

Wildlife Program

Week of January 13-19, 2014

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) – Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)

Evaluation: Biologists Derek Stinson, Ann Potter, and Chris Sato completed evaluation of invertebrates identified for review as part of revising SGCN status. To evaluate taxa for SGCN designation, a screening process was developed to assess all invertebrate taxa with state or federal Endangered, Threatened, Sensitive, or Candidate status, NatureServe ranks of G1, G2, S1, or S2, and additional species of conservation priority as identified by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff.

Approximately 200 taxa met these criteria. Derek, Chris, and Ann evaluated these, identified 70 for possible SGCN status, identified about 20 that need further evaluation, and noted 6 taxa for which SGCN status likely is not appropriate in the future. Information for evaluated taxa, including reviewer reasoning and taxa references were compiled and provided to Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator Lynn Helbrecht.

Washington Ground Squirrel Protection: At the request of Biologist Wiles and working through District Biologist Rich Finger, Assistant Manager Brian Cole of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex installed signage through the Seep Lakes Unit and the Lind Coulee Arm of the Potholes Reservoir Unit, directing the public to not shoot the ground squirrels, which are a protected species.

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery – Surveys: With snow seeming unlikely on Sagebrush Flats (SBF) this winter we decided to go ahead with transect surveys without the aid of snow. The surveys were much more successful than we anticipated. We were able to both cover ground more quickly and observe burrows easier than we anticipated; although it was more difficult to determine current activity status without the aid of snow tracks.

Technicians Duvuvuei and Hastings, Biologist Gallie, Natural Resource Specialist Winegart, and Biologist Wisniewski were able to survey a little more than 4 priority survey areas and collect pellets from 109 potential new pygmy rabbit (PYRA) burrows and 31 known PYRA burrows from 2012-13. Genetic testing of the pellets will determine if these new locations are pygmy rabbit burrows, and supply evidence of survival after release. It will also give us information on rabbit production.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management



Region 1 Moose Survey: Districts 1 and 2 wildlife staff along with Game Section Manager Rich Harris and Moose/Deer Project Biologist Sara Hansen teamed together to accomplish helicopter surveys of moose within the two districts. This winter a new methodology using distance sampling from line transects is being employed. Unfavorable weather conditions hampered survey efforts this week; hence, several additional flight days will be needed to accomplish sampling objectives between now and next month. One of the radio-collared cows from last month's moose captures was observed during the flights.

White-tailed Deer Population Modeling: Region 1 Wildlife Program staff participated in a meeting with Professor Paul Lukacs, a biometrician from the University of Montana. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the efficacy of developing an integrated population model to estimate and monitor the white-tailed deer population within northeastern Washington.

Annual Coordination Meeting between the Colville Confederated Tribes and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW): District Wildlife Biologist Dana Base along with Regional Wildlife Program Manager Kevin Robinette attended this annual coordination meeting with fish and wildlife personnel from the Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT) held in Airway Heights, WA. Many topics were discussed including wolves, piscivorous birds, sharp-tailed grouse, elk, and big-horned sheep. Foremost among these was continuing coordination and cooperation for management of wildlife on the North Half of the CCT Reservation.

Wildlife Areas

Grouse tracking at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA): Volunteer Dr. Kim Thorburn tracked by ground on Tuesday, January 14 locating several sage grouse, including six birds without signals that flushed while she was nearing a bird with a signal. Thorburn was also able to fly over a small area on Wednesday, January 15 once the fog burned off at the Davenport airport. She and the pilot were up for 3.25 hours, and located four of the eight birds she had thought she might be able to find. These were two female sage grouse (one a mortality), a male sage grouse, and a male sharp-tailed grouse. Thorburn hopes that the cold has sapped the batteries on the transmitters for the other four grouse, and that she can locate them when the weather warms up. Thorburn tracked with two additional volunteers, Adrian Rus and Katie Wat, on Saturday. These two college students have done a little tracking at SLWA before, and tracked on their own on

Sunday. On Saturday, January 18, Thorburn radio-located two sharp-tail females and one sharp-tail male, and saw three sharp-tails of unknown sex without signals. She also radio-located two sage grouse females, including one mortality, which appeared to be due to great horned owl predation. On Sunday, Rus and Wat radio-located three sharp-tail males, one sharp-tail female, and one sage grouse male.

Private Lands/Access

Mule Deer Foundation funding request: Private Lands Biologist Baarstad met with members of the Spokane Chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation (MDF) to discuss a funding proposal for habitat management projects to benefit mule deer, Sage grouse and Sharp-tailed grouse in at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area and private lands in the hunter access program in Lincoln County. Baarstad requested \$1,500 for planting projects in 2014 and an additional \$3,500 over the next three years to improve summer range forage for mule deer and foraging/nesting habitat for grouse. The proposal was well received and MDF will make a decision soon.

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

Wildlife Areas

Access site repairs and maintenance: Access Manager Scott Young conducted routine maintenance at the access areas on Silver, Fourth of July, Hatch, Ruby, Waitts, and Eloika Lakes. He also had to tip two portable toilets back upright after a windstorm the weekend of January 11 tipped them over.



Scott Young tipped toilets upright at the Fourth of July Lake Access Site, January 15, 2014.

Blue Mountains Wildlife Area – Boggan Access Site:

Debby Flynn and Cuevas Winegeart spent a portion of their day Monday assisting Terry Folkins with repair of the entry road into the access site. Rain and runoff conditions continually play havoc washing out the driveway. Debby and Cuevas hauled the wildlife area mini-excavator down and installed a section of conveyor belt on its side in trench dug across the top of the driveway. The belt was buried so that only about four inches were left exposed above ground to capture and divert excess water. After the belt was installed, the excavator was used to fill in eroded ditches and other washed out areas in the driveway.



View of the repaired driveway at Boggan Access Site.



Cuevas Winegeart and Debby Flynn repaired roads at the Boggan Access Site.

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 – Hwy 195 Moose Calf Removal: Conflict Specialist Bennett, Sergeant Sprecher, Officer Langbehn, and Wildlife Veterinarian Mansfield immobilized a female moose calf that was being fed by locals. The calf moose was successfully moved to a north Spokane County location.



Successfully immobilized moose near Highway 195 was moved to a north Spokane County location.

Wildlife Conflict – Asotin County/Cloverland Elk Issues: Conflict Specialist Rasley met with two farmers in the Cloverland area regarding an update on the 350-plus head of elk that traditionally come off of our wildlife area and cause crop damage to the canola crop. Both said since they filled one damage prevention elk permit 3-4 weeks ago the elk have stayed on WDFW's canola crop on Smoothing Iron Ridge. So far all the farmers are very happy with WDFW's efforts to assist them with their crop damage.

Wildlife Conflict – Nuisance Turkeys: Biologist Earl and Conflict Specialist Rasley worked together to alleviate turkey issues in Asotin County. An automatic feeder purchased by the Turkey Federation was placed to help remove turkeys from a winter cattle feeding area. The

landowner has over 100 birds tearing up hay bales and getting into feeders. Earl and Rasley also delivered 500 pounds of peas to a landowner up Asotin Creek to help with the 200 turkeys there.

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

Private Lands/Access

Inland Northwest Wildlife Council Award received by Joey McCanna: Region 1 Private Lands Program Supervisor Joey McCanna (right) received an award from the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council for his work to provide thousands of acres of hunter access through landowner agreements, and to coordinate response to wildlife conflicts on private land. Regional Director Steve Pozzanghera (left) presented the award to McCanna at the Wildlife Council's annual member appreciation banquet last weekend.



REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wolf Conservation and Management

Wolves: The Wenatchee district office received the first confirmation of wolf activity in the Wenatchee area this week. A remote camera placed near a deer carcass by a local landowner recorded two images of a wolf during a night time visit. This is the first time during the 2013/2014 winter that the presence of a wolf has been confirmed. Reports and sign of wolf activity have been noticeably absent during the fall and winter, leading to speculations about the persistence of the pack itself. This sighting is at the center of the activity of the pack last winter. However, there is no way of confirming if this wolf is a disperser or part of a local pack. Attempts over the fall and winter by Wolf Biologist Becker to locate the Wenatchee pack have not yielded positive results. At this time of year, deer and elk have moved down in elevation onto winter ranges and it's expected that wolves, if present, follow the ungulates. At this point, there is no other information, and without snow cover it will be more difficult to confirm locations.



Nighttime remote camera image of a wolf in the Wenatchee area, 2014.

Wolf Management: Specialist Heilhecker made arrangements to attend the Coordinated Reserve Management (CRM) meetings for the Methow Wildlife Area next week. She drove around the area and gathered background information for the meeting. Specialist Heilhecker received a phone call from a representative of Conservation Northwest. They discussed range riders and the carcass removal project on January 15.

Wildlife Management



Technician Hastings surveying for active pygmy rabbit burrows. Photo by J. Gallie

Pygmy Rabbit Winter Surveys: Biologist Gallie, Technicians Duvuvuei and Hastings, and Assistant Manager Winegeart began winter surveys for active pygmy rabbit burrows on Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area, but without the benefit of the snow. Adjusting survey methods a bit to deal with the lack of snow, we were still easily able to detect burrow systems and find fresh pellets to collect for DNA analysis. However, the lack of snow has made it difficult to conclude whether some burrow systems were active or not without tracks. See Pygmy Rabbit Update for results.

Wildlife Areas

Odessa Subarea Special Study: Biologist Duvuvuei met with WDFW fish biologists and Water Program Coordinator Davidson to discuss amendments to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Ecology, and WDFW. The amendments address mitigation options and environmental commitments related to the Implementation and Adaptive Management for the Odessa Program. Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei have been developing Statements of Work for several mitigation projects throughout the Columbia Basin including one large wetland restoration project, leopard frog reintroduction planning, burrowing owl artificial nest structures, and nesting platforms for aechmophorus grebes.

North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team: Prescribed Burn Team Member White continues helping with miscellaneous projects on the Methow Wildlife Area. The Prescribed Fire Burn Plan for the Mill 2 Unit on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area underwent final editing and should be ready for signature approval by Swedberg, Okanogan Lands Operations and Prescribed Burn Program Manager. Good progress was made on the Cecile Creek 2 Prescribed Fire Burn Plan. Fuels Manager Leuschen and Dry Forests Restoration Specialist Guse met with Matt Dahlgreen of The Nature Conservancy to scope-out and prioritize proposed prescribed fire burn units on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area.

Chiliwist Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) Meeting: Manager Haug and Okanogan Complex Manager Swedberg met with representatives of the Chiliwist Coordinated Resource Management (CRM) team in Okanogan to discuss the upcoming grazing rotation within the Chiliwist Wildlife Area. The meeting was hosted by Will Keller of the Natural Resource Conservation Service and included representatives from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Plans for grazing within the Chiliwist Wildlife Area for this year were solidified and expectations for the permittee and WDFW were clearly stated and understood. To date, grazing within the wildlife area has been almost nonexistent. WDFW and the permittee look forward to implementing grazing as a tool to improve forage quality and range conditions.

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

Wildlife Management

Reserves/Regulated Access Areas -- Biologists Finger, Duvuvuei and Wehland toured the Winchester and North Potholes Reserves and discussed options for adjusting the boundaries. By scoping potential boundary adjustments, the biologists are seeking to increase waterfowl hunting opportunities in the Columbia Basin while reducing large areas of reserve that include uplands and/or wetlands of relatively low bird use, and attempting to place boundaries such that they run along ridgelines or roads rather than through the middle of wetlands or road-less uplands. The key to these adjustments is protecting the core concentration areas from disturbance. District Team involvement will occur this week so we can receive input from the various programs.



View of the waterfowl concentration area within Winchester Reserve. This wide spot in the Winchester Wasteway is important because it provides open water and great loafing opportunity on sand bars and slack water ice shelves. Photo by Rich Finger

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

Wildlife Management

Pasco Wildlife Society Conference: Biologist Finger produced a poster for The Wildlife Society conference in Pasco during February 3-7.

SOFT RELEASE METHODS FOR THE REINTRODUCTION OF WASHINGTON GROUND SQUIRRELS.

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Objectives

- Enclosures are intended to delay freedom for a short period of time (e.g. several days) in which squirrels self localize with conspecifics within and among enclosures.
- Enclosures should force squirrels to create burrow infrastructure and invest in the colony.
- Artificial tunnels allow squirrels to venture out while minimizing risk from birds of prey.

Site Preparation

- Soil suitability is most important consideration; deep (>6'), sandy/light loam soils are optimal.
- A Verminator can be used to create shallow tunnels (6" deep) which quickly become occupied by ground squirrels.
- In deep soils with minimal rock the Verminator is capable of operating at about 1.5 tph to a large complex of shallow starter tunnels can be established relatively easily. May not work in stony soils.
- Supplemental cover and food can help increase survival while squirrels develop the colony.
- Short term predator control would likely increase the probability of success.

Enclosures



Step 1: Attach ends and lay out 25' length of 1/2" x 1" welded wire. Use spray paint to mark location to guide trenching.



Step 2: Dig 4-6" deep trench to place enclosure.



Step 3: Place enclosure, backfill, and install upper flashing barrier. Flashing will keep squirrels from climbing over the top. Bird netting top may be warranted to reduce depredation from birds of prey.



Step 4: Provide temporary nest boxes and food (e.g. unsalted peanuts and carrots for moisture). Monitor as needed.

Results

- Success is highly variable and likely dependent upon level of predator activity.
- 50-70% of pregnant females have been documented to return and produce litters on successful sites.
- Complete failure may result on sites experiencing intense predator activity.

Lessons Learned

- Ground squirrels can be translocated during two time periods, either prior to birthing (Feb) or after pups are weaned (May).
- Up to three pregnant females per enclosure can be translocated effectively. If translocating individuals after weaning, number per enclosure can likely be increased.
- Success is likely higher if kinship is considered during translocation.
- If a suitable site is selected (i.e. soils are appropriate), predators are likely to be the most significant factor limiting success.
- Perches may need to be substituted for metal flashing or squirrels will chew it apart and escape our top.
- Enclosures are relatively cheap and can be reused if stored properly.

Materials and cost

Enclosure Materials	Cost/Enclosure
25' welded wire roll 1/2" x 1/2" x 1"	\$38.00
25' x 6" Flashing	\$8.00
25' of underfill	\$10.00
3/4" x 1/4" bird netting	\$0.00
TOTAL COST PER ENCLOSURE	\$56.00

Site Preparation Cost

Verminator	\$1,000 per release site
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Acknowledgments

Step: Hills Golf Course, Warden, Washington provided the source population and trapping assistance. Clatsop Ridge Corrections Center inmates provided assistance with enclosure installation. US Fish and Wildlife Service has provided financial and logistical support throughout the life of this project. Lastly, special thanks to the many volunteers who have participated in the trapping efforts.



Sandhill Crane Festival: Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei coordinated with Sandhill Crane coordinator Cindi Harr. Finger and Duvuvuei will each be giving a lecture (Washington ground squirrels and Sage grouse, respectively) and a couple tours for Washington ground squirrels and a reintroduction themed tour of pygmy rabbits and ground squirrels with Biologist Wisniewski. Finger and Duvuvuei will also be setting up a small WDFW booth which describes the lands that WDFW manages and the wildlife viewing opportunities throughout those units.

Wildlife Areas

Chesaw Wildlife Area timber thinning project: Assistant Manager Dupont is monitoring the timber thinning project on the Chesaw Unit. Pioneer Harvesting started thinning timber last week under ideal conditions. Despite melting snow at slightly lower elevations, the project site at 4,100 feet and on a north slope aspect is holding up well. The roads are frozen solid, with 8 inches of snow cover. Log truck drivers are starting at 2:00 a.m., and off the haul road by 10:30 a.m. as warming temps melt the lower elevations. Pioneer is harvesting about five acres per day, which means after this week they will be approximately half done with this winters harvest. About 40 loads have been cut to date.



Self-loading forwarder at the landing, Chesaw Wildlife Area – Photo by Jim Olson

Private Lands/Access

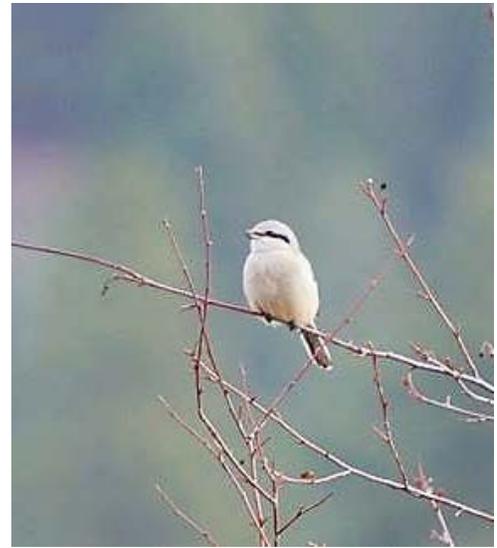
Access Maintenance – Access Manager Graves serviced and maintained access areas in the Region that receive duck hunter and ice fisherman use this time of year, including installing or replacing signs.



Evergreen Lake, ice angler activity – Photo by Joe Graves



Mallards enjoy a nice loafing area on an ice shelf in a private hunting club – Photo by Rich Finger



Clockwise from top: A pair of Mule Deer within a recently thinned area of the Chiliwist Wildlife Area. Bald Eagle over Forde Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Sharp-shinned Hawk on the Chiliwist. Northern Shrike on the Sinlahekin. Bohemian Waxwing on the Sinlahekin. Photos by Justin Haug. A long-tailed weasel observed near the shop at the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Photo by Brandon Boulger

REGION 3

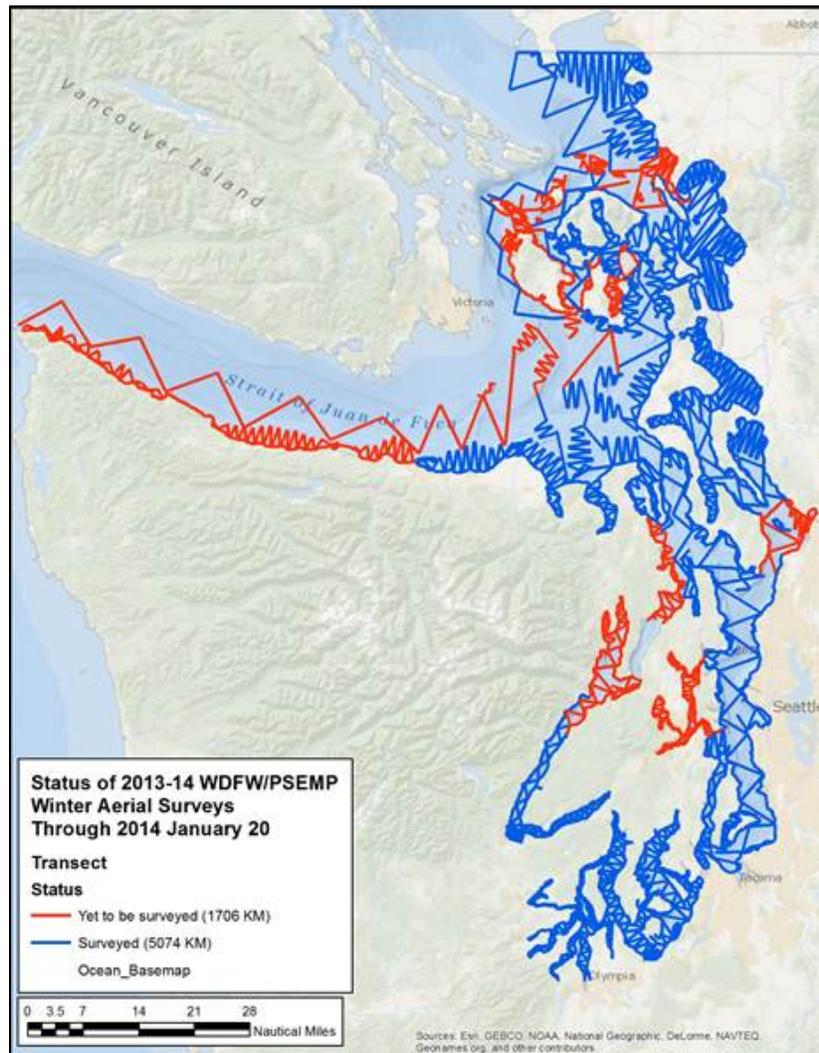
None.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Winter Marine Waterfowl Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra, Waterfowl Survey and 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 are the longest data sets 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. Continued dense low fog has hampered surveys this past week, but with flights on the weekend and holiday we are now nearly 75% complete. 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. Information on these surveys along with past data can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/psamp/>.



Status of 2013-2014 Winter Marine Waterfowl Surveys as of January 20, 2014. Blue indicates completed transects.

Mid-Winter Waterfowl Counts: Biologist Milner completed mid-winter waterfowl counts in Snohomish County. Highlights for Biologists Anderson and Smith were Trumpeter Swan, Redhead, Ruddy Duck, Canvasback, neck banded Cackling Geese and the usual few Eurasian Wigeon...all in an urban setting. Given the fog and sheet water due to rains in past week – diversity was decent but numbers seem anecdotally low. Compilation of data will likely show this speculative trend. Waterfowl are likely spread out and may be hanging to the north given the weather conditions we've had in Western Washington. Biologist DeBruyn conducted driven waterfowl surveys in Whatcom and Skagit counties, counting ducks and geese on lakes, ponds and gravel pits. All water was open and good numbers of ducks were counted.

Heron Biology

Outreach: Biologist Anderson provided urban wildlife and specifically heron biology outreach and a presentation for an open house regarding heron and other wildlife viewing proposals in the Magnolia/Ballard area.



Swan Morbidity and Mortality Project: Technician Anderson with assistance from Technician Otto continued to attend to the large number of sick and dead swans in northern Whatcom County. The focus was on repeatedly checking the locations where large numbers of swans have been recovered since mid-December. Fewer swans recovered this week and Anderson spent considerable time going through the swan log data to classify swans according to probable/potential cause of mortality. A preliminary pathology report from the swan carcasses sent to the National Wildlife Health Center suggests that both Aspergillosis and lead poisoning were involved in the recent spike in mortalities in Whatcom County. Technician Anderson and Biologist Danilson coordinated with members of the swan team to share information and address issues with the swan mortality summary that is disseminated on a weekly basis.

North Cascades Elk Working Group Public Safety Committee Meeting: Biologist DeBruyn chaired a meeting of the committee at Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) headquarters in Mt. Vernon attended by representatives from WSDOT, Washington State Patrol (WSP), WDFW, Western Washington University (WWU), The Stillaguamish Tribe and some landowners. A draft of one objective of the herd plan was approved and it was agreed to work on some language in the strategies section to make it more specific. A second objective relating to minimizing risk of vehicle collisions involving elk viewing was discussed at length. The committee agreed to move forward on suggesting another viewing area off Highway 20 to alleviate people stopping on the highway to view elk. An update on data collection (e.g., smart phone app, website, hot line) was given. WSDOT gave an update on the signage project and reported that the new signs were in place, but the solar powered flashers were not yet in operation. An update on the collar study was given. One of the collared animals appears to be

injured and may have to be euthanized. The committee agreed to meet again in March and have our plan objectives finalized at that time.

Oregon Spotted Frog Work Group Annual Meeting: Biologist Danilson was contacted by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) representatives regarding the upcoming annual Oregon Spotted Frog Work Group meeting (scheduled for January 21). Unable to attend, Danilson provided GIS data and an update on proposed activities for 2014. Due to other pressing issues and a lack of funding, District 14 staff will not be conducting Oregon Spotted Frog surveys in 2014. The surveys conducted during the previous three field seasons were funded by USFWS and were primarily conducted by seasonal staff under the supervision of WDFW and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Wildlife Areas

Intalco Ponds and Lake Terrell Water Controls: Manager Kessler coordinated with managers at Ducks Unlimited on replacement of leaking water controls on the Intalco and Lake Terrell units. One water control on Intalco has a big hole in it and is leaking, causing one of the ponds to be about three feet lower than normal. The water control on Rainbow Pond on the Lake Terrell Unit also has a hole, but was patched last summer. It continues to leak, and will also need to be replaced. Ducks Unlimited will help with estimates for these replacements.



Managers from the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association and students with Bellingham Technical College installed 80,000 chum salmon eggs in remote site incubators on Terrell Creek, Whatcom Wildlife Area.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: WDFW and Ducks Unlimited staff that attended the project Stakeholder Committee meeting on January 8 met via teleconference to

discuss input received from Stakeholder Committee and to consolidate notes to be incorporated in a draft meeting summary. Once finalized and approved by the Stakeholder Committee, the meeting summary will be posted on the project webpage. WDFW and Ducks Unlimited staff scheduled a meeting for January 30 to work on drafting design alternatives for the area, and will present them at a public meeting this spring when they are completed.

Samish River Unit (Welts) Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Program Manager Link, and Wildlife Area Manager Rotton met to discuss issues related to project permits. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will require an Individual permit and compensatory mitigation to construct the parking lot portion of the project. Brokaw and Rotton are now reviewing compensatory mitigation options, including adding a project element to the current plan set to count as on-site mitigation or accomplishing mitigation requirements at other sites in the watershed.

Samish Unit (West-90) Wetland Project: Manager Rotton and Project Coordinator Brokaw had a teleconference with Ducks Unlimited staff, and discussed modifying the project design, initiating the permit application process, and holding a public Open House to present information on the proposed project and answer questions. A date for the Open House will be set when more information on the proposed design is available, but will likely take place in March.

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.

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

Wildlife Management

Co-management Technical Committee Meeting: Manager Link, Biologist Danilson, and Technician Griffith attended the quarterly meeting of the co-management technical committee. In addition to WDFW staff, representatives from several of the Point Elliott Treaty Tribes were in attendance. The range of topics discussed included research, data sharing, survey and monitoring efforts, herd plan updates, elk-related conflicts, and lethal and non-lethal strategies to address elk damage.

Exploring Private Lands Access -- Wildlife Conflicts Nexus: Biologists Danilson and Caldwell, Specialist Griffith, and Technician Pinjuv met to discuss using Private Lands Access Program(s) to help address elk damage issues in Acme. This is a carryover topic from early 2013 (prior to a vacancy in the Private Lands Bio 2 position). Additional hunting pressure created by changes to elk hunting seasons in Game Management Unit (GMU) 407 appear to have helped reduce elk damage this winter, but are burdensome to the one large landowner in this area due to the number of hunters requesting access. Conceptually, staff is exploring whether Private Lands

Access programs can help reduce this burden and potentially be expanded to other landowners in this area.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Delta Waterfowl Replacement Lands Proposal: Information on this proposal and others is currently available at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/acquisitions/>, and the public is invited to comment until January 31. The WDFW team working on this proposal has planned a meeting for February 4 to discuss next steps in this project.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Survey: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo monitored quality hunt sites for use, and identified maintenance needs and issues.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Sites: Habitat management practices employed by the Private Lands technician staff (Otto and Deyo) were a success at many sites within Region 4 in 2013. The resulting habitat structures likely enhanced the quality characteristics of these hunting sites (see photos). Furthermore, site characteristics at other locations also exhibited favorable conditions to provide quality hunt opportunities.



Green Road Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site (management practice used: mowing).



Barret Road Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site (natural habitat structure).



Region 4 access staff fixed the entry road and removed downed alder trees on the Panther Lake Access Site in Snohomish County.

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 Wolf Sighting: While facilitating the Damage Committee meeting on Wednesday, Conflict Specialist Griffith and Biologist Danilson received a report of a “wolf howling” on a landowner’s property in Day Creek. Danilson notified the appropriate chain of command. Griffith met with the landowner and conducted a field investigation on Friday. Griffith took a statement from the landowner, located canine tracks in the area, took evidentiary photos, and submitted his findings to appropriate chain of command. Canine tracks found by Griffith were well within the size range of a coyote or small domestic dog.



Canine tracks found in the Skagit Valley were within the size range of a coyote or small domestic dog.

Wildlife Conflicts: Conflict Specialist Griffith, Technician Pinjuv, and Biologist Danilson facilitated the sixth meeting of the North Cascades Elk Damage Committee. The meeting was well attended by local agriculture interests, sportspeople and Tribal representatives. The group provided input and comments to one of the main herd plan objectives and supporting strategies

related to agricultural damage. Pinjuv finalized specifications for two fencing projects in the Skagit Valley and completed materials lists for both projects.

Biologist Smith communicated with Master Hunters assigned to properties within hunt #2710 (Region 4 South). Hunters documented (trail cameras) a few elk visiting agricultural fields during hours of darkness. However, no elk were located in hunting locations during legal shooting hours. Biologist Smith used a trail camera to monitor intermittent nocturnal elk activity on agricultural properties in the Snoqualmie Valley. Elk activity has decreased significantly on these properties, but may resume at any time.

Wildlife Areas

Volunteer Native Plant Potting: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated a volunteer native plant potting party to replenish plants in the Cherry Valley nursery. Approximately 18 Cub Scouts, Scout Leaders and parents from the Lake Stevens Pack

participated in the event held at the Ebey Island Unit. The Cub Scouts have been discussing “What’s a Volunteer” during the month and this opportunity provided the activity for the lesson. Local partner Sound Salmon Solutions provided tables, canopy and pots for the event. Approximately 100 native plants and shrubs were potted up and transported to the Cherry Valley Nursery. Manager Boehm was very pleased to see adult leaders and parents participate in the event, providing the mentoring necessary to grow future volunteers.



Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with three farmers interested in leasing cropland at Ebey Island. Manager Boehm facilitated this second round of meetings to further discuss potential crops, acreage and additional details that will impact the viability of raising crops on the unit.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Project staff held a meeting with organizations providing funding for the project to update them on project status and the future timeline. The project is currently on track with its timeline, and is expected to have a final design completed by December 31, 2014.

Wiley Slough Restoration Project: Manager Rotton is working with Habitat Biologist Brian Williams and Habitat Engineer Bob Barnard to update the pump station operation and maintenance plan for the proposed new pump station.

Skagit Headquarters: Staff removed trees blown down on the dike top trail during the most recent wind storms. Dead trees along the dike trail are monitored regularly following wind storms and to make sure to reduce any hazard trees that may develop.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm attended Snohomish County's Sustainable Land Strategy Executive Committee monthly meeting. Manager Boehm provided a progress report to the members detailing Ebey Island agriculture progress over the last four months. The Committee was pleased to hear that WDFW has a team in place to plan and manage the complex issues on the unit. Manager Boehm announced his intention to have crops in the ground for the 2014 growing season.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program Meetings: Biologist Caldwell met with the Executive Director of the Western Washington Agricultural Association to discuss land qualities, agricultural practices and discuss quality hunting opportunities within Region 4. Additional meetings were coordinated to meet local large-scale agricultural operations managers. Biologist Caldwell met with Biologist Danilson and local Wildlife Conflict staff to discuss the private lands access and management model application for areas of wildlife conflict regarding elk damage within Whatcom County. Elk management strategies were discussed that would optimize results and minimize conflict situations.

As a follow up to this meeting, Biologist Caldwell met with Law Enforcement Officer Valentine to discuss stakeholders that are being affected by elk damage. Biologist Caldwell also met with the Skagit Valley Chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association. Introductions and technical information regarding the Private Lands Program were exchanged. Relationships and meeting opportunities were established for the upcoming 2014 waterfowl season.

Hunter Concerns: Biologist Caldwell and Technician Deyo responded to complaints regarding blind placement and use at the Cook road quality hunt site. Biologist Caldwell and Technician Deyo evaluated the blind placement, site attributes and usability of the site. After conducting the review, Biologist Caldwell determined that the blind placement was marginally optimal for quality hunting success in accordance with site attributes and that the blind location needed to be relocated to accommodate the needs of hunters. NOTE: Vegetation and water parameters at this location are in the process of being adaptively managed. As a result, in the upcoming 2014 season, the blind will be relocated, and additional vegetation management will be applied to improve quality site components.

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

Wildlife Management

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

Explosive Storage: Biologist Danilson met with the Washington Labor and Industries (L&I) explosives storage inspector to allow for his inspection of the new storage magazine. The magazine was approved and L&I staff in Olympia were notified. Follow up will include repainting the magazine to meet L&I requirements and sending a payment for the annual storage license fee, which is based on the volume of explosives that will be stored.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Region 5 Deer Management: Biologist Holman compiled and summarized the data from the Klickitat County deer surveys conducted in December. Aerial deer surveys were conducted over GMUs 578 (West Klickitat), 388 (Grayback), and 382 (East Klickitat) during the week of December 16-20. Biologists Holman, Bergh, Stephens and George participated in the survey work with Biologists Anderson and Bergh providing flight following. A total of 1,612 deer were observed during the flights with 1,424 classified.

The survey results broken down by GMU and resulting buck to doe to fawn ratios are as follows:
GMU 578: 177 deer classified (26 bucks to 100 does to 73 fawns).
GMU 388: 562 deer classified (15 bucks to 100 does to 69 fawns).
GMU 382: 685 deer classified (11 bucks to 100 does to 65 fawns).

The buck to doe ratios generated from this survey effort allow for consideration of management actions in relation to the goals outlined in the Game Management Plan (WDFW 2008). The Plan calls for a post-season buck to doe ratio of 15-19 bucks per 100 does in the deer population. While GMUs 578 and 388 regularly meet the objective under existing hunting management strategies, GMU 382 does not. Specifically, the average buck to doe ratio in GMU 382 over the past 5 years is 12 bucks per 100 does. Members of the public interested in GMU 382 deer management should watch the WDFW website for opportunities to offer input during the 2015-17 three-year hunting season setting process.

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) GMUs. During 2013, six fawns have been captured in the Washougal cluster. Fawn monitoring is currently being conducted. To date, three 2013 fawns remain alive in the Washougal study cluster. Two fawns were captured in 2013 in the Coweeman cluster, and one remains alive.

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt: One week remains in the 2013-2014 Management Area 2A regular season goose hunt. The final day to hunt will take place on January 26, 2014. To date, 689 hunters have checked in 1,412 geese at a rate of 2 geese per hunter. Cackling geese continue to comprise the majority of the harvest. However, participating hunters have checked in quite a few snow geese recently due to this species congregating in and around the Shillapoo area. All zones continue to remain open for Management Area 2A. For information regarding up-to-date zone closures, hunters can call the Region 5 office at 360-696-6211 and follow the menu options for hunting and waterfowl. Hunters interested in goose hunting in Area 2A, can refer to pages 16, 19 and 20 of the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season Pamphlet or check online at <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01535/wdfw01535.pdf> for further details regarding requirements for participation.

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A Special Late Season Goose Hunt: January 17 was the application deadline for master hunters interested in participating in the 2014 Management Area 2A Special Late Goose Season. This hunt will take place on participating properties from February 1 through March 5 on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Landowners experiencing damage from geese on agricultural properties within Area 2A can sign up for assistance through this program at any time throughout the season. Landowners interested in participating should contact the WDFW Region 5 office at 360-696-6211 for more information on how to be included. Master hunters who are selected to participate in these hunts will need to abide by the same regulations and possess all of the same authorizations required to hunt geese during the regular season in Area 2A. Hunters will be required to check in harvested geese at either the Vancouver or Woodland check stations. Check station hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for the Vancouver Station and 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Woodland Station. Check station locations, regulations and requirements for participation can be found on pages 16, 19 and 20 of the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season Pamphlet or check online at <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01535/wdfw01535.pdf>.

Wildlife Areas



Down tree on Old Headquarter Road

Klickitat Wildlife Area -- Wind Storm: A strong windstorm moved through the area over the weekend, so Technician Davis inspected roads on the Soda Springs Unit to look for storm damage. He found three places where trees had fallen and blocked vehicle passage and worked to clear the trees out of the roads. Expecting to find damage due to fallen trees and limbs, Technician Davis also inspected and repaired fences on the Soda Springs Unit north of the Glenwood Highway. There were also two places found where people had cut the fences.

Klickitat Wildlife Area -- Grazing Permit: The grazing permit on the Fisher Hill Unit is up for renewal, and the permittees have requested to add more WDFW property to their permit. Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven is working with Range Ecologist Burnham to consider this possible action. In preparation for a field visit next week, Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis inspected one of the parcels to see what features are there and found survey markers, functional fences, and nice oak groves interspersed with open grasslands.



View down the Columbia River Gorge (left) and an Oak Grove (right).

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

Private Lands/Access

Klickitat Wind Storm: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes had a lot of clean up and tree removal as a result of the strong windstorm that moved through the Klickitat area over the weekend. A large oak tree was blown over in the parking lot at the Rowland Access Site and Spangler and Rhodes cut and piled the branches and logs out of the road. Two cottonwood trees were down around the Leidle South campground loop road and a large oak tree, rotten cotton wood, and a large pine were blown over in the wind at Stinson Flats. The logs and branches were cut up and winched out of the road.



Rowland Lake (left) and Leidle (right) blow downs.



Stinson Flat blow downs.

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 -- Elk Damage: Conflict Specialist Conklin spent a considerable amount of time this week talking to several landowners regarding Crop Damage Agreements for 2014. Conklin addressed questions from some landowners regarding the use of Master Hunters and allowing public access as part of these agreements. Conklin also worked with a Wahkiakum County landowner this week who is participating for the first time in having Master Hunters assist in addressing elk damage. One hunter was sent to his property this week and Conklin will continue to work with him to assure he is happy with the program.

Conflict Specialist Conklin also met with a local Morton resident experiencing heavy damage from elk on his fields. This landowner is a pleasure to work with and is using multiple tools available to address his elk damage: he uses Master Hunters to assist him in fence damage, provides public access for hunting, is going to begin using Master Hunters for damage control, and also has modified his fences for easier elk crossing. The landowner also suffers from a great amount of damage from geese as well. Conklin and the landowner will work together to begin providing access to goose hunters as well. The photo illustrates the landowner's efforts to modify his fencing to allow elk to cross without damaging the fencing.



Modified fence for elk to easily jump over.



Elk trail leading directly to Highway 12 from the landowner's field.

Conflict Specialist received an early morning call from a landowner in GMU 513 who is very upset that the elk are now eating hay from his barn. The elk are constant residents and routinely eat from this landowner's cow feeders. This particular area is very challenging due to large numbers of elk that stay year round in the lower hay fields and continues to be a difficult issue for the landowners and WDFW alike to address. Conklin was also advised that there are many vehicles versus elk collisions every year in this area.

Range Rider Contracts: Biologist Stephens and Conflict Specialist McDonald met with two of the cattlemen that WDFW has ranger rider contracts with in Klickitat County. The cattlemen will be moving their cow-calf pairs out to grazing allotments this spring on private and public forestland. The range rider contracts are a proactive measure to try and reduce potential conflicts between wolves and the cattle ranching community. Stephens and McDonald emphasized the importance of monitoring cattle behavior while on grazing allotments, maintaining a human presence when possible, and alerting WDFW immediately to potential wolf sign or depredations.

Deer Damage: Conflict Specialist McDonald signed a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement with a Clark County berry farmer experiencing springtime deer damage. Arrangements were made to try new nonlethal hazing devices and a landowner damage access permit was issued.

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. January temperatures have been slightly above normal and there has been below normal precipitation with high snow levels.

Short-Term Forecast: Freezing levels will range from 6,000 to 9,000 feet for the upcoming week. The 6-10 day forecast is for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation, and the 8-14 day forecast is for normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The February forecast is for an equal chance for either above average, below average, or normal temperatures and precipitation. The three month forecast predicts an equal chance for above average, below average, or normal temperatures and 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 3,500 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 3,500 ft. Precipitation/snowpack is still below normal but recent weather should begin to improve the outlook for spring runoff. Nighttime temperatures moderated this week as a warm Pacific front moved into the area Wednesday.

Winter Severity: Elevations below 3,000 ft. continue to be open throughout District 9 for 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	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	
Name	Elevation	Stats							
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

		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	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%

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Trumpeter Swans -- Clallam County Monitoring: Volunteers monitoring the local trumpeter swans conducted a count on January 8. They saw a total of 92 off Schmuck Road and reported that only 2 looked like juveniles. The swans were feeding and resting. They also saw eight more (three juveniles) in the field near the cow barns off Lamar Road. This made for the highest count of the season so far – total of 100 swans. Biologist Ament conducted some swan counts when she was in the field during the past week. On January 14 she observed a total of 47 swans off Smuck Road. On January 17 she observed a total of 25 swans at the Delta Farm and 54 swans off Smuck Road. On January 20 Biologist Ament observed a group of 29 swans (3 juveniles) feeding on remaining carrots on the field south of Anderson Road.



Left: Swans at Delta Farm. Right: Swans off Smuck/Port Williams roads.



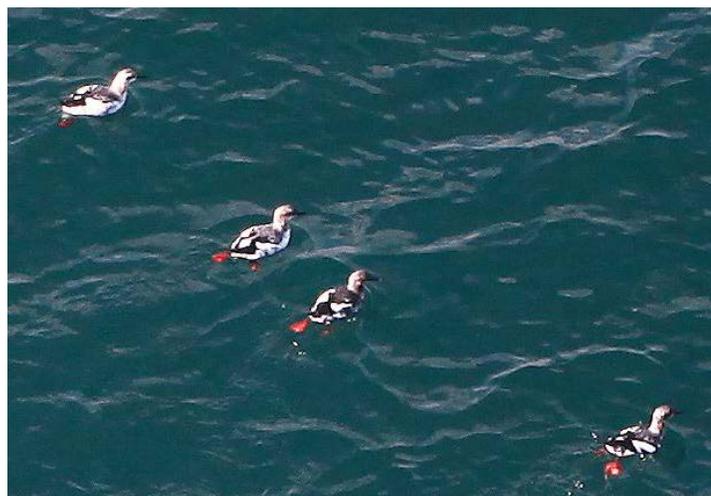
Dead swan: Biologist Ament received a message late on January 13 from Officer Fairbanks who reported that someone had called Olympia Enforcement to report a dead trumpeter swan off Port Williams Road. She knew there was a high risk of predation on the swan so she went searching for the swan for over an hour after midnight. She was unable to locate the swan. Apparently, Officer Fairbanks had also contacted Jaye Moore from the Northwest Raptor Center and she had actually collected the swan late Monday afternoon. The swan was in a field with corn stubble, 100 meters north of Port Williams Rd. (east of Holland). Even with the quick response, there had been some fairly major avian predation on the swan. A guy who lives in the vicinity reported to Biologist Ament that he did observe an adult eagle feeding on the swan. The closest power line was 100 meters to the south. Biologist Ament retrieved

Dead Trumpeter swan collected off Port Williams Road on January 13, 2014.

the swan on January 14 and took it into Greywolf Vet Clinic. She also consulted with Kristin Mansfield and notified District Biologist McMillan, Don Kraege, and Martha Jordan about the dead swan. X-rays revealed no evidence of metal fragments in the body or gizzard. Dr. Tyler actually cut into the gizzard and found no identifiable metal fragments. He reported that the swan had been eating well and was in fairly good condition. The gizzard and liver samples will be taken for possible future lead testing. Dr. Tyler saw no obvious wounds that may have been associated with a line strike or electrocution, but a more thorough exam will be conducted. At this point there is an undetermined cause of death for this swan. The swan and samples will be stored at the Wildlife Program freezer located at the Dungeness Hatchery.

Marking Power Lines -- On January 17, Biologist Ament met with Clallam County Senior Electrical Engineer Kelli Carr to identify some sections of power lines that are hazardous to trumpeter swans. The Public Utility District (PUD) is willing to mark some lines in high-use swan areas and has purchased a supply of flap markers. During the field trip specific lines were identified where electrocutions and line strikes had been documented last season. Markers will be placed on lines at the Delta Farm off Towne Road and along Port Williams Road. Biologist Ament had monitored the flight patterns of the swans at Port Williams for a few evenings. She and Kelli also talked with two separate landowners in the Port Williams Road area who shared some very helpful information. Biologist Mel Walters from Puget Sound Energy, Martha Jordan, and the 2012 document “Reducing Avian Collisions with Power Lines” were all consulted to help determine the number of markers per span and the appropriate spacing of the flapper devices. The markers will be installed by the PUD crew in the upcoming weeks.

Marine Bird Surveys: Waterfowl Survey and Sea Duck Specialist Evenson and Assistant District Biologists Murphie and Cyra continued their survey efforts of the winter sea duck and marine bird aerial surveys of the inner marine waters of Washington State. This is the 22nd winter that these surveys have been conducted. These surveys are the longest data set documenting trends of winter marine bird distribution and population indices in the Puget Sound, documented the declining trends in many of the species that inhabit the Puget Sound during the winter season. In addition, these surveys are used to document population index levels of sea ducks that will determine next year’s harvest limits. The efforts and professionalism of Chuck Perry, chief pilot with Kenmore Air, are much appreciated and are keys to the success of this project.



Top: Mallards and a pintail. Right: Pigeon Guillemots.



A total of three days of survey were flown this week completing 20% of the survey area. The survey is now 67% complete.