

Wildlife Program

Week of May 12-18, 2014

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Turnbull NWR Waterfowl Survey: District Wildlife Biologist (DWB) Dana Base assisted Waterfowl Specialist Joe Evenson with accomplishing a helicopter survey of waterfowl on the Turnbull Wetlands Transects. Assistant District Wildlife Biologist (ADWB) Annemarie Prince flight- followed for the waterfowl crew one day this week.



View from the helicopter of representative wetlands surveyed for waterfowl.



Flock of white pelicans observed at a scabland lake.

Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Project: Biologist Atamian reviewed the GPS Transmitter locations and one of the remaining 10 GPS marked males movement indicated another mortality. Atamian entered some of the backlog of radio tracking data. Atamian went out to search for the nest of sage grouse hen 1047, and to attempt to find the GPS units from two mortality males (the VHF have failed on both of these units making them very difficult to find). Atamian found one of the GPS units and the successful nest of 1047 with 10 hatched eggs!



1047 nest shrub



zoomed in



New nest location for an historic Asotin County Golden Eagle territory

Blue Mountains Golden Eagle monitoring: Asst. District Wildlife Biologist Vekasy conducted a third check of a Priority #1 territory near the 4-O Wildlife Area that was confirmed occupied but where the historic nest had been destroyed and no known alternates existed. A nest was finally located with adult female brooding young. A 2nd Priority #1 territory was checked on Asotin Creek and had at least one nestling present, although the nest is difficult to observe. A 3rd Priority #1 territory on the Grande Ronde River also had at least one nestling present. All 3 territories had adults visit with prey items during observations. A new nest and territory that had been found earlier in the season was also checked and found to have 3 nestlings, and one of the Grande Ronde Bald Eagle territories has a nest with 2 well-feathered nestlings.



Grande Ronde Bald Eagles

National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan Conference Call: Supervisor McCanna participated on the national conference call to move forward with the hiring of a coordinator to implement the National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan. Washington State (Supervisor McCanna) will hold the first National Wild Pheasant Plan Meeting in September with up to 26 different state Upland Game Bird Managers attending.

Wildlife Areas

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area (SCWA) Prescribed Burning: The Cougar Unit of the prescribed burning portion of the habitat improvement project was completed this week. The WDFW Prescribed Burn Team, SCWA staff, and a contract crew burned the final 85 acres of the unit over two days. We anticipate a boost in evergreen ceanothus regeneration in this unit due to the burning, improving wildlife winter range.



Right: *Fuels Manager Tom Leuschen, acting Burn Boss, is directing the two igniters, seen in the lower left, on another pass.*

Left: *Mopping up the unit to eliminate dangerous hot spots.*



WT Wooten Wildlife Area – Inland Northwest Wildlife Council Volunteer Project:

Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Kari Dingman worked the weekend with volunteers from the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council from Spokane. The group removed the old barbed wire fence along the Blind Grade Road that was originally installed after acquisition by the Department in the early 1990's. The poorly constructed fence was installed by a contractor hired by the US Army Corps of Engineers and never served a purpose other than to act as a barrier to ranging wildlife. The volunteers had a group campout in Campground 1.



INWC volunteers removing the old barbed wire fence along the Blind Grade.

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

Wildlife Areas

“Home on the Range” at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA): Staff hosted their annual “Home on the Range” program for two groups of area schoolchildren this week, with another coming out next week. This is part of the Lake Roosevelt Forum’s larger project, Discover Week, which matches classes with fish, wildlife and habitat-oriented field trip locations. At SLWA, Odessa and Wilbur third-graders got to take a nature hike, see a slide show with cool animals of the shrub-steppe, visit with Fish and Wildlife Office Curt Wood, and examine skins and skulls of local wildlife species.



Private Lands/Access

Union Flat Pheasant Route: Conflict Specialist Bennett completed the last of pheasant crow counts near Colfax, Washington. More pheasants were noted vocalizing this time and seen along the route. Other wildlife observed included; white-tailed deer, coyotes, turkey, black-billed magpie, red-winged blackbird, warblers, American robin, and mourning doves.



Landscape and wildlife along the Union Flat Pheasant Route (Left top: moonset on route, a male turkey displaying, male red-winged blackbird, hazy moon over landscape).

FFA Presentation: Biologist Lewis was invited to participate in a Washington State Future Farmers of America (FFA) competition. Lewis was asked to give a wildlife presentation and the group requested a wolf presentation. Lewis worked with Supervisor McCanna and Specialist Bennett to get a power point presentation for the event. The group of 24 students was to create practice flyers and a blog about the information provided.

Wildlife Conflict: Natural Resource Worker (NRW) Wade worked hard this week to keep elk hazed away from crops along the elk fence in Garfield County. NRW Wade was able to move 10-12 bull elk through the one way gate of the elk fence. While hiking the fence line, Wade

came across a gate that had been propped open. Someone had driven metal t-posts into the ground and wired the gates open. The tracks in the road indicated that elk and deer have been jumping over the cattle guard to get through the opening. NRW Wade removed the posts and closed the gates.



Gate in the elk fence wired open with metal fence post

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

Wildlife Management

Cougar and Coyote Issues: Specialist Shepherd investigated cougar and coyote depredation issues on dogs and calves in Ferry and Stevens and with Officers Parkert and Anderson, and Technician Bendixen. A dog was most likely killed by a cougar although the new born calves were completely consumed and identification of the mortality source was not possible. The dog in Stevens County survived was most likely attacked by a coyote or possibly another dog. A remote camera was deployed.



Officer Parkert photographs the ear of a surviving mastiff dog in Ferry County. Technician Bendixen talks to a Ferry County rancher.

REGION 2

WOLVES: Specialist Heilhecker attended a Forest Service all permittee meeting for the Tonasket Ranger District. She answered a variety of wolf related questions. Specialist Heilhecker met with a rancher, the range rider and a WSU student to discuss the range rider's responsibilities. She provided equipment to the range rider including: a journal to record his daily activities, a GPS unit to document wolf activity and locations of dead livestock, screamers for hazing, and a trail camera to photograph activity on dead livestock prior to an investigation taking place. Specialist Heilhecker received a phone call from a Conservation Northwest representative regarding range riders and wolf locations

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Washington Ground Squirrels: With assistance from Columbia National Wildlife Refuge biologists, WDFW Private Lands Biologist Comstock, and volunteers, biologists Finger and Duvuvuei trapped 130 Washington Ground Squirrels during a two day trapping effort at the Sage Hills Golf Course. The trapped squirrels were released at prepared sites in order to boost or establish meta populations within the Columbia Basin. Seventy-six of the squirrels were translocated to the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge and the remaining 54 were released at the Steamboat Rock reintroduction site. These release sites will be monitored periodically to determine the overall effects on the local population.

Common Loon Management: Biologist Heinlen and others have been monitoring the loon on Lost Lake that has a fishing hook in its mouth. The loon has been found to be very active preening, diving, swimming, flying and acting like a normal loon. The loon was first found to have the fishing line in its mouth on April 18th, almost one month ago. The loon must be feeding to still be this active which is a good positive sign. The Loon Lake Loon Association is working with the Biological Research Institute (who bands Washington's loons every year) to conduct a capture of this loon to attempt to remove this hook. Biologist Heinlen will continue to monitor this situation.

Golden Eagle Occupancy Surveys and Eagle Management: Conflict Specialist Heilhecker assisted continued to assist Biologist Heinlen with Golden Eagle surveys. Specialist Heilhecker conducted the second round of occupancy surveys on the last priority one territory in the district. Biologist Heinlen worked with Olympia staff on the productivity flight budget. Anecdotally, a hiker came across an active Golden eagle nest and sent photos of two chicks still in down. This is a priority three nest and not part of the Golden eagle survey but is a good candidate for Research Biologist Watson's nestling research.



Occupancy visits are nearly complete in Chelan and Douglas Counties, with the last remaining ones visited due

***Golden eagle chicks
Photo: Dana Visalli***

to difficult access or obtaining proper permission on private property. Currently most birds tending young, with frequent trips to the nest with prey items, which allows for easy assessment of territory occupancy and productivity. In Douglas County, 14 of 21 territories were occupied, whereas Chelan County had 10 of 13 territories occupied. Biologist Gallie also discovered a new territory in Duffy Creek, Douglas County.

Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse: Leks counts and searches are complete for this season. Results are disappointing with both species seeing declines. Sage grouse continued a four-year decline from the population peak in 2010. Counts of male sage grouse (on leks totaled 218, which is a 21% decrease from last year (419 males were counted in 2010). In addition to the broad decline, 4 leks have become inactive with no grouse being detected in the last two years and 3 others are trending that way. Sharp-tailed grouse did not do much better as their total high count was 108, an 11% decrease from last year. No new leks for either species were found.

Wolverine Highlights: As access to the high country opens up Biologist Fitkin and USFS staff are opportunistically checking wolverine run pole camera sites to see who's been visiting. Logan continues to be very active in the study area and recently put on quite a show at the Easy Pass camera site (see the attached video for some serious entertainment).



Wolverine Logan at a remote camera site.

Photo - USFS

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

Wildlife Areas

Tonasket 4th Grade Field Trip: Manager Haug and Washington Dept. of Natural Resources acting Unit Forester Andy Townsend led the wildlife and fire ecology portion of the Tonasket 4th Grade field trip to the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area (see picture below). The field trip also covered interpretation of photos to determine the effects of prescribed burning as well as journaling experiences on a short hike. Manager Haug and forester Townsend discussed the benefits

prescribed burning the necessity of using fire as a management tool in a fire-dependent ecosystem. Forester Townsend discussed using timber management practices to reduce the potential for disease and managing the forests for the benefit of our state school system. The two also discussed some of the species that live in both the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area and Loomis State Forest and how lucky the students are living in such a special place. We got lots of positive comments during and after the presentation as well as numerous postings on Facebook.



Photo by Jeff Heinlen.



Bitterroot (Lewisia rediviva) unfurling in the morning

*Scenery on the Sun Mtn trails, Methow Valley.
Photo – Scott Fitkin*

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer lighting fire in the Cougar Prescribed Burn Unit – Ray Guse





*Sherman Creek Wildlife Area
Assistant Manager Palmer
lighting fire in the Cougar
Prescribed Burn Unit – Ray
Guse*



*Fine-leaved Daisy (*Erigeron linearis*)
in Holcum Canyon, Methow Wildlife
Area.*



*Jerusalem cricket on the Methow Wildlife
Area.*

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Burrowing Owls: Biologist Gregory assisted the Global Owl Project and Photographer Jenny Ross with installing infrared lighting and a camera that will capture activities inside the web cam burrow. The camera will take a still photo every 2 minutes for the next several weeks until the young owls have left the burrow.



Left: David Johnson of the Global Owl Project and Photographer Jenny Ross configure the camera that will capture activity inside the burrow (nest access point is on the left). Photo: S. Gregory.



Right: Placing the camera inside the burrow. Photo: S. Gregory

Mourning Doves: Biologists Gregory and Stutzman surveyed for mourning doves using formal Distance Sampling on the Wenas Wildlife Area. They observed doves at 6 of the 20 survey locations. The survey will be repeated two more times. All data collected will be submitted to the USFWS and incorporated with other distance sampling data collected throughout the country to determine if it will be useful for estimating dove abundance and density.

Ferruginous Hawks: Longtime volunteer Baird reported that there is only one known nesting pair of hawks in District 4. In 2011 there were 5 active territories. This is a concerning situation, as this area is supposed to be the primary breeding locale for ferruginous hawks in Washington.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz talked with a photographer who is filming Yakima Canyon bighorn sheep. Evidence of pneumonia and lamb mortality has increased this past week. Safari Club International volunteer Greenhaw also stopped in the canyon over the weekend and reported observing afflicted and dead lambs.

Cougars: Three possible cougar depredations were investigated this week. Responses and investigations involved Conflict Specialist Wetzel, Carnivore Section Biologist Maletzke, and Region 3 Enforcement. One dog was injured in a probable cougar altercation in the Sunlight Waters area of Cle Elum. Two goats were killed in a probable cougar depredation in the South Thorpe Highway area of Cle Elum. Two sheep were killed in a cougar depredation in the Sun East area north of Ellensburg. The cougar involved in the sheep kills, 105 lb. 3 year old male, was trapped and humanely euthanized.



Gray Wolves: Biologist Moore worked with Conflict Specialist Wetzel and several volunteers to set up a fladry corral for the initial release of cattle in the Teanaway. Cow/calf pairs will be brought in soon and they will use the fladry pasture for approximately 2 weeks before being turned out on the open range.

Golden Eagles: Biologist Moore began an early productivity check on a few occupied territories. The Cape Horn territory was checked and photographed to assist Region 2 Biologists with the upcoming productivity flight.



Robinson and Umtanum were checked to provide Research Scientist Watson with information for a banding project and to determine if our road and trail closures are necessary. Nothing was observed at Cape Horn, but the Robinson and Umtanum pairs appear to have young on the nest.

Umtanum Cliff Nest with at least two young on the nest.

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

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman provided information to RPM McCorquodale and Deputy AD Schirato on the rock climbing incident at the Royal Columns climbing area. It was determined that the best course of action was to have a professional geologist inspect the area. Huffman contacted a geologist with DNR who came out on Friday and looked at the climbing area. An e-mail from the geologist with recommendations for the one problem area will be coming shortly, but overall the climbing areas are in fairly stable condition.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Chelan County and WDFW completed the purchase of 4010 acres high elevation mixed conifer forest from Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands property in the Stemilt Basin this week. This is the culmination of 7 years of work to secure fish and wildlife habitat, water resources and public access in the Basin by the Stemilt Partnership Group. Chelan County acquired 3370 acres, while WDFW now owns 640 acres. An additional 1280 acres of WA DNR lands is scheduled to be transferred to WDFW in the near future. Chelan County and WDFW are currently working on agreements for management of these lands and possible incorporation into the Colockum Wildlife Area.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Hunt continued working with the LDS group slated for a hand cart trek in late June. We need confirmation from DNR as to whether or not the group can camp on their ownership (leased by DFW).

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

Wildlife Areas

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom met with RPM McCorquodale, Biologist Bernatowicz, and Assistant Manager Sak at the Bus Road gate to take a short field tour and discuss the concerns brought forth by the City of Grandview regarding hazards of long-range weapons on the Byron Ponds Unit. Several topics were discussed, including recreational opportunities, habitat, and health and human safety. One long-term management option may be to implement a short-range weapons restriction on wildlife area units along the I-82 corridor, in Yakima County in order to address ongoing issues and still provide consistent public access.

Wildlife Management

District 4 Conflict Specialist: Conflict Specialist Hand monitored harvest of Damage Prevention Permits in Elk Area 3721. Very warm temperatures and high winds hampered the opening of the summer bull damage permit season. Although no elk were harvested, multiple groups of elk were hazed back to Hanford.

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

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman looked at the biological control release site for 2 diffuse knapweed bugs at Mud Lake with the Yakima County Noxious Weed Control Board Manager. We will be spraying knapweed in the area using a contractor this spring and we wanted to make sure we did not treat at the release site. Bugs were present at the site and there are hopes to use the area for a collection site in future years. Later in the week Huffman toured the project area with the contractor and identified the release site and the no spray area. The contractor should be starting this coming week. While in the area several new patches of white top and dalmatian toadflax were located for treatment.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegart, Assistant Manager Hunt, and Habitat Biologist Meyer toured the new Plum Creek lands that were recently added to the LT Murray. Field checked known RMAP issues and documented places with resource damage that needs to be addressed.



Road with plugged culvert and headcut in upper North Fork Manastash Creek.

On Saturday, Manager Winegart and Tech Schnebly, along with members of the Washington Conservation Corps and the Mule Deer Foundation, removed over a mile of old barbed wire fence along Taneum Creek where it posed a wildlife entanglement hazard.



Ernie Farmer (WCC) and volunteer Chris Felstad load wire into a trailer



Craig Schnebly (WDFW) and Allan Charlton removing T-posts

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris submitted an authorization request to Program Manager McCorquodale and Regional Director Livingston for a 2014 fire season timing restriction on target shooting on the Wenas Wildlife Area. The shooting hours will stay the same as in the past two years (sunrise to 11:00am), but the start date for the timing restriction will be moved back to June 1 based on the early initiation of fire season this year and the early June fires (3 by June 8) that were started by target shooting last year.



Illegally dumped tires collected at access sites

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Access Manager Garcia and NRW2 Barbosa picked up illegally dumped tires at Mattoon Lake, near Ellensburg and checked a neighbor's concern in Kittitas County regarding water backing up onto his property from WDFW lands.

Access Manager Garcia and NRW 2 Barbosa worked with volunteers at Pond 4 to clean up trash and other illegal dump sites. They had 12 people helping, including 5 divers removing trash from the lake. An estimated 30 bags of trash and a few tires were collected throughout the day.



Volunteers help with cleanup at access sites

This week the old burned shop site (from the wildfire earlier this year) was cleaned up by a contractor from the Tri-Cities.



Images of the shop site during and after cleanup

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Citizen Science Bat Survey: Biologist Anderson met with the organized citizen group that has been conducting pilot acoustic encounter surveys on the wildlife management units found in the Lower Snoqualmie Valley. This includes Stillwater, Cherry Valley and Crescent Lake WMU. This is the last pilot year. Data has been compiled annually and a list of findings will be finalized after work this summer. Work will begin in June and run through August.

Common Loon Monitoring and Management: Biologists Anderson and Smith spent time monitoring loons in King Co. Anderson confirmed a pair at Calligan Lake. The pair consists of the 2013 banded female and a new male. It is speculated the 2013 banded male has either been usurped early in the season by this new male, suffered winter mortality, or is now non-territorial and perhaps on other area lakes. Upon driving out of the Snoqualmie Tree Farm a cougar ran in front of Anderson – quickly moving away! Anderson notified Carnivore Research Scientist Kertson for purpose of his ongoing study tracking area cougars.

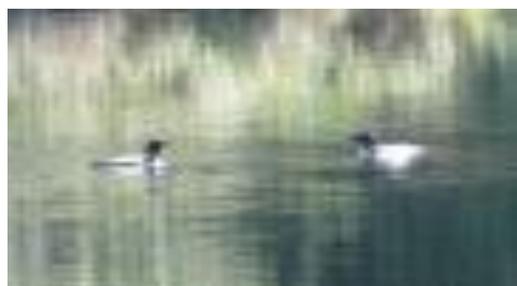
Biologist Smith and Anderson visited Lynch Lake to assess nesting progress of the pair there and found that the known nest had been depredated (likely mammal). They also had a single loon on Rattlesnake Lake.



Failed Common Loon nest site from east King County. Eggs were likely removed by a mammalian predator.

With only 15-17 pairs of “Common” Loon in Washington, where this species once bred down to Mt. Shasta area of California, it is important to keep track of our small population. Working with landowners and educating the public is essential. Washington is the last west coast state to have this species, which is receding across the lower 48 states in historical range. All

western states that still have a known population (WA, WY, MT) have small numbers and are engaged in conservation efforts to retain and hopefully increase this charismatic bird for future generations. See WDFW’s loon management website for more information: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/loons/>



A pair of Common Loons consists of the 2013 banded female and a new male.

Sharp-tailed snake cover board check: Biologist Milner checked cover boards for surveys on Orcas Island and found a northwestern garter snake under a cover in the area where a sharp-tailed snake was reported at about this time of the year, last year.



San Juan Islands bat surveys: Biologist Milner spend two nights with a capture crew from UW mist netting bats on Vendovi Island at the request of the landowner. Twenty-six bats were caught over the two nights, all of them adult males of either Yuma or California myotis species.

Tiny myotis bat getting measured.
Photo by: Sharlene Santana

Bald Eagle Issues: Biologist DeBruyn shipped a freshly dead bald eagle to the National Wildlife Health Center for necropsy. The eagle died for no apparent reason in a large field and was collected by an officer shortly after it died. DeBruyn consulted with department scientist Jim Watson regarding the Fir Island Farm restoration project and its effect on an eagle nest in the area. A good exchange of ideas took place and the team working on the plan was brought up to date on the discussion. DeBruyn documented several new bald eagle nests in the area and got them in the database.

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw provided an update to the Tulalip Tribes representative on the Stakeholder Committee, who was unable to attend the meeting two weeks ago. They discussed the six design alternatives that will be modeled and reviewed the proposed design screening criteria and selection considerations.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw completed a first draft of the project monitoring and adaptive management plan for objectives related to protecting drainage, groundwater, and water quality on adjacent agricultural land. Objectives related to monitoring habitat changes in the project area will be drafted in the next month. Once the whole plan is drafted, it will be reviewed by the project steering committee and an independent technical review team.

Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn monitored trail cameras set up at DeBay slough to document the presence/absence of nutria.



Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with Werkhoven Dairy during winter wheat harvest and initial soil preparation. All of the wheat is harvested and one field is prepped for planting. Barley and corn will be planted in a similar fashion as last year.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Sno-Valley Farms to discuss the planting plan for the new Ebey Island agricultural lease. Soil has been prepped for planting approximately 60 acres of corn and barley this week. Manager Boehm also met with Everett Alexander to discuss the grazing plan that was initiated one month ago. Wet weather and slow growing grass on the West Lobe pasture has resulted in removing some of the herd off of the pasture until the grass recovers.

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager met with Frohning Dairy to finalize the planting plan for the Unit. Approximately 55 acres are planned to be under plow as soon as the soil dries. A mix of barley, corn, and grass is planned to be planted on the Unit this spring.

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

Wildlife Areas

Agricultural enhancement program: Skagit Wildlife Area staff made final prep for the corn planting areas on the Island Unit. Manager Rotton coordinated with the sharecrop planter for the planting of corn on the Island Unit.

Weed control program: NRS Meis monitored herbicide control areas at the Samish Unit, FIF, Padilla Bay, and Headquarters units.

Whatcom Wildlife Area Noxious Weed Control: Natural Resource Tech Deyo performed mechanical weed control on patches of poison hemlock on the Nooksack unit.

Lake Terrell Barley Fields: Natural Resource Tech Deyo worked to prep the agricultural fields at Lake Terrell for barley plantings. He plowed and disked the fields.

Johnson DeBay's Slough: Skagit Wildlife Area staff mowed and weed wacked DeBay's Slough Swan Reserve entry road, fence lines and parking lot. Staff also monitored agricultural lease activities on the site.

Samish Unit Wetland Enhancement Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, and Ducks Unlimited set the date, reserved a venue, and began advertising for a public open house to present and receive input on the project design. The meeting is planned for June 3rd from 6:30 – 8:00 pm at the Padilla Bay Breazeale Interpretive Center. For more information, please contact Loren Brokaw at Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov.

Skagit Acquisition Team: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Habitat Planner Brian Williams met to plan next steps needed to advance a proposal to provide additional waterfowl hunting opportunity and waterfowl winter forage in the Skagit and Samish deltas.

Pheasant Pen Repairs: Two Master hunter volunteers performed repair work on the Skagit headquarters pheasant holding pens. During the Winter, a snow storm collapsed old 2x4's holding up the netting in the pens. The volunteers removed broken 2x4's and replaced them with new wood.

Spring Dust Off Archery Event: The Custer Sportsmen's Club held the Spring Dust Off Archery competition at the Intalco Unit Archery Range. Good weather helped the event with good numbers of people attending. Manager Kessler performed pre-event mowing of the overflow parking area and parts of the course.

Nooksack River Dike Top Trail Maintenance: Manager Kessler mowed the dike top trail, and around the reader boards on the Nooksack Unit.



Left: Manager Kessler, Natural Resource Tech Deyo and Access Manager Hacker worked to rehab the Nooksack River access gravel parking area.



Right: Whatcom County Parks and Recreation recently completed a new dike top trail that goes from Main Street in Ferndale, across the WDFW River Access, and along the river edge to Hovander Park. A trail dedication and ribbon cutting was held.

Hunter Educator Training: Coordinator Dazey held a Pre Service training session in La Connor. This is the first of three sessions to be held in the Skagit area to certify new volunteer hunter education instructors. Applicants must complete PST training which includes classroom sessions on "How to put on a class" "Effectiveness of hunter education teaching methods", and "tips and techniques to deliver the course materials". Following the classroom session held at the La Connor field office the applicants will conduct an actual class of hunter education students over two evenings and be evaluated on their abilities. The applicants completed the classroom portion of their training and in the following week will conduct a class in Burlington at the new Skagit shooting range.



Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey held a Pre Service training session in La Connor.

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Wildlife Management

Nuisance Bear Concerns: Biologist Anderson provided requested collaboration and outreach with King Co. staff and WDFW Enforcement to provide community-wide bear management recommendations to concerned citizens in an area where a bear is being seen. Please see our Living with Wildlife, Bear page for general information: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/bears.html>

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Biologist Caldwell and Technician Otto continued coordinated efforts to utilize Migratory Bird Enhancement funding in Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish Counties. Biologist Caldwell surveyed roughly 600 acres of land that a new private landowner would like the WDFW to consider for waterfowl hunting in 2014-15. Next week we will be conducting habitat suitability index surveys of these lands and meeting with the landowner to discuss their options.

Spring Bear Hunter Management: Biologist Caldwell contacted hunters to verify any unreported harvests in the Monroe and North Skagit Areas. So far this hunting season, three bears have been harvested from the Monroe area and no bears have been harvested from the North Skagit area.

Bow Hill Pheasant Hunt Parking: Biologist Caldwell spoke with private landowners regarding parking accommodations for the upcoming 2014 pheasant hunting season. Follow up contacts will be made in the upcoming week.

Black Bear Depredation: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn conducted a site visit to validate bear damage to timber in Skagit County. Despite using a feeder system to minimize damage to this 13 year old stand, there has been substantial damage to this 13 year old stand of trees.



Substantial bear sign was evident in the area of the feeder and along an old road grade through the sign. Most of the peel damage observed was 1-2 years old, but newly peeled trees were evident as well. Danilson followed up with Conflict Section staff to indicate that the claim is valid and a depredation permit should be issued.



Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn confirmed bear damage to timber in Skagit County

Wildlife Areas

Island Unit: Manager Rotton met with volunteers regarding the Island Ditch maintenance project. Manager Rotton and NRS Meis met with the project cooperater who is providing services and equipment for the project to discuss the no cost contract for the project.

Manager Rotton met with landowner of the moorage access to discuss the bank repair project and access for the site this planting season.

Skagit Headquarters: Manager Rotton continues to coordinate with the DNR Marine Debris Removal Crew regarding dismantling of the WDFW Island Unit barge. A contract for removal and disposal was accepted. The barge has been removed from the Skagit boat launch and will be dismantled off-site. Staff treated weeds along the dike trail on the Headquarters Unit and mowed and weedeated along the dike-top trail and around restoration plantings at the boat launch parking area of Headquarters. .

Fir Island Farms: Skagit Wildlife Area staff weedeated along fence lines and parking lot area at Fir Island Farms viewing area. Manager Rotton discussed options with Fir Island Farms lessee for other weed control measures for the site in sensitive areas around the active bald eagle nest.

GOAL 4: SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Wildlife Management

Novatus Contracts Management System: Biologist Caldwell began familiarizing himself and constructing contracts via the Novatus Contracts Management System.

Private Lands Access Program Management: Biologist Caldwell coordinated agendas with technician staff pertinent to program goals and objectives for the Private Lands Access Program. Vehicle mileage and spending reports were also submitted this week by all PLAP staff.

Biologist Danilson conducted a final exit interview for Conflict Specialist Griffith who resigned effective May 15th. Danilson also addressed several inventory issues related to Griffith's resignation and Wildlife Program request to reduce the number of radios assigned to field staff.

Biologist Danilson prepared and submitted the forms necessary to initiate the recruitment process for the seasonal Wildlife Conflict Technician position. Danilson later reviewed and commented on the draft job announcement prepared by Human Resources staff.

Wildlife Areas

Technician Staff: Technicians Otto will continue assisting me in working with landowners on utilizing duck stamp money for the 2014 hunting season. He will also continue applying managing (mowing, applying herbicides, fertilizer, etc.) at enhancing sites and planting food plots at designated locations.

Staff attended a noxious weed control seminar for continue education credits needed to maintain their sprayers license. The seminar was hosted by the King County Noxious Weed Program.

Manager Boehm participated in a volunteer-based clean-up day at the Cherry Valley Barn on May 17th. A Master Hunter organized the event with his employer, Atkinson Construction. Eight employees participated and the company provided two excavators, two chainsaws, and a chipper-shredder. Manager Boehm provided a 25 cubic yard dumpster. Work was focused on removing



nuisance trees growing too close to buildings and the net pen, pressure washing the pheasant loading area, loading heavy objects into the dumpster, and removing years-worth of debris and garbage from the barn and parking lot and placing it in the dumpster. Metals were sorted out for recycle.

Manager Boehm participated in a huge volunteer-based clean-up day at the Cherry Valley Barn.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle Habitat Improvement: District Wildlife Biologist Anderson and Biologist Dobson from the USFS organized a work crew from the USFS Columbia River Gorge fire crew to mow grass and Scots broom in a western pond turtle nesting area in Skamania



County. This area is on USFS ownership and is part of a cooperative management agreement between the two agencies for western pond turtle recovery. A four member crew spent part of two days hand mowing approximately 2 acres of habitat. Biologist Anderson used the opportunity to educate the work crew about the significance of the habitat work and also used a spotting scope to show the crew the difference between our two native turtles, the western pond and painted turtle.

USFS Fire Crew

Western Pond Turtle Management: Biologists George, Holman, Stephens, and Conflict Specialist McDonald, all participated in this week's continuation of the 2014 study of western pond turtles at the Sondino site. Priorities for this year include continuing to evaluate the shell disease condition among the population, collecting specific individuals for veterinary biopsies related to the shell disease condition, capturing sufficient individuals to generate a population estimate for the Sondino site, collecting young for the head-starting program, and conducting bull-frog control. The current capture effort involves 28 traps set in 3 of Sondino's primary water bodies.



Western pond turtles

Through 28 days of trap checks, 387 total captures have occurred comprised of 159 individual turtles. Additionally, seven hatchling pond turtles have been captured and delivered to the Oregon Zoo. Also, eleven bull frogs were captured in hoop traps and removed. Additional bull frog control efforts are underway under the direction of Volunteer Slavens. One turtle found dead by predation has been submitted for necropsy. Finally, all 12 of the animals targeted for biopsy have been captured and transferred to the Oregon Zoo.

Golden Eagle Survey/Wind Power: District Wildlife Biologist Anderson followed up with a site visit to a golden eagle nest site that is part of Research Biologist Watson's golden eagle/wind power habitat use project. The nest tree that has been used the past couple years was located, but the nest was found to have blown out and was on the ground nearby. An adult golden eagle was perched in the area and its behavior suggested there was another active nest in the territory. A follow-up site visit will be made to search from another vantage point to determine the status of this golden eagle pair.



Blown out Golden eagle nest

Wildlife Areas

Mt St Helens Wildlife Area Forage Enhancements: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Technician Sample finished applying fertilizer and lime to over 150 acres on the Mudflow Unit last week. These applications help improve the quality and quantity of elk forage on the area. Surveys from previous years have indicated that there is a 25-50% increase in the amount of forage available in the treated areas versus the non-treated areas, greatly increasing the carrying capacity of the area. This work was funded in large part by a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation grant.



Technician Sample fertilizing Mikey's Meadow on the east end of the Mudflow Unit.

Shillapoo Wildlife Area Pasture Rehabilitation: Wildlife Area Manger Hauswald finished the rehabilitation work associated with a 20 acre pasture in the South Unit last week to improve forage conditions for wintering waterfowl. The pasture was dominated by many unwanted vegetation species including reed canary grass, canada thistle, and himalayan blackberry. The field was replanted with a grass and clover mix, along with wheat to help control and minimize weed growth in the pasture.



Photo taken during the flyover last week associated with the possible reconnection of the Columbia River to the Wildlife Area.

Klickitat Wildlife Area Grazing Monitoring: Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven visited pastures of two grazing permits on the Fisher Hill Unit. One permit area appears to have almost no utilization and the other permit has been lightly to moderately utilized. Van Leuven met Range Ecologist Burham in the field while he was sampling plots, and discussed observations on the condition of the plant community and possible management strategies.

Seasonal Road Closure Lifted: The gate on the Sheep Canyon Road was opened this week on the Klickitat Wildlife Area. All road gates used for implementing seasonal closures are now open.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Wildlife Management

Willapa Elk Herd Plan Public Meetings: Regional Wildlife Program Manager Jonker and Biologists Bergh and Stephens attended the two public meetings in Montesano and Vancouver regarding the Willapa Hills Elk Herd Plan this week. The purpose of the meetings was to allow staff to answer questions about and receive comments or suggestions on the draft Willapa Hills Elk Herd Plan. The plan is designed to be a reference document for stakeholders, guide the management of the herd, and identify objectives and strategies associated with management priorities specific to the herd. Despite a small turnout at both meetings, many great comments and ideas were made by those attending. The public comment period is open from May 5-June 2 and comments can be made online here: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/>

Wildlife Conflict

Coyote Conflict: Conflict Specialist McDonald spoke with a Klickitat County resident about nonlethal coyote deterrents. A coyote has been spooking her pony at night. The homeowner will try some new techniques and will call back at a later date.

Unwanted Cougar: Conflict Specialist McDonald investigated a report of a cougar sleeping in a Goldendale resident's open barn at night. A site visit revealed that the small barn was filled 3" deep with feral house cat scat. No cougar sign was found. The difference between cougar and house cat track and sign was discussed, and the property owner was relieved that a cougar was not inhabiting the barn.

Wine Grape Depredations: Conflict Specialist McDonald met with two vineyard managers and an orchardist regarding deer depredation in Skamania County. The crop claims process, damage prevention cooperation agreements, fencing options, and nonlethal management techniques were reviewed. All three agreed to sign damage prevention cooperation agreements and two are likely going to install New Zealand type fencing.

Wildlife Deterrents: Conflict Specialist McDonald arranged for a Master Hunter to help a Goldendale area resident haze deer off of his agricultural field. The landowner spends a great deal of time hazing 15-20 deer off his 15 acre alfalfa and barley field.

Community Response: Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to a "duck" that was attacking people at a trailer court/campground at Silver Lake. The bird turned out to be a feral Muscovy duck. The occupants of the trailer park wanted to capture the duck and relocate it with other wild ducks while others wanted to put it in a "pot". Conklin decided to relocate the duck to a farm environment. Conklin turned her back on the duck long enough for him to run up and bite her on the ankle! No good deed.....Conklin contacted an employee of the local farm and supply store in Longview who takes in unwanted birds and happens to raise Muscovy Ducks. The ungrateful duck was captured, wings clipped, and relocated to the feed store employee's farm. Although this call was unconventional to say the least, it turned out to be a very good public relations contact. The residents of the court were very appreciative that WDFW responded and assisted even after learning the animal was domestic and not technically the Agency's responsibility. A lesson was given to the occupants of the park on the complications of feeding wildlife (including feral ducks).



Don't be fooled...this duck was much bigger than what it appears!

REGION 6

Weekly report will be provided in May19-25 report.