

# Wildlife Program

Week of January 20-26, 2014

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

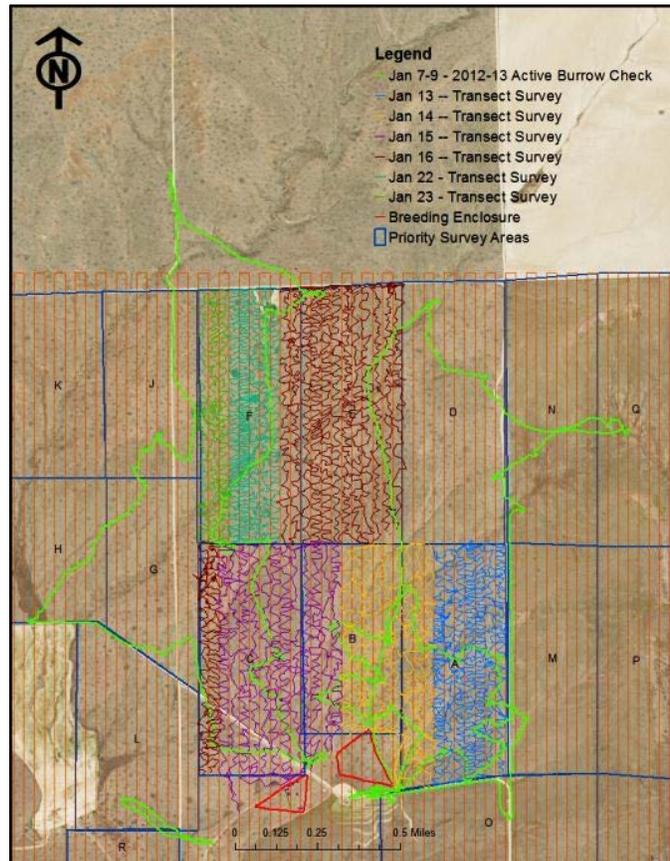
### *GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE*

#### Wildlife Management

**Sage Grouse:** Section Managers Penny Becker and Cynthia Wilkerson reviewed a sage grouse conservation actions document and met to discuss developing a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for the species. Becker followed up on the discussion with Deputy Assistant Director Schirato, Division Manager Gardner and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

**Pygmy Rabbit Recovery:** Technicians Duvuvuei and Hastings along with Biologist Duvuvuei continued surveys this week. They surveyed one day (Hastings two days), completed one more priority survey area (see attached map), and collected 37 pellet samples. 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.

**Oregon Spotted Frog:** Section Manager Becker, Biologist Lisa Hallock and other Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff along with external partners from USFWS, zoos, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and universities met for the annual Oregon Spotted Frog meeting. An update was provided on populations in 2013 and the group discussed 2014 recovery and survey activities. Becker, Hallock and Gardner also met with representatives from Klickitat County regarding addressing their comments on the draft Recovery Plan.



**Columbia White-tailed Deer (CWTD):** Section Manager Becker and Regional Program Manager Sandra Jonker conference called with USFWS biologists regarding a minimum viability assessment that the USFWS has contracted out for. Becker and Jonker discussed with

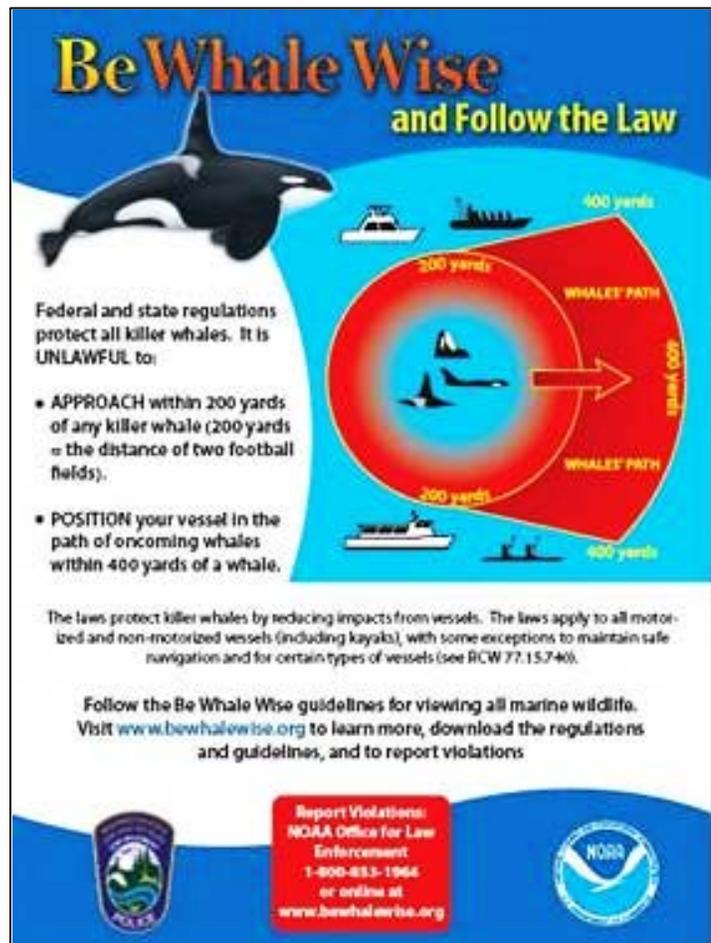
the USFWS biologist about the model developed and how we can work collectively to improve upon it to inform CWTD recovery.

**Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly:** Staff from Diversity Division in Olympia (Derek Stinson, Dave Hays, Ann Potter, Penny Becker), Habitat Program (Gary Bell), and Region 6 (Mary Linders, Anita McMillan, Michelle Tirhi, Mick Cope) met to discuss the Taylor's checkerspot 2-Year Action Plan. This action planning format is a new approach, intended to outline and prioritize all WDFW actions for species or habitat type recovery. In addition to species introductory information, the building blocks of the plan are tables that provide information for each Action: overview, priority, location, staff, time, funding, and expected outcomes. Meeting participants reviewed and discussed the 26 Actions drafted to date for the plan, identified outstanding Actions, and discussed criteria for prioritizing Actions. Next steps in development of the plan are for the lead (Ann Potter) to incorporate comments and additional newly drafted Actions, select a priority level for each Action, and submit that revised draft to the group for detailed review.

**Southern Resident Killer Whales:**

The final version of the Be Whale Wise ad was submitted to Seattle Times Press for printing in the next edition of WDFW's sport fishing rules pamphlet, where it will be placed on the inside back cover. Cost of publication is funded through a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Section 6 grant to WDFW's Enforcement Program, Marine Division. The ad, which was designed by graphic artist Uko Gorter from Kirkland, is intended to remind recreational boaters to stay the appropriate distances away from southern resident killer whales.

**Fisher:** Wildlife Diversity Division Manager Eric Gardner, Listing and Recovery Section Manager Penny Becker and Biologist Jeff Lewis met with Bridget Moran and Ken Berg (USFWS) to discuss the implications of a possible proposal to list the fisher in Washington, especially its implications for moving ahead with a Cascades fisher reintroduction in the fall of 2014. We have a better sense that the Service understands the hurdles we face in initiating the reintroduction project and they have expressed enthusiastic support for WDFW and National Park Service (NPS) moving ahead with the project this fall. Biologist Lewis continues to assist the NPS with the development



of the environmental assessment for the Cascades fisher reintroduction. Lewis recently gave a presentation on fishers and fisher recovery at the North Cascades Basecamp in Mazama, WA. He is also developing a similar presentation as a guest lecturer at The Evergreen State College and to give at The Wildlife Society (TWS) / Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology (SNVB) annual conference in Pasco, WA.

**Teanaway Community Forest:** Section Manager Wilkerson attended a community meeting at the Teanaway Grange that was co-hosted by Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and WDFW. The meeting was attended by approximately 160 people. DNR Special Assistant Matthew Randazzo and Deputy Director Joe Stohr gave an introductory overview, followed by four listening stations that were distributed throughout the room and allowed for one-on-one conversations about various topics. Applications were made available for the Community Forest Trust Advisory Committee. Wilkerson staffed a booth on the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan with Kittitas County Commissioner Paul Jewell.

**Yakima Basin Integrated Plan:** Section Manager Wilkerson attended a strategy session with several other WDFW staff regarding our conservation strategy, focused on components in the first 10-year phase as well as specific WDFW areas of focus for the next 2 years. Wilkerson developed the initial draft strategy and led the discussion regarding refinement and finalization.

***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 Diversity Advisory Council (WDAC):** The current make-up of the Wildlife Diversity Advisory Council met for the second time. All but two members were in attendance, which was an excellent turnout. The WDAC received an informative overview of the Habitat Program's roles in the Department and discussed several emerging conservation issues. A portion of the afternoon was spent in breakout groups during which WDAC members provided input on potential WDAC engagement processes and meeting agenda development/meeting management. A basic framework for meeting management and inter-meeting WDAC engagement using subcommittees was discussed. Two subcommittees, one to address logistics for our next meeting, and another to develop marketing ideas for Personalized License Plates, were approved by the council.

**Division Action Prioritization:** Diversity Division Manager Eric Gardner and Section Managers Penny Becker, Cynthia Wilkerson and Bruce Thompson began detailed discussion for developing the Division-level approach to prioritizing ongoing and future actions of the Division. Initial focus is on a three element approach that considers resources (animal taxa and ecological systems), action types, and motivations for the actions. A final approach, which may differ from that described earlier in this section, is expected by end of March 2014. The preliminary development was shared at a meeting with the Wildlife Diversity Advisory Council on January 25.

## **REGION 1**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Grouse tracking at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA), new volunteers:** On Tuesday, January 21, volunteer Dr. Kim Thorburn tracked by ground and trained two volunteers, Brian Drake and Fabio Fortunat. The two men are wildlife biologists out of southern California, who will be tracking daily at SLWA until about January 28.



***Grouse tracking volunteers Fabio Fortunat (left), Dr. Kim Thorburn (center) and Brian Drake (right) at the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area, January 21, 2014.***

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Access site repairs and maintenance:** Access Manager Scott Young conducted routine maintenance at the access areas on Silver, Hog, Waitts, and Eloika lakes.



*Ice fishers spotted on Hog Lake (rear right), January 25, 2014.*

### Private Lands/Access



**Deer Damage to Orchards/Vineyards:** Conflict Specialist Rasley coordinated one Damage Prevention deer hunt south of Walla Walla along the Oregon State line. One deer was harvested. The hunter asked if he could shoot this buck and Conflict Specialist Rasley said “No.” Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Damage Prevention hunts are limited to antlerless animals.

***Local Vineyard Buck***

## **REGION 2**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wolf Conservation and Management**

**Okanogan Wolf Report Follow-up:** Biologist Heinlen followed up on a wolf report call in the Chesaw area forwarded by Officer Christensen. The reporting party never observed the animal, but reported hearing a very high pitched howl that they recorded and sent to Biologist Heinlen for identification. After reviewing the recording, it was clear the animal making the vocalization was a coyote.

**Wenatchee Wolves:** A short article appeared in the Wenatchee World on the confirmation of a wolf sighting near Wenatchee. Biologist Volsen responded to a report of a wolf being seen in the Squilchick drainage on Friday, Jan. 24. A search of the area yielded no positive sign or tracks. Descriptions of the animal's activity suggested it may have been a large dog. No other reports of a wolf were received from the area of moderate housing density.

**Chelan County Deer Hair Loss:** Biologist Volsen and Becker responded to a call from a reporting party of a dead deer at the bottom of a driveway. We normally do not respond to these types of calls, or remove dead deer, however, this deer was close to the last reported sighting of wolf activity and residents appreciated the information on the deer. The deer was an old (9.5+) female mule deer. She was in relatively good shape, but a little thin considering she did not have to suffer through a heavy winter this year. She showed moderate evidence



***Old mule deer doe killed by a cougar exhibited moderate evidence of hair loss.***

of hair loss, and lice were easily observed on the carcass. In reviewing the scene it seemed that a cougar may have killed the deer, and upon skinning the neck bite wounds were confirmed. A local resident reported seeing a cougar in the area recently. Local dogs had been feeding on the carcass and portions of the deer were in the yard of a neighbor. Volsen and Becker disposed of the carcass.

## Wildlife Management

**Pygmy Rabbit Surveys:** Technicians Duvuvuei and Hastings along with Biologist Duvuvuei continued surveys this week. They surveyed one day (Hastings two days), completed one more priority survey area, and collected 37 pellet samples. 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.

**Sharp-tailed Grouse Augmentation:** Biologist Heinlen assisted Research Scientist Schroeder with preparation and planning for the translocation of sharp-tailed grouse to augment existing populations in District 6. Plans to get birds from British Columbia will have to wait another year due to paperwork delays, but we still hope to get birds from Idaho as we have in the past. Biologist worked with Olympia staff to set up the contract for a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to help fund the grouse translocation effort.



*Bald eagle struck by a vehicle on Highway 97 in Chelan County.*

**Bald Eagle:** Biologist Volsen examined a bald eagle that was reported to have fallen dead from the sky by a motorist traveling over Blewette Pass. Officer Erhardt retrieved the carcass and noted that there were no trees or overhead structures in the areas. Upon examination we found a piece of deer meat in the eagle's mouth and the smell of carrion on the bird. The eagle was apparently feeding on a deer carcass along the road where it was hit by a car, thrown up into the air and dropped in front of the motorist traveling the opposite direction.

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

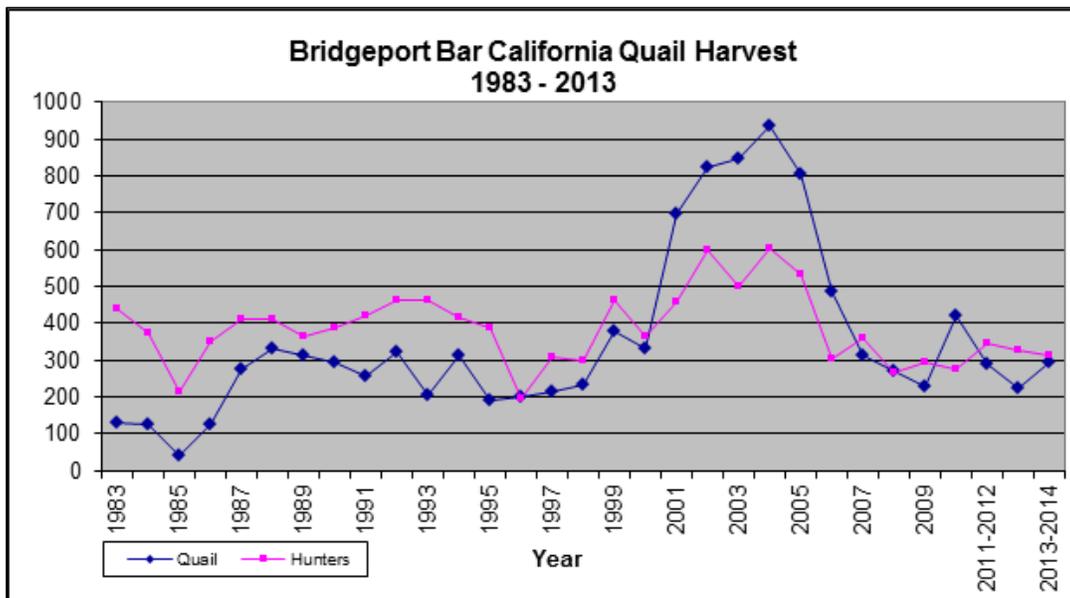
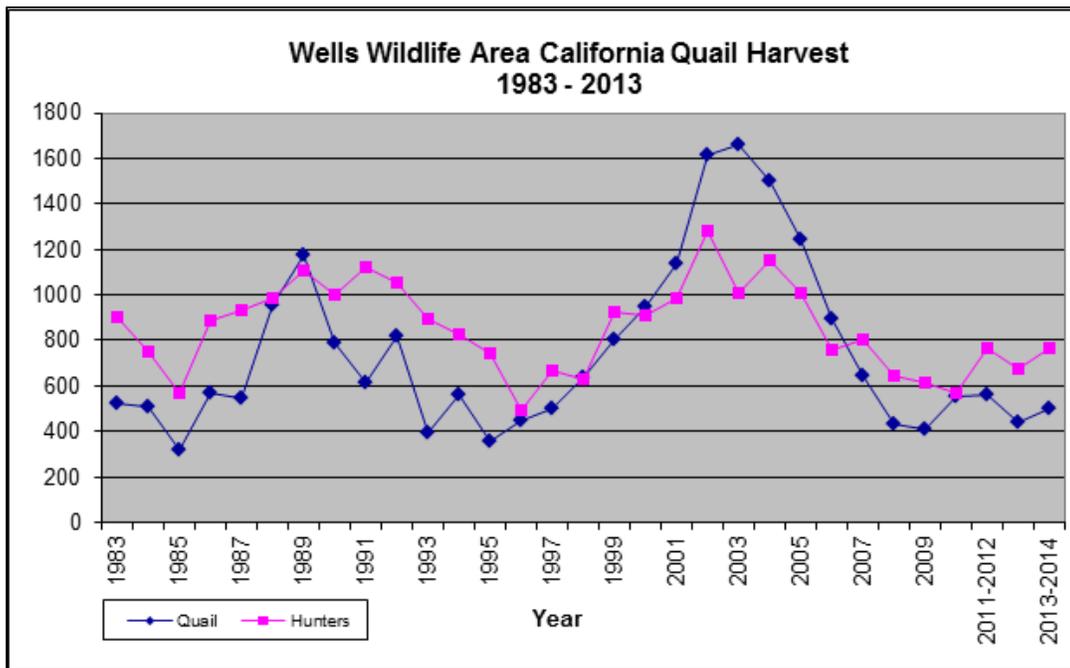
### Wildlife Areas

**Upland Birding Hunting – Wells Wildlife Area:** Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup> brought a close to the 2013-2014 upland bird season. With that we did our final tally of hunter registration cards for the year. This was our 31<sup>st</sup> year for the hunter registration program and it was a below average year for both number of hunters and birds of species taken with 764 and 539 respectively. California quail, as usual, dominated the number of birds taken at 504. Other species bagged included pheasant (29) and Hungarian partridge (6). The Bridgeport Bar Unit, again as usual, was the

busiest and most productive unit of the wildlife area. It hosted a total of 311 hunters who bagged 293 quail. The following table and charts provide a summary.

**Hunter registration data 1983 – 2013**

	Hunters	Quail	Quail/ Hunter	Upland Birds	Upland Bird/Hunter
<b>Average</b>	853	744	0.85	838	0.96
<b>Minimum</b>	496	320	0.44	397	0.55
<b>Maximum</b>	1,284	1,659	1.65	1,721	1.71
<b>2013</b>	764	504	0.66	539	0.71
<b>2012</b>	678	442	0.65	491	0.72



## Private Lands/Access

**Hunter Access:** Biologist Dougherty continued working to update CAPs Hunter Access Contracts for Region 2. Any agreement with a landowner that had been nonresponsive after repeated inquiries had their contracts closed. Over the last year, most of the Hunter Access Agreements have been renewed with fewer than 10 being closed due to landowners uninterested in continuing the program. At this point, all expired Hunter Access agreements have been addressed. However, there are approximately 15 contracts that need to be signed by the landowners to finalize the agreement.



Biologist Dougherty has assisted several hunters that were interested in waterfowl hunting next year (2014-2015). These hunters were

hoping to gain a better understanding of the hunting prospects that might be available. Specifically, they were interested in the “Quality Hunt” opportunities provided through the Hunt by Reservation online system.

*Waterfowl and upland bird hunting seasons have ended, but some small game hunting opportunities continue through March 15. Photo by R. 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

**Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) Show:** Biologist Gallie and Special Species Section Manager Rich Harris participated in the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Wild Sheep Working group meetings and the annual Wild Sheep Show and Auction in Reno, NV. WAFWA meetings gathered bighorn sheep biologists from across the west to discuss management issues. The predominant issue facing bighorn sheep throughout the West are interactions with domestics and disease outbreaks. We manned the WDFW booth at the Sheep show talking mostly with out-of state hunters interested in bighorn hunting opportunities, but also for deer, elk, moose and mountain goat. We also had lots of opportunities to talk with many of the members of the Washington Chapter of WSF about current bighorn management in the state. Our booth rarely had a quiet minute as thousands of participants attended the show culminating with the Washington California Sheep Auction tag selling for \$70,000.



## Wildlife Areas

**KOMW Radio Interviews:** Okanogan Lands Operations Manager Swedberg completed his 12<sup>th</sup> interview for the five minute 'Ask Dale' news segment on Fridays between 12:30-12:45 p.m.

## **REGION 3**

### *GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE*

#### Wildlife Management

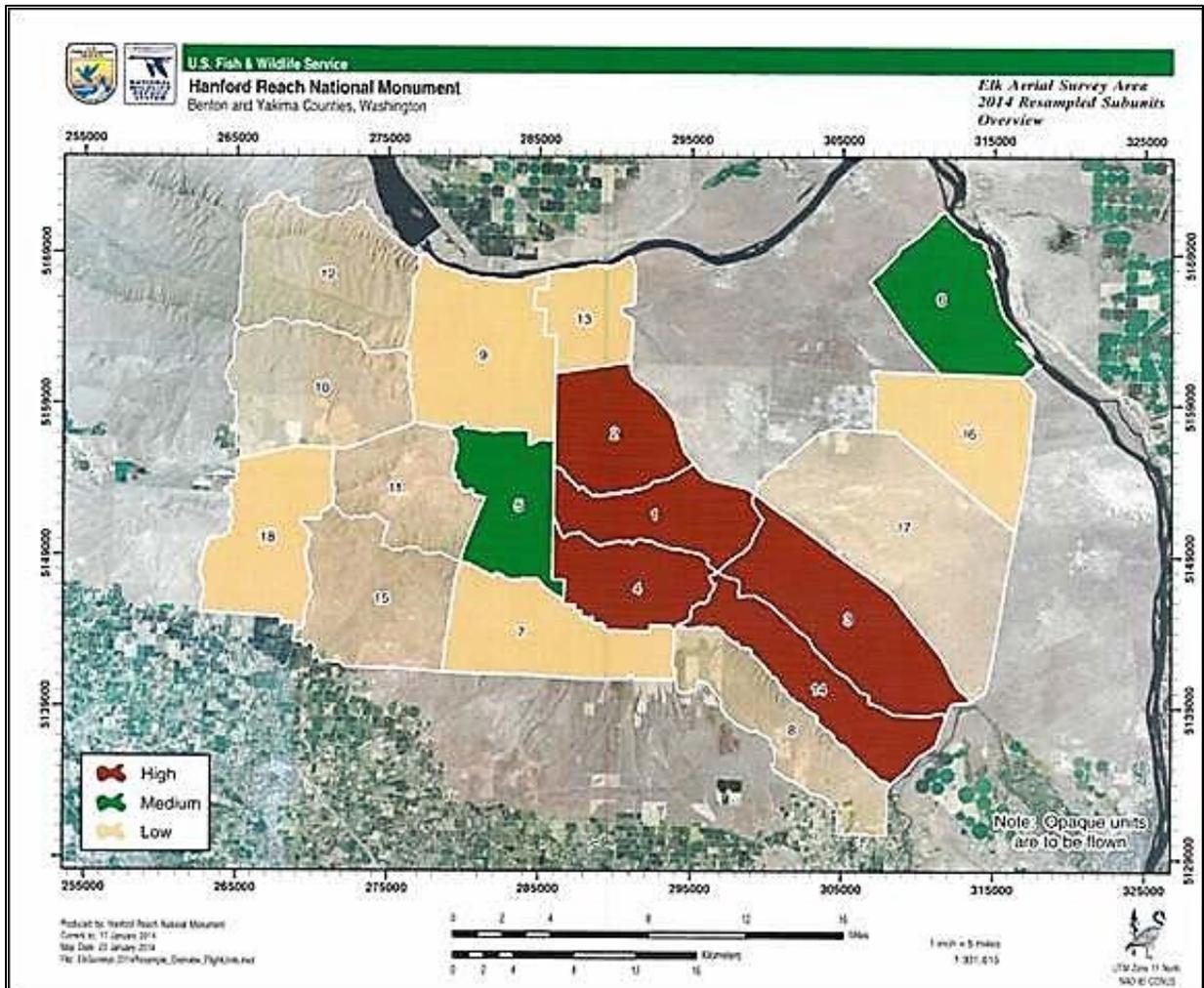
**Bighorn Sheep:** Biologist Bernatowicz checked Cleman Mountain on Tuesday morning and found the ice fog and low clouds had concentrated the bighorn sheep low on the mountain. The bighorns eagerly consumed the pellets put in bins and a ground darting operation was quickly scheduled. With help from Idaho Fish and Game, Biologist Wik, Dr. Mansfield, and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, eight sheep were darted and



*Cleman Mountain sheep being processed before being loaded for transport to Washington State University.*

sent to Washington State University (WSU) for a research project. While at the site, Biologists Bernatowicz and Moore counted ewes and lambs. A total of 109 ewes and 45 lambs were tallied, the highest ever for both age classes. This is another good indication that we were successful in keeping the disease problems in the Tieton herd from reaching Cleman Mountain.

**Hanford Elk:** Biologist Gregory met with USFWS Biologist Newsome to discuss upcoming elk surveys on the Hanford/ALE properties. The survey will follow the Idaho sightability methods and result in a population estimate as well as herd composition. Initial ground surveys have counted more than 700 animals on the ALE reserve.



*A map of the sampling units for the 2014 Hanford/ALE elk survey displays the relative density of elk predicted for each unit by referencing high, medium, or low.*

### Wildlife Areas

**Wenas Wildlife Area Photo Opportunity:** Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Confer Morris and a volunteer posted Cleman Mountain with winter feeding area closure signs. While near the top of Cleman Mountain and finally above the inversion and persistent fog they took advantage of the unique views.



*Above: View from Cleman Mountain looking north where Manastash Ridge and the Observatory are just barely visible. Below: View from Cleman Mountain looking west across the Naches Valley towards Mt. Rainier.*



## **REGION 4**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

##### **WDFW – Woodland Park Zoo Annual Citizen Science Amphibian Monitoring Training:**

Biologist Anderson, along with zoo education staff, and zoo Herpetology Curator Dr. Jennifer Pramuk led a classroom and field training session teaching volunteers how to survey for amphibian egg masses indicative of breeding at a site, as well as looking for other sign and the overall general life history of local common amphibians. The effort aims to gain landscape coverage annual and over time of amphibian use of sites, particularly in our heavily developed counties of King and Snohomish. Participants included amphibian enthusiasts, professional biologists, students, ZooCorp teens that participate in wildlife outreach at the zoo, and local city and county staff working in various environmental and planning divisions. A few egg masses were found. This helped bolster enthusiasm of participants and enhance media coverage efforts.

Approximately 70 participants showed up for either the classroom and/or the optional field training dry run at Carkeek Park. Seattle Parks provided a volunteer docent which discussed the history of the park, the pond, and



*Long-toed salamander (above) and Ensatina (below) – Photos by WDFW volunteer Kevin Wheeler*



the work Seattle does to keep the park ecosystem as functional as possible given the multiple recreational use and urban location – volunteers always welcome! Biosecurity precautions including how to decontaminate field gear appropriately for chytrid fungus, ranaviruses and New Zealand Mudsnaill were covered. Volunteers in mudsnaill areas will be working with Biologist Anderson to ensure proper decontamination steps are taken as it is a bit more of a process than other decontamination procedures. Education of the public regarding exotic invasive species, their presence, and what they can do to help reduce the spread, notify WDFW, and educate others is crucial in management of these species.

More information on this Citizen Science Program can be found at <http://www.zoo.org/backyardhabitat>.

More information on Invasive Species in Washington State and steps that the hunting, fishing and wildlife recreation community can take to assist reducing their spread can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/ais/>.

More information on how the public and other entities can assist WDFW in documenting wildlife occurrences, including amphibians but also many other species – even exotic invasive species – can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/viewing/observations/>.



*Biologist Anderson, along with Woodland Park Zoo education staff, and Zoo Herpetology Curator Dr. Jennifer Pramuk led a classroom and field training session teaching volunteers how to survey for amphibian egg masses indicative of breeding at a site, as well as looking for other sign and the overall general life history of local common amphibians.*

**Swan Morbidity/Mortality Project:** Technicians Anderson and Otto collected 12 swans, 11 trumpeter and 1 tundra. All 12 were from central Whatcom County. They included 10 carcasses and 2 feather piles. Of all 12 swans collected this week, 11 died of unknown causes and 1 from a power line strike. Biologist DeBruyn banded two Trumpeters that have been successfully rehabbed and are to be released.



**Mid-winter Swan Surveys:** Biologist DeBruyn organized mid-winter swan surveys for Skagit, Whatcom, Snohomish, and Island counties. Biologist Milner, Techs Anderson and Deyo and volunteers Doug Huddle, Martha Jordan and Maynard Axelson helped count swans in all appropriate habitats. Overall 13,488 swans were counted including 3,284 in Whatcom, 9,545 in Skagit and 634 in Snohomish and Island counties. The total number of swans was up slightly from last year which was an all-time high.

*Adult and juvenile trumpeter swans pose in Whatcom County.*

**Bird Viewing:** Snow goose use increased on the south end of Fir Island this last week of the hunting season. Foggy mornings and sunny afternoons increased hunting and bird viewing activities in the area.



*Snow Geese observed outside the Skagit Wildlife Area office on Fir Island.*

**Waterfowl Survey:** Biologist Anderson and Customer Service Specialist Wilson conducted the annual “Seattle Urban Core” waterfowl count. This included Green Lake, Haller and Bitter lakes.

Highlights were 11 species on Green Lake including double digit Ruddy Ducks and the annual Eurasian Wigeon here and there with the other American Wigeons. Increased numbers of Northern Shovelers were also present. The Green Lake count, in particular, has a surprising number of waterfowl in such an urban location (~400-800 plus individuals) and decent diversity annually, despite the altered system that is present. It is always a great opportunity to interact with the public and allow for them to see “all those mallards” out there – affording some time to learn that not all of those animals are mallards.

**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 22<sup>nd</sup> winter that these surveys have been

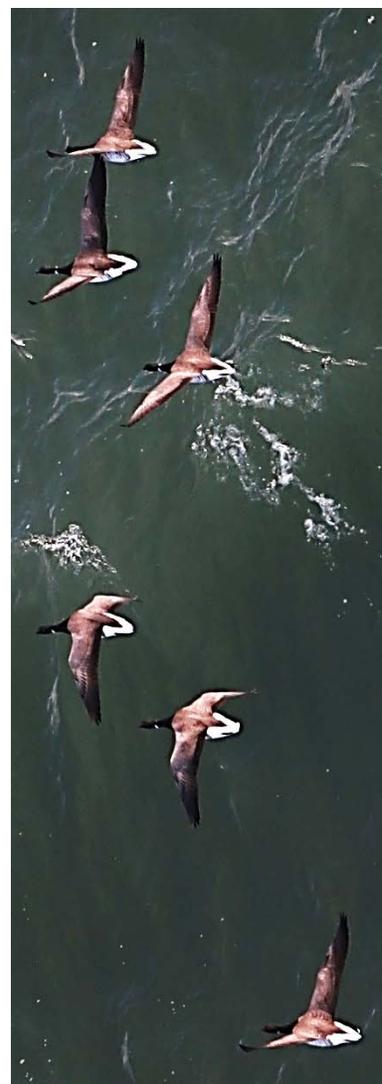
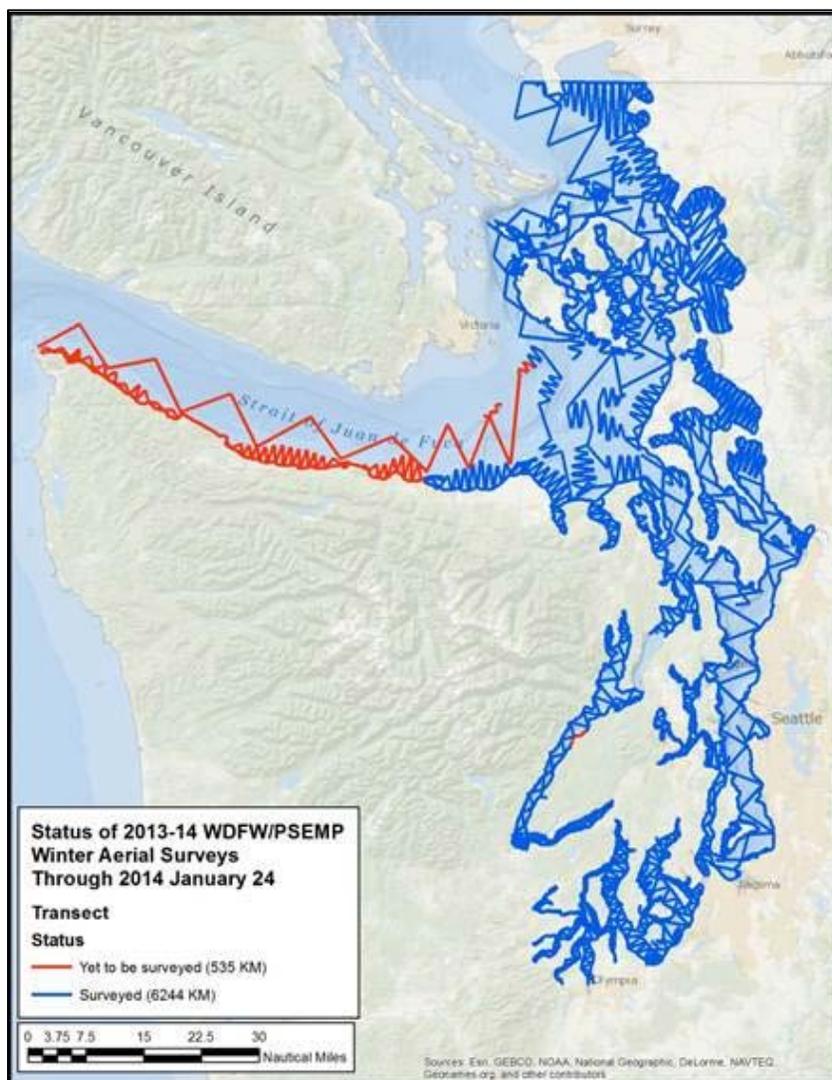
conducted and are the longest data sets documenting trends of winter marine bird distribution and population indices in the Puget Sound. In addition, these surveys are used to document population index levels of sea ducks that will be used to determine next year’s harvest limits. A total of five days of survey were flown this week completing 25% of the survey area. The completed areas included the San Juan Islands, northern and central Puget Sound, Hood Canal, Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Strait of Georgia. The stagnant air and resulting fog affected the length of most survey days and restricted access to some areas. The survey is now 92% complete. We are fortunate again to retain the services of Kenmore



*Above: Pilot’s view of Winter Marine Waterfowl Survey transects. Below: Observer’s view of survey transect – string on strut marks the outer edge of the survey transect.*



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/>.



*Left: Current status of the Winter Marine Waterfowl Survey – the blue lines on the map represent transects surveyed while the red lines represent those yet to be surveyed. Right: Black Brant as seen from the air during the Winter Marine Waterfowl Survey.*

## Wildlife Areas

**Samish River Unit (Welts) Wetland Restoration Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Manager Rotton met with Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) staff to discuss implementing compensatory mitigation requirements for parking lot construction on the restoration site. NRCS has determined that implementation of mitigation elements is incompatible with their easement on the property, so WDFW must accomplish mitigation requirements off-site. Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Manager Rotton now must identify a project on a nearby site to meet compensatory mitigation requirements for the parking lot.

**Intalco Ponds and Lake Terrell Water Controls:** Manager Kessler coordinated with managers at Ducks Unlimited (DU) on replacement of leaking water controls on the Intalco and Lake

Terrell units. An engineer with Ducks Unlimited provided detailed estimates for replacing each control. Manager Kessler submitted the project proposals using Duck Stamp funds.

**Intalco Unit Beaver Activity:** Manager Kessler and Private Lands Biologist Otto plugged a hole that muskrats had dug in one of the pond dikes on the Intalco Unit. Kessler also cleared the plugged up water control on that pond to lower the water level.

**Nooksack Unit Wood Duck Nest Boxes:** Manager Kessler met with volunteers who take care of wood duck boxes along Silver Creek on the Nooksack Unit. He provided them with several of the new wood duck nest boxes that were built by Master Hunter volunteers.

### Private Lands/Access

**Black Brant and Swan Surveys:** Technician Deyo performed Black Brant and swan bag check surveys.



*WDFW Enforcement, Nooksack Tribal Police and the Wildlife Program removed derelict fishing nets (finding and releasing one live Coho Salomon) and writing one closed season sport fishing violation on the Nooksack River.*



*Above: WDFW Technician Otto removed derelict fishing nets, finding and releasing one live Coho Salmon. Below: Technician Otto documented illness and mortality occurrences across Whatcom County. As a result of his efforts, he further documented sites to retrieve sick and dying swans.*



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

**Wildlife Management**

**Skagit County Brant Hunt**

**Bag Check:** Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn conducted bag checks of brant hunters at various boat launches and hunter access locations in Skagit County. Technicians Anderson and Deyo accompanied Danilson and DeBruyn to get exposure to collecting biological information on brant harvested during the eight day season in Skagit County bays. A stipulation of the Pacific Flyway Brant Management Plan, this data collection is the current approach for monitoring the proportion of harvest of the Western High Arctic population (a.k.a. gray belly brant). This is a unique and much smaller population from the Parry Islands that exclusively overwinters in Fidalgo, Padilla and Samish bays. Based on interviews with hunters, the total number of brant harvest during the hunt this year is likely to be lower than in recent years past. Only 62 brant were checked during the two days bag checks were conducted, and roughly 40% of these were Western High Arctic.



*A young hunter assists Technician Deyo in determining the breast color of brant harvested earlier in the day. This is a key feature that is used to distinguish between the two different populations found in Skagit County.*



*Above: A successful party's bag from hunting brant and sea ducks on Padilla Bay.*

**North Cascades Elk Management:** Biologist Danilson attended the Population Monitoring and Research committee meeting for the North Cascades Elk Management Group. The group was able to make good progress and agreement on most of the relevant objectives and strategies. The remainder of the meeting focused on how the group would try to implement a ground-based count of elk in portions of the Skagit River Valley this spring. Follow up to this meeting includes drafting up a meeting summary, revising objectives and strategies (based on feedback at the meeting), and making sure everyone is aware of (and attends to) their commitments on the ground survey planning effort prior to the next meeting.

Biologist Danilson coordinated with officers at Washington State Patrol (WSP) for an upcoming trial effort to use forward looking infrared video technology for surveying elk in the Skagit River Valley. Additionally, District 14 staff and the Point Elliott Treaty Tribes have resumed efforts to capture and radio collar elk in the North Cascades Herd using Clover traps and are making logistical arrangements for upcoming elk surveys to be conducted in mid-to late March.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Nisqually Wildlife Refuge:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw toured the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge to see how that site is managed for recreation opportunities after an estuary restoration project was implemented. Dike-top trails and an elevated boardwalk provide walk-in access to the site, and a portion of the site allows waterfowl hunting that is accessible by boat.



*Left: A photographer prepares to get a photo of a Great Blue Heron from a dike-top trail. An elevated boardwalk and walkers are in the background. Right: An elevated boardwalk provides walk-in access to a restored estuary at the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge.*

## 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.

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

## Wildlife Management

**Seattle Sportsmen's Convention:** Biologist Danilson attended the Seattle Sportsmen's Convention as a guest of the Seattle Puget Sound Chapter of Safari Club International (SCI). WDFW attendance at this event is important because SCI provided funding (a \$250 gift certificate) to encourage hunters who harvested a goat in 2013 to allow WDFW biologists to collect samples and take measurements. The winner of the raffle for this gift certificate was Mike Swint, who was present to receive this gift. Another highlight was the auctioning of a mountain goat tag for the 2014 season. The winning bid was \$15,500, which is the highest this tag has ever been auctioned for.

**Skagit County Elk Conflict:** Conflict Specialist Griffith spent the entirety of the week meeting with multiple landowners experiencing elk damages to their agricultural properties in the Skagit River valley. Griffith initiated a number of Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements (DPCA), issued damage permits, and worked with the Master Hunter coordinator to get master hunters assigned to properties. In addition to lethal control, Griffith met with two landowners who were seeking advice and assistance with wildlife friendly fencing and one landowner who is interested in exclusionary fencing of their vineyard. Griffith and Conflict Technician Pinjuv picked up two signed fencing contracts and received final bids from local vendors for materials. Pinjuv met with a landowner and deployed two scare devices along two well used game trails leading onto their property. Pinjuv also met with another landowner to discuss the use of scare devices and located appropriate places for deployment.

## Wildlife Areas

**Island Unit:** Skagit Wildlife Area staff and Habitat Program Biologist Brian Williams hosted a field visit with Department of Ecology staff to examine and discuss the ditch cleaning project on the Island Unit and other projects around the Skagit Valley.

**DeBay Slough:** Technician Cosgrove checked the conditions and use at the Johnson/DeBay Slough Reserve. He discovered the entry cable gate was being vandalized, but was able to salvage the cable and repair the gate. No swans were observed in the Reserve field and no hunters on hunt unit. Manager Rotton is working with Washington Waterfowl Association on a duck stamp proposal for the DeBay Slough Unit.

**Samish Unit:** Staff toured the site and mapped water levels following most recent rain for discussion with DU regarding project design elements.

**Wildlife Area Management Plan:** Skagit Wildlife Area staff participated in a conference call of the weed management subgroup of the Wildlife Area Plan. The call was to discuss upcoming plan revisions and to identify management options.

**Barge Disposal:** Manager Rotton is coordinating with Kristian Tollefson from Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the dismantling and disposal of the red-flagged barge. A time slot has been freed up in late February for the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew to begin the project.

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm prepared two Recreation and Conservation Office grant proposals. One for Ebey Island could provide funding for design of wetland enhancement and restoration projects. The second could fund replacement of a pedestrian bridge across Harris Creek on the Stillwater Wildlife Area.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Contract Vouchers for Private Landowners:** Biologist Caldwell performed quality assurance and control for all private landowner agreements for the 2013-14 Snow Goose and Waterfowl Quality Hunt contracts in Skagit, Whatcom and Snohomish Counties. Contract amendments and corrections were noted and made as needed for the upcoming 2014 season.

**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 Whatcom County. Biologist Caldwell also met with Refuge Manager Kessler and toured the Lake Terrell Wildlife Area. They discussed possible habitat management strategies and habitats that could be incorporated into the Private Lands Access Program in 2014.

**Hunter Concerns:** Biologist Caldwell responded to a complaint regarding a double reservation at the Fisher Slough Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site. Biologist Caldwell informed the hunter of how this can occur. Furthermore, Biologist Caldwell followed up with Web Designers and the I.T. department to resolve the issue from reoccurring in the future.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**ArcGIS Internal Training:** Biologist Anderson, along with a number of other Region 4 biologists and staff, took a day-long training offered by Westside Data Support and GIS Analyst Dr. Treg Christopher. It was very helpful to go through the Geolib offerings and learn some of the new tips and tricks in Version 10.1 of ArcGIS. Reference materials that Dr. Christopher put together will be very helpful in keeping this education fresh in the memory.

## **REGION 5**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Black-tailed Deer Research Project:** Biologists Holman and Bergh made preparations for next week's round of doe captures associated with the black-tail research project. Research Scientist and Chief Investigator Rice, private contractors Northwest Helicopters, and Biologists Bergh and Holman will be attempting to capture eight adult does in both the Coweeman (550) Game Management Unit (GMU) and Washougal (568) GMU. Preparations in advance of this work include readying safety equipment, contacting landowners regarding helicopter operations on their lands, scouting out cable-based timber harvest operations, monitoring deer already in the study areas, etc.

**Mt. St. Helens Elk Herd Study Update:** Staff from the Region 5 Wildlife Program met with Deer and Elk Section Manager Nelson and Deer and Elk Specialist McCorquodale to discuss the results of the Mt. St. Helens Elk Herd Population study. The study goals were to estimate abundance, survival, and composition of elk in the herd. Additionally, elk body condition was also assessed during capture and with elk organ collections. The report is nearly finished and the results are complete enough for managers to use in decision-making regarding the herd.

**Lower Columbia River Streaked Horned Larks and Dredging Meeting:** Biologist Bergh attended a meeting put together by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding activities by the local ports that may impact streaked horned larks, which was listed as a threatened species last fall. Presentations were made on the consultation process (including Section 7 for Federal entities, like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Habitat Conservation Plans for non-federal entities like state governments and the private sector), streaked horned lark habitat use on dredge material, and an update from the consultation occurring between U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and USFWS in terms of dredging in the Lower Columbia River. Meetings like this encourage collaboration and answer questions that will be important for the recovery of a species like the streaked horned lark that currently occupies industrial habitats.

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

#### **Private Lands/Access**



**Langsdorf Landing:** Construction of the new launch facilities has begun at the Langsdorf Boat Launch. Currently, work on the parking lots, new restroom facilities, and mitigation aspects of the project are underway. The ramp itself will not be replaced until

***Langsdorf ADA Platform***

October of this year when in-water work can occur. The launch will remain open during the construction phases, except for a couple of days in October when the new ramp and dock are installed. All work is to be completed by the end of 2014.

**Hand Access Site:** Access staff Spangler and Rhodes hauled five tons of gravel and spread it at the access site entrance. This is to address large ruts and potholes caused by vehicles spinning tires when turning onto Kalama River Road.



*Hand Access Site Gravel*

**Waterfowl:** Conflict Specialist Conklin has been communicating with a Lewis County resident interested in providing access to her land for waterfowl hunting. Conklin and Biologist Stephens will meet with the landowner in the near future.

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

### **Wildlife Management**



*Exclusionary fence constructed to monitor growth without impact from elk and geese.*

**Wildlife Conflict – Elk Damage:** Conflict Specialist Conklin met with several landowners in Lewis County as well as with several landowners in the South Rainier GMU regarding elk damage. Conklin counted 57 elk in one of the claimant’s field. Conklin was sent this picture from one of the landowners she worked with last week in the Morton area of an exclusionary fence to monitor growth without impact from elk and geese.

### **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. January temperatures have been slightly above normal and there has been below normal precipitation with high snow levels so far this month.

**Short-Term Forecast:** Freezing levels will range from 4,000 to 10,000 feet for the upcoming week. The 6-10 day forecast is for normal temperatures and precipitation, and the 8-14 day forecast is for below normal temperatures and 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 remained well below average this week with no new snow accumulations. Snowpack is still below normal, approximately 68% of normal.

**Winter Severity:** Elevations below 3,500 feet 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 continue to 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.

**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.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/sno_narr3.pl)  
<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snotel/Washington/washington.html>

<b>SNOWPARKS:</b>									
<b>Name</b>	<b>Elevation</b>		<b>12/6/2013</b>	<b>12/13/2013</b>	<b>12/20/2013</b>	<b>12/27/2013</b>	<b>1/3/2014</b>	<b>1/10/2014</b>	<b>1/17/2014</b>
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:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**1/24/2014**    **1/31/2014**

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No new report  
No new report

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**1/18-1/24**    **1/25-1/31**

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19.7  
32  
57  
43

43.6

**1/18-1/24**    **1/25-1/31**

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0.1  
34  
54  
42.3

30.6

**1/18-1/24**    **1/25-1/31**

---

0  
30  
56  
35.8

21

**1/18-1/24**    **1/25-1/31**

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24.1

33

54

43

38.6

**1/18-1/24**    **1/25-1/31**

---

0

32

54

43.3

32.7

**1/24/2014**    **1/31/2014**

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27%

42%

47%

## **REGION 6**

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**



**Rapjohn Lake Waterfowl Hunting Blinds, Pierce County:** Biologist Tirhi checked the parking stalls used for registering to hunt within the hunting blinds (mandatory at Rapjohn Lake) while doing the 2014 Midwinter Waterfowl Surveys. All stalls and signage are intact and clearly marked. Both hunting blinds are stable and accessible with the #2 blind needing a porch fixture.

**Rapjohn Lake entrance sign informs waterfowl hunters of requirement to hunt from blinds.**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Black-tailed Buck with Arrow:** Biologist Ament received several calls last week from concerned landowners on Bell Hill about a deer observed with an arrow protruding from the left shoulder. She sent a detailed message out to WDFW Law Enforcement staff and promptly got a phone call from Sergeant Eric Anderson. He had also received a report about the deer and was on Bell Hill for a few hours on January 21. He was able to locate the deer and watched it with a scope from about 25 yards away. He reported the deer was actually a buck (not a doe as reported by some residents) and that the arrow was likely three to four inches deep in the shoulder area. No vital organs were hit.

There is a possibility that the deer was shot during the late buck season that ended December 31. Sergeant Anderson reported that there was no sign of infection at the entry site and that the buck was eating just fine. One resident reported to Sgt. Anderson that he watched the deer actually jump over a four-foot fence. Another Bell Hill resident apparently saw a deer with an arrow a couple months ago, but it is unknown if it was the same deer. Sgt. Anderson has elected to have residents continue to monitor the deer.

Biologist Ament contacted a man who had sent out an e-mail alert message to Bell Hill residents. She provided him with an e-mail message to forward to residents that would update them about the deer and hopefully help with decreasing phone calls generated by the deer. She conveyed that

although it is disturbing to see the arrow in the deer, there are risks involved when trying to dart and tranquilize the deer to remove the arrow. However, should the opportunity present itself, WDFW staff will attempt to dart the deer and have a vet remove the arrow.

**Listed Species on Airports:** Biologist Tirhi and Program Managers Mick Cope, Eric Gardner and Margen Carlson met with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and USFWS to discuss listed species management on South Sound airports. Topics addressed also included the need for WDFW and USFWS to improve communication and collaboration. WDFW and USFWS field biologists are currently reviewing permits and providing jurisdictional recommendations independently, possibly providing applicants with competing responses. An example includes recent response to organizers of the Olympic Airshow held each year at the Olympia Airport. Read more about the Olympia Airports Master Plan and listed species at <http://www.portolympia.com/index.aspx?NID=130>.

**Biodiversity Planning:** Biologist Tirhi attended the fourth planning meeting of the Russell Family Foundations Puyallup River Initiative of which the Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance (PCBA) has formed a “Community of Interest.” The collective biodiversity group has defined its past work, barriers to future success, and is ready to formulate a plan of action for grant submission to the Foundation. Read more on the initiative at <http://www.trff.org/puyallup-watershed/>. Read more on the PCBA at <http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/index.aspx?NID=922>.

**Puyallup Sportsman Show:** Most Region 6 Wildlife Program staff worked the WDFW booth at the Puyallup Sportsman Show. We also received help from Ruth Milner and Mike Smith from Region 4 as well as Chris Miller and Kris Thorson from the Wildlife Program in Olympia. The online laptop computer was a huge benefit over past years and our staff used it often to seek or show public information on our website.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Wildlife Conflict -- Deer:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Novack visited property of “Peace of the Earth Farms” in Kitsap County after their request for help with deer depredation. He provided advice on how to resolve the problem with deer causing damage to their organically produced crops. Novack conducted an inspection of the existing fence and provided details and material needs to make the fence effective at excluding deer.