assist Terry with repair of the road next week by hauling the area mini-excavator. Activity has been constant at the shooting range and for this time of year, it is the busiest site Terry has been looking after.

Private Lands/Access

New Access Interest in Whitman County: Biologist Lewis discussed the Voluntary Public Access program with some landowners in the Lacrosse area who are interested in signing up land into the program. There is still strong interest from landowners wanting to enroll land into the program, but future funding depends on the program being renewed with a new Farm Bill.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wolf Conservation and Management

Nothing to report.

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Wolverine Research Project: Despite the meager snowpack, Project staff started the New Year with the second wolverine capture of the season. We placed a satellite collar on a new young male (Hobbes). It will be interesting to compare this animal's movements to the known home range of Logan, the other young male we caught earlier in the season. DNA samples from Hobbes will be analyzed later this year to assess possible parenthood. Early bets are that he is the offspring of Mallory based on his extensive chest blaze (see photo). A link to the project's annual report for last year is now available on the Wolverine Foundation website at <http://wolverinefoundation.org/>.



North Cascades wolverine, pretty boy Hobbes – Photo by Scott Fitkin.

Pygmy Rabbit Surveys: We began winter “snow” surveys despite the lack of snow. Technician Duvuvuei spent the week on Sagebrush Flats visiting the known active burrow sites from the 2012-13 survey season. The goal was to determine if the burrow was currently active and collect a pellet sample. Determining if a burrow is currently active can be difficult without the presence of snow for track observations. Despite the poor survey conditions, Erin was able to visit all 81 active burrows from last year and collect 31 pellet samples. Six of the samples were collected from previously unrecorded burrow sites. Genetic testing will determine if these new locations are pygmy rabbit burrows.

Wildlife Areas

Middle Crab Creek – Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei met with Wildlife Area Managers Fitzgerald and Bechtold, Environmental Planner Davidson, and construction contractors to discuss the initiation of wetland construction in Middle Crab Creek as part of the Supplemental Feed Route enhancements. Once construction is complete and the Odessa Feed Water is flowing, Middle Crab Creek will have approximately 1,000 new acres of wetlands available for hunting and wildlife watching.

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

Wildlife Management

Bighorn Sheep Presentation: Biologist Heinlen gave a presentation on Bighorn Sheep for the Methow Conservancy’s Tuesday Night Lecture Series. The presentation focused on the biology, history, distribution and current management of the Bighorn sheep herds in Okanogan County and surrounding areas. The presentation went very well and attendance was exceptional with over 180 people attending!

Wildlife Areas

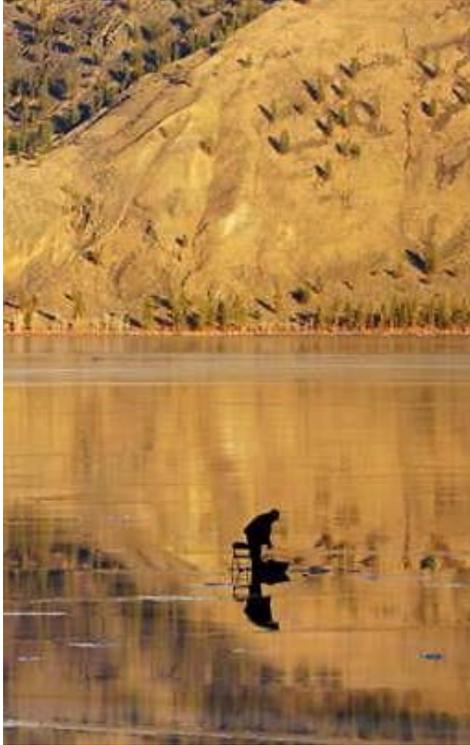


Chesaw logging: Pioneer Harvesting from Addy has started moving in equipment to complete harvest on the remaining 70 acres of the Chesaw thinning habitat improvement project. The project should take approximately 4 weeks to complete. Log volumes will supplement the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area project.

***Methow winter whitetail –
Photo by Scott Fitkin.***



Top left: Trumpeter Swans on Forde Lake, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Top right: Prairie Falcon near Sinlahekin Wildlife Area on Fish Lake Rd. Black-capped Chickadee (above) and Dark-eyed Junco (left) on the Similkameen-Chopaka Wildlife Area. Photos by Justin Haug.



Above: Ice fisherman on the thawing surface of Palmer Lake near Split Rock Access Area (Bureau of Land Management). Right: A reflection of a snag near the melting Conners Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Photos by Justin Haug.



REGION 3

None.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Study: Biologist DeBruyn and Tech S. Anderson continued to gather and process swans affected by lead and other environmental factors. Biologist Danilson and DeBruyn were involved in ongoing coordination throughout the week and weekend to

develop a response plan to the growing number of swan mortalities in Whatcom County. A spike in swan deaths may be related to a recent outbreak of aspergillous documented in Whatcom County. Two specimens were submitted to The National Wildlife Health Center for analysis.



Region 4 Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Tom Cyra participating in 22nd year of winter sea duck and marine bird aerial surveys.

Winter Marine Waterfowl Surveys:

Assistant District Biologist Cyra, Waterfowl Survey & Sea Duck Specialist Evenson and Assistant District Biologist Murphie continued the winter sea duck and marine bird aerial surveys. This is the 22nd winter that these surveys have been conducted and is the longest data set documenting trends of winter marine bird distribution and population indices in the Puget Sound. In addition, these surveys are used to document population index levels of sea ducks that will be used to determine next year's harvest limits. Despite the unstable weather patterns, three days of surveys were flown this week, with nearly 50% of the surveys now complete. Data from the surveys were transcribed on the no-fly days. We are fortunate again to retain the services of Kenmore Air and their Chief Pilot for these technically challenging surveys and they are a large part of the success of this project. Their rapid response to aircraft issues is appreciated. Information on these surveys along with past data can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/psamp/>.

Wildlife Areas

Water Controls:

Whatcom Wildlife Area Manager Richard Kessler worked with a Master Hunter volunteer to clear beaver built blockages in two of the Intalco Unit water controls. These water controls impound water that provides habitat for waterfowl breeding, feeding and resting, as well as warm water fish



habitat. One control was cleared of debris blocking the water flow, and an enclosure was built over it to prevent the beavers from blocking it again.



Lake Terrell: Eurasian Milfoil has been identified in Lake Terrell located on the Whatcom Wildlife Area. Approximately 80 acres of milfoil is infesting the 550 acre lake. Manager Kessler met with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) noxious weed coordinator Dave Hiemer, the Whatcom County noxious weed coordinator, and managers from the Department of Ecology on the status of the milfoil infestation, and possible steps to control or eradicate it from the lake.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo monitored quality hunt sites for use, identifying any maintenance needed or issues to address. In addition, they performed parking lot and field maintenance on Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites in Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish counties.

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with WDFW Enforcement Officer Kim Chandler to improve access roads within the unit. Years of neglect has allowed blackberry to encroach on the access roads and trails making it difficult for vehicle traffic. Manager Boehm also met with staff from Sound Salmon Solutions to discuss restoration work this coming year. Sound Salmon Solutions is currently working at the Stillwater and Cherry Valley units where they provide invasive weed control and riparian planting.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with the grazing lease holder to provide a new access agreement for the middle parking area. The agreement will be renewed annually, rather than being a line-item tied to the grazing lease. Manager Boehm also continued to prepare the reporting and grazing fee records for the 2013 grazing season.

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

Wildlife Management

Brant Bag Checks: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn checked hunters at local boat launches during opening weekend of brant season. Hunting in the north end of the area near Samish Island was excellent whereas hunters to the south in Padilla Bay had a tougher time getting limits. Thirty eight brant were checked, most were “black brant.” High winds and Seattle Seahawk viewing contributed to lower than usual participation in this annual sea born adventure.

North Cascades Elk Management: Biologist Danilson travelled to Olympia to meet with Central Washington University graduate student Anna Yost and Information Technology Specialist Andy Duff. Ms. Yost’s thesis involves using recently developed elk habitat models to help inform and guide ongoing efforts to update the North Cascades Elk Management Plan. The objective of the meeting was to get Duff’s input on assumptions and techniques Yost has used to update the models and to discuss how to incorporate her work products into North Cascades Elk Management Work Group committee meetings.

Port Susan Snow Goose and Birding Festival: District Biologist Milner began planning for the festival. This year we anticipate again offering a shorebird identification class and shorebird focused field trips. Milner will also be the featured speaker for the Skagit Bay Important Bird Area (IBA) recognition. This IBA, which is an Audubon Society designation, was late in receiving the designation compared to other locations, but Skagit Bay has been recognized as a site of international importance for the number of trumpeter swans who utilize the site.

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: The project Stakeholder Committee met on Wednesday evening in Stanwood. The meeting was well attended by committee members – 25 of the 29 volunteers for the committee attended, as well as regional WDFW staff, Ducks Unlimited staff, and a third party meeting facilitator. Volunteers for the committee were selected based on a survey distributed at the first public meeting for the project, and include duck hunters, pheasant hunters, co-manager biologists, wildlife viewers and photographers, local jurisdictions, habitat restoration interests, and others. At the meeting, WDFW presented project information and answered questions. The group had a roundtable discussion focused on current uses and importance of Leque Island, and thoughts and ideas from committee members on potential tidal restoration and dike projects. Once finalized and approved by the committee, notes from the meeting will be posted on the project webpage. Ducks Unlimited and WDFW will now work on drafting design alternatives for the area, and will present them at a public meeting this spring when they are completed.

Barnaby Slough Feasibility Study: Project partners (Skagit River Systems Cooperative and The Nature Conservancy) presented an update to WDFW staff on a feasibility study that is underway regarding the potential to restore floodplain processes at Barnaby Slough on the Skagit River. The study examines whether or not there would be any expected positive or negative impacts to surrounding properties if historic side channels were reconnected to the main river, and how beneficial that action could be to salmon. The project partners have not yet completed

the study, and when complete, will present the information to stakeholders and local landowners at a public meeting.

Skagit Wildlife Area: Natural Resources Specialist Greg Meis and Natural Resource Tech Curran Cosgrove monitored water levels, waterfowl use and public use on the Island, Leque Island, Headquarters, Jensen, Big Ditch, Johnson/DeBays Slough Reserve and Samish units.

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 Technician Kyle Pinjuv worked on three fencing projects over the week. Pinjuv completed GIS mapping of all three proposed projects as well as finalized the material lists. In addition to fencing project activities, Pinjuv conducted elk hazing activities on one property that reported damage issues with a group of 12 bulls.

Bald Eagle Response: Biologist DeBruyn responded to a call from the local Audubon chapter president and documented the existence of a new bald eagle nest the caller thought had been cut down. There was some land clearing activity by the railroad in the immediate vicinity of the nest but it was still standing and occupied by two eagles. DeBruyn submitted the nest data to Olympia and the USFWS and informed the railroad as to the recommended buffer zones.

Wildlife Areas

Snohomish County Roads Crew: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with the Snohomish County Roads Crew for a win-win arrangement. Snohomish County produces truckloads of mulch each day and needs to dispose of it. Manager Boehm is in need of mulch for trail improvements. When Snohomish County is near a wildlife area, they will dump the load of mulch in our parking area rather than trucking it for disposal. Manager Boehm and volunteers will relocate the mulch onto access trails and roads.



DeBay Slough: Manager Rotton forwarded quote for maintenance work to Washington Waterfowl Association representative to begin drafting a duck stamp proposal for the pond rehab and maintenance project. Staff installed four new gates to replace ones that were stolen or broken on the reserve. The field entry gates on the hunt unit were also repaired.

Wiley Slough Restoration Project: Manager Rotton monitored photo points on the Wiley Slough Restoration site.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with a disabled volunteer hunter who has been using the ADA duck blind at Cherry Valley in recent weeks. The hunter installed some shelving, hooks for hanging gear, and a sign-board to post ADA reservation notices. The hunter also provided a note to remind users to pack out their trash when they leave.

Private Lands/Access

Hunter Concerns: Biologist Caldwell and Technician Deyo responded to complaints regarding blind size, placement and use at the Fisher Slough reservation site. Biologist Caldwell and Technician Deyo evaluated the blind size, placement, site attributes and usability of the site. After conducting the review, Biologist Caldwell determined that the blind placement was optimal for quality hunting success in accordance with site attributes and that the blind size was adequate to accommodate three adult hunters.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program Meetings: Biologists Caldwell and Milner met with the Executive Director of the Western Washington Agricultural Association to coordinate efforts of conservation, stewardship, and cooperation between our agencies. Timelines and contacts were established to evaluate land qualities within Region 4 and to meet local large-scale agricultural operations managers. Biologist Caldwell also met with Biologist Rotton and toured the Skagit Wildlife Area. They discussed possible habitat management strategies, management dilemmas, and habitats that could be incorporated into the Private Lands Access Program in 2014.

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

Wildlife Management

Training: Assistant District Biologist Cyra assisted staff with obtaining radio training, answering questions, and assigning radio call numbers. Wildlife Area staff completed the mandatory WDFW Globally Harmonized System (GHS) Hazard Communication training.

Game and Diversity Winter Workshop: Wildlife Program staff spent three days in Wenatchee learning about Game and Diversity Program priorities and visions. Conflict Specialist Griffith spent the entire week in Eastern Washington. Griffith participated in firearms training and qualifications during the first part of the week and attended the Game and Diversity Division Winter Workshop the remainder of the week.

Private Lands Access Program Management: Skagit Wildlife Area staff met with Cole Caldwell, Region 4 Private Lands biologist, to discuss the Wildlife Lands program in Skagit County. In addition, Rotton and Caldwell toured a number of the Skagit sites to help Cole become acquainted with the Wildlife Area and upcoming projects.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Midwinter Waterfowl Survey – District 9: Biologists Anderson, Holman, and George with the assistance of Technicians Johnson and Doorly completed two sections of the midwinter waterfowl survey along the Columbia River Gorge: 1) from the mouth of the Washougal River upstream along the Columbia to Wind River and 2) from the Wind River to the John Day Dam. Strong winds along the river made survey conditions slightly unpleasant and resulted in a lot of waterfowl being located in areas protected from the high winds.

Preliminary results indicate that overall waterfowl numbers appear to be in the normal range for this year. Some backwater ponds, small lakes, and sloughs still remained frozen from past freezing conditions. With that, 95% of the traditional survey area was open. Regardless of the weather, a total of 6,661 ducks, geese, and swans were observed along the entire route. This number included 4,537 scaup, 383 widgeon, and 453 ring-necked ducks among 622 Canada geese and 39 tundra swans. A sprinkling of goldeneye, gadwall, shoveler, and green-winged teal were observed along the route as well. Survey results will be further summarized and submitted to Olympia staff for inclusion in the overall cooperative effort to monitor waterfowl populations across North America.



Midwinter Waterfowl Surveys

A few noted “species” highlights from the survey included a male Long-tailed Duck (formerly Oldsquaw) on Horsethief Lake. It was a winter-plumaged bird with the long central tail feathers, a rare bird in the Columbia River Gorge. In addition we spotted a drake Redhead on Horsethief Lake, a species that is very scarce in the Gorge.

Closer to the John Day Dam a full adult drake Tufted Duck was sorted out from a large raft of Ring-necked Ducks and Scaup. Although the Tufted Duck is periodically seen on the Columbia River in the winter, it is considered a rare Eurasian migrant. In this same area near John Day Dam we found a White Pelican and a Cackling Canada Goose. Cacklers are rarely seen in the Columbia River Gorge east of the Vancouver/Ridgefield wetlands.

Midwinter Waterfowl Survey – District 10: Biologist Bergh finished up the District 10 portion of the Midwinter Waterfowl Inventory by surveying routes in Cowlitz and Lewis counties. Very little sheet water was present on fields and what little was there was often frozen. Because of this, lower than average counts were seen on all survey routes.

Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area Elk Survey: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Assistant Manager Loomis conducted the second monthly winter elk survey on the valley floor of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area. The survey is conducted early every month, December through April, to assess the number of elk using the Wildlife Area, survey for elk carcasses, and evaluate winter conditions. A total of 111 elk were observed on the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area. Elk appeared to be in good condition with forage available on the valley floor, and the snow level at 3,500 ft.

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

Private Lands/Access

Martin Access Sites: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes used chainsaws to remove limbs from around the boat launch and moved one of the boulders farther away from the ramp so trailers won't hit it.

Vancouver Lake and Martin Access Sites: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes came upon damage by persons unknown and for unknown reasons that pulled a boulder into the middle of the lower gravel parking area and tried to remove the cable in the upper paved lot by tying it to their hitch ball and pulling on it. Several concrete pillars were broken off. The persons attempting this had to remove their ball from the hitch because the cable tightened up and couldn't be removed.



Above: Site maintenance. Below: Pillar damage.



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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Conflict: Conflict Specialist McDonald and Biologist Stephens met with two Clark County farmers experiencing springtime deer damage. Fencing options were discussed and proactive, nonlethal methods were suggested. We will follow up with these landowners when the growing season begins.



Conflict Specialist McDonald met with a Hunt by Written Permission contract holder in Klickitat County regarding elk damaging his barbed wire fences. Master Hunters for the last Trout Lake Elk Hunt have been contacted regarding this property. The landowner is very happy with the respect that the Master Hunters have been showing his property. The landowner will use noisemakers to discourage the elk from congregating on his property.

District 10 and Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: December temperatures and precipitation were below normal. There was little snowfall or accumulation below 3,000 feet until the first week in December, when arctic air arrived lowering temperatures to well below normal for the time of year. Most areas between 2,500 feet and sea level only received a trace to a couple of inches of snow in December during two snowfall events.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will range from 2,500 to 6,000 feet for the upcoming week. The 6-10 and 8-14 day forecasts are for above normal temperatures and precipitation.

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

Habitat: Forage is available at all mid to lower elevations, with the landscape being snow free below 3,500 feet.

Snow Depths: Areas of mid to low elevations are snow free, with there being only minimal snow in elevations above 3,000 feet. Snowpack is less than 50% of average for the time of year.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The second monthly winter elk survey was conducted on January 10. A total of 111 elk were observed on the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area.

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

Mortality: None reported.

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.

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

District 9 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Precipitation in the South Cascades increased this week with new snow accumulations primarily above 4,500 ft. Precipitation/snowpack is still below normal but recent weather should begin to improve the outlook for spring runoff. Night time temperatures moderated this week as a warm Pacific front moved into the area Wednesday.

Winter Severity: Elevations below 5,000 ft. continue to be open throughout District 9, both the west and east side of the Cascades. There is no concern for the current severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County in the White Salmon River drainage. Those portions of Klickitat County east of Rock Creek have no snow accumulation and deer are reported in good condition.

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

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

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

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	
WAKEPISH	2,800'		No report		1-2" snow	1-2" snow	2" snow	2" base	

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	
		Min Temp (F)	14	19	23	29	31	26	
		Max Temp (F)	45	27	50	54	51	47	
		Avg Temp (F)	30	22	36.2	38.3	39.5	36.7	
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	27	27	27.7	30.9	31.3	36.6	

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	
		Min Temp (F)	11	18	21	29	30	20	
		Max Temp (F)	46	27	52	51	52	46	
		Avg Temp (F)	29	25	36.8	36.8	39.2	36.8	
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	17.5	17.9	18.3	22.1	22.7	25.5	

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	
		Min Temp (F)	14	16	24	28	29	25	
		Max Temp (F)	48	26	46	46	51	46	
		Avg Temp (F)	31.5	22	34.5	34.8	36	35.2	

		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
Name	Elevation	Stats						
SHEEP CANYON	3,990'	Avg Snow						
		Depth (inches)	4		7	8.6	7.9	11.7
		Min Temp (F)	12		20	28	29	23
		Max Temp (F)	43		50	51	50	50
		Avg Temp (F)	26		35.3	36.8	38.8	35.8
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	23.1		24.4	27.8	28.4	32.5

		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
Name	Elevation	Stats						
CALAMITY	2500'	Avg Snow						
		Depth (inches)	1	5.5	0.1	0	0	0
		Min Temp (F)	16	18	27	32	33	30
		Max Temp (F)	47	27	55	52	53	48
		Avg Temp (F)	31	23	39.2	41.2	42.3	39.8
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	18.8	22	20.3	23.2	23.6	27.4

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%	
SPIRIT LAKE		122%		100%	48%	33%	73%	
SHEEP CANYON		20%		20%	27%	22%	38%	

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Midwinter Waterfowl Counts: Biologist Tirhi began annual waterfowl counts last week in Thurston County. Water levels are below average in the count area as are waterfowl that traditionally use those sites. In particular, flooded agricultural fields that typically support waterfowl are high and dry. High counts in Thurston included McIntosh Lake, Patterson Lake and Capitol Lake. Tirhi secured one new and improved viewing location for McIntosh.



Waterfowl concentration observed on Capitol Lake, Thurston County.

Both Biologists Ament and Loafman assisted with mid-winter waterfowls surveys. Due to the scheduling of the program winter workshop, Biologist Loafman was approved to assist with the surveys.

Aerial Survey: Biologist Ament spent time on Thursday, January 2 reviewing maps and preparing for an aerial survey. She conducted a two hour aerial survey on January 3 to search for concentrations of waterfowl in eastern Clallam County. This survey is very useful in helping determine how to deploy surveyors for ground counts. New priority survey locations have also been located during past surveys. Fortunately, there were good weather conditions for the survey. No ponds or wetland areas were found to be frozen during the survey (*Special note – there were overnight freeze conditions the next two days after the flight). No new significant concentration areas were located, but Biologist Ament did gather useful information for waterfowl distribution and also took several GPS fixes for ponds to check from the ground.



Above: Grays Marsh in Clallam County. Below: Three Crabs area by the mouth of Dungeness River, Clallam County.



Ground Counts – Prep: Biologist McMillan coordinated the District 16 effort by including many assistants from other agencies and organizations who contributed their time.

Ground Counts – January 5: Biologist Ament surveyed all priority listed sites from Sequim to Port Angeles on Sunday January 5.

Ground Counts – January 6: Biologists McMillan, Ament and Loafman conducted waterfowl surveys on Monday in the Dungeness Basin. Other assistants in the Dungeness Basin count included USFWS Biologists Thomas and Sollman, Bob Boekelheide, Graysmarsh Manager Robin Berry, and Pt No Pt Tribal Biologist Cullinan. A majority of ponds were frozen over and in many cases waterfowl were only found on open water or in fields.

Ground Counts – January 7: Biologist McMillan conducted counts east of Port Angeles, from Morse Creek west to Ennis Creek, in concert with Biologist Thomas' (USFWS) counts in Port Angeles Harbor from various ground locations.

Biologist Ament conducted ground counts of all listed priority sites located east of Sequim in Clallam County. There was some open water at these sites and an average number of ducks were observed.

Ground Counts – January 8-9: Biologist Sager (Lower Elwha Tribal Bio) conducted waterfowl counts on sites west of Port Angeles to Lake Crescent area.



Waterfowl concentration observed near the mouth of the Dungeness River, Clallam County.

Biologist Skriletz conducted the waterfowl ground surveys for Mason, Kitsap and east Jefferson counties. Waterfowl numbers appear to be down in District 15 due to low water levels at many freshwater locations.