

Wildlife Program

Week of April 6-12, 2015

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Region 1 Wolf Activities

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

Wildlife Management

Smackout Local Working Group: Biologist Shepherd met individually with Smackout Working Group members who were not present at the meeting the previous week. Potential progress and paths forward were discussed.

Range Rider Request for Qualifications: Biologist Shepherd, Conflict Supervisor McCanna, and Conflict Section lead Simek discussed and formulated a Range Rider Request for Qualifications that determines the qualifications necessary and the process for retaining contract range riders.

Range Rider Discussion: Biologist Shepherd discussed business issues with a person attempting to set up a range rider business.

Huckleberry Area: Biologist Shepherd discussed data sharing and Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock with Huckleberry producers. Biologist Shepherd discussed the Huckleberry wolf issue with Conflict Specialist Bennett who is assigned to manage several aspects of the wolf conflicts in the area.

State and Regional Wolf Conference Calls: Biologist Shepherd participated in the Statewide and Regional Wolf Management Conference calls.

Wolf Deterrence Plans and Working Groups Conference Call: Biologist Shepherd and Supervisor McCanna participated in a wolf deterrence plan and working group conference call with regional and Olympia staff.

Regional Wolf Conference Call: Biologist Earl participated in the Region 1 bi-weekly conference call.

Camera Deployment: Biologist Earl and Wildlife Area Manager Dice spent a day placing trail cameras on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area in an area that has been experiencing repeated collar data activity. While out there, Earl and Dice located several elk carcasses and body parts, as well as wolf tracks and scat. This is in an area that lies just a few hundred yards outside of the Umatilla National Forest Boundary where a grazing allotment for 442 cow/calf pairs is

scheduled to begin in June. Biologist Earl also worked with the cooperator to map out the allotment entirely.

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Wolves at Smoothing Iron area: WLA Manager Bob Dice and Private Lands Biologist Jason Earl looked at wolf activity at Smoothing Iron, Cooper Canyon, and the south fork of Asotin Creek on Wednesday. Dice and Earl deployed two trail cameras,



one belonging to the wildlife area and one belonging to the wildlife conflict program. A torn up and eaten elk was found in Cooper Canyon. Numerous wolf tracks and scat was found and photographed. Another fresh elk leg was found near the south fork of Asotin Creek in the vicinity of several recent wolf locations. We didn't find that particular kill site due to daylight running short. Bob showed Jason where wildlife area boundaries are and showed him where a Forest Service grazing allotment will commence in early June.



Wolves on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area

Collar Data: Biologist Earl worked on transferring the collar data off of the State's web site and downloading it into a map form that is on his computer. This will allow him to more efficiently track the wolf activity as it relates to the cameras and grazing allotments.

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

Wildlife Management

Region One Wolf Management Team Conference Call: Supervisor McCanna prepared an agenda for the April 8th conference call and will be preparing minutes from the meeting.

Other

Wolf Conference Calls: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett participated in both the statewide monthly and regional bi-weekly wolf conference calls. New pack information and deterrence plans were discussed.

Region 2 Wolf Activities

Nothing to report

Region 3 Wolf Activities

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wolf Reports and Investigation: Biologist Moore began investigating reports of two wolves in the District. Moore spent about half a day searching for sign but did not find any. Conflict Specialist Wetzell and Contractor Leuck placed two cameras in the general area. Moore will continue checking the area next week.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Species Reclassifications: Following a brief presentation by Biologist Gary Wiles and Acting Diversity Division Manager Penny Becker, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission approved the classification of Tufted Puffins as a state endangered species and removed Steller Sea Lions from state threatened status. Both votes by the Commission were unanimous in supporting the listing changes recommended by the Diversity Division. The puffin listing is the first addition to the state Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive lists since March 2006, when Streaked Horned Larks and Taylor's Checkerspot became endangered and Mazama Pocket Gophers became threatened. Although Steller Sea Lions were delisted, they will remain classified as "protected wildlife" under WAC 232-12-011.

Pacific Flyway Nongame Migratory Bird Technical Committee: Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan participated in a conference call with other members of the Pacific Flyway Nongame Migratory Bird Technical Committee to discuss a process to evaluate and prioritize

activities. The group will have a work session in June where priority issues and actions proposed by partners and state wildlife agencies will be evaluated.

Western Gray Squirrel: Citizen Science Coordinator Wendy Connally worked with Science Division's Matt Vander Haegen and Wildlife Program's District Biologist Scott Fitkin to review a proposal for additional Citizen Science coordination through Pacific Biodiversity Institute. Western Gray Squirrel surveys using Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife protocols in the northern Cascades have been conducted by the Pacific Biodiversity Institute for years. Their assistance in recruiting, training, and coordinating a group of highly qualified/technical Citizen Scientists for this new range-wide expanded survey effort will be invaluable to get timely, accurate information.

Butterfly Conservation: Butterfly monitoring commenced for the State Wildlife Grants Prairie-Oak project, in which ten Species of Greatest Conservation Need are being studied as part of habitat restoration projects in the south and north Puget Sound. Ann Potter, Insect Conservation Specialist, scouted a south Puget Sound study site for the Hoary Elfin butterfly and found several already out as adults. Typically, these butterflies do not begin to emerge until late-April. It is an early spring weather-wise, and unprecedentedly early butterfly species sightings are being reported throughout our region. Surveys will begin in earnest this week.

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

Wetland Conservation and Human Dimensions: Natural Resource Scientists Don Kraege and Joe Buchanan attended a workshop in Oregon – as observers and in support roles – that will provide information for a national survey that is being supported by the Pacific Flyway Council and other organizations across North America. Input gathered through these workshops will form the foundation of two national surveys, one for waterfowl hunters and one for viewers, regarding aspects of waterfowl and wetland conservation and management. Don attended a session with thirteen waterfowl hunters (8 April) and Joe attended a session with eleven viewers (9 April). Twelve of these two-session workshops were scheduled across the United States, and six have now been conducted. The emphasis of the workshops was to summarize values about waterfowl hunting and wildlife viewing experiences that are most important to hunters and viewers. This effort will provide additional insight on factors that contribute to quality recreational experiences and ways to increase public support for conservation. Don and Joe represent the Pacific Flyway on a Human Dimensions working group that is coordinating development of the survey.

WildWatch Cameras: Citizen Science Coordinator Wendy Connally and Biologist/Technical Expert Greg Falxa coordinated with a private landowner/cooperator to restore the Osprey camera prior to nesting. Ospreys appear to have returned to the site.

eBird Northwest: Citizen Science Coordinator Wendy Connally worked with our eBird Northwest partner, Klamath Bird Observatory, to explore a possible new feature on our portal – a clickable-map of our Wildlife Areas where an eBird Northwest user could download current eBird checklists for each site. This tool would support Watchable Wildlife activities on our

Wildlife Areas and provide another recreational opportunity as well as another avenue to promote the Discover Pass. Connally met with Lands Division planners to discuss the connections between this possible new service and our constituents, as well as identify some issues we need to work out.

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

Butterfly Conservation: Ann Potter, Insect Conservation Specialist, reviewed a manuscript submitted for publication with the scientific journal *Northwest Science* on a study of prairie butterflies in the Willamette Valley, Oregon.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Selkirk Grizzly Bear Monitoring: Assistant District Wildlife Biologist (ADWB) Annemarie Prince and a Kalispel Tribal biologist deployed one hair-snagging corral and wrapped two rub trees in barbed wire in the Selkirk Mountains Grizzly Bear Recovery Area. Hair corrals consist of a single strand of barbed wire in a circle around trees, a camera, and lure placed in the center of the corral. Rub trees are trees or posts already being used by bears for scratching, wrapped in barbed wire with no lure present. The hair left on the barbed wire is used to gather genetic information from the bear.

Lincoln Cliffs Bighorn Sheep: Biologists Lowe and Oyster conducted ground telemetry on bighorn sheep in the Lincoln and Whitestone areas. Twenty-two sheep were located in the Lincoln group, including seven of eight marked animals. Eight sheep were observed in the Whitestone group, including two of four marked animals. Planning, including equipment issues and volunteer coordination, is ongoing for the monitoring of lamb production and survival this spring/summer.



Bighorn sheep in the cliffs above Lake Roosevelt

Golden Eagle monitoring: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy checked a number of the Asotin County golden eagle territories. Eagles were present at each territory, two were incubating, one historical nest was not in use and alternate nest locations are unknown, and two pairs were

attending nests but did not appear to be incubating or have young. Vekasy also checked ferruginous hawk territories near Starbuck and found no activity except for red-tailed hawks.

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

Wildlife Areas

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Barn:

Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer removed the framed floor from the west side shed of the barn at Sherman Creek WLA headquarters due to rotten framing associated with the sag in that portion of the roof. Palmer received notification this week that replacement of the barn roof is on the agency's Capital Funds Project list, and a new roof will be on the barn before the end of 2015. Palmer has to fix the framing issues on the west portion of the barn before the roof replacement can commence.



Private Lands/Access

Southeast Washington Livestock Producer Contacts: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley and Earl, along with Biologist Wade, were able to track down several livestock producers in SE WA to acquire signatures for documents and contracts. All of these will be entered into the agency's contract system and wolf/livestock checklists will be mailed to Olympia.

Peola Elk: Natural Resource Technician (NRT) Wade checked the crops in the Peola area and observed twenty-one elk in one of the landowner's winter wheat fields. NRT Wade subsequently was able to haze the elk through one of the one way gates in the elk fence onto the Weatherly Wildlife Area, where they met up with a smaller heard of elk observed on the good side of the elk fence. During several later checks of the area, the elk were still feeding and bedding on the wildlife area and no other elk were observed in any of the privately owned agricultural crops.

Blue Mountain Community Grant: Biologist Earl received a call this week informing him that his application for the BMC Grant was chosen as the top candidate. This \$10,000 grant will be used to improve wildlife habitat in NW Garfield County. The project will also utilize several entities, including the Pomeroy Conservation District, Pomeroy High School, and Pomeroy FFA, as volunteer labor from several private land owners in the area. Biologist Earl has also been in touch with the Mule Deer Foundation who is interested in contributing additional funds to the project.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Wolverine Research: Biologist Fitkin and USFS Biologist Rohrer conducted aerial surveys for wolverine dens in the known home ranges of adult females Xena and Mallory. We located what we believe to be an active denning area not far from where we documented Mallory's den in 2012 and hope to return to the area this coming week to install cameras to help pinpoint the precise den site and possibly obtain photos of kits. A search of Xena's home range did not yield any high use areas suggesting denning activity. As time and weather allow, we also hope to search Sasha's home range and a localized spot being repeatedly visited by dominant male Special K. Unlike many other carnivore species, male wolverines often visit and are tolerated at natal den sites, so Special K may be able to lead us to a female with young.



Wolverine tracks in probable den site area – Photo by Scott Fitkin

Pygmy Capture/Release Activities: It appears that kits arrived almost a month early at the two southern breeding enclosures, which puts us a little behind. New Technician Gibbs has jumped right in and is feverishly trying to get everything ready to begin capture/releases. Technician Gibbs, along with volunteers Katie Remine (Woodland Park Zoo) and Jessica, cleared the artificial burrows at the Sagebrush Flat (SBF) enclosures, and Gibbs also completed this task at Beezley Hills.

Wildlife Areas

Methow Post-fire Forest Management Project: Okanogan Lands Forester Jamie Bass met with Department Foresters Rod Pfielfle and Doug Kuehn to examine the project timber sale area for any breaches in the harvester contract before releasing the performance bond. The sale area roads were left in excellent condition, no trash or merchantable products were left behind, and the harvester did all infrastructure repairs to the satisfaction of the Contract Admin (Jamie Bass).

Bass wrote a final inspection letter to Gasho and Gasho LLC (Harvester) to release the performance bond from financial and worked on completing any documentation needed for the sale. In addition Bass worked on completing a project work report summary for use within the department to track work that has been done and future recommendations.

Manager Sherry Furnari also finalized the firewood cutting permit drafted by Forester Bass, who posted signs directing firewood cutters to contact headquarters for firewood cutting permits. The firewood cutting permits will help remove large woody material over the next six months that has been left behind by the mechanical treatment, as well as breakage and blowdown, to keep the fuel loading within the historic range of variability and fire risk low. Once some of the debris has been removed, wildlife area staff will keep an eye on weeds and needs for reseeding any ground-disturbance.

Methow Forest Rehabilitation Project: Okanogan Lands Forester Jamie Bass continued to work on defining boundaries for future forest treatments in the unburned forested areas within the Methow Unit (referred to as the North Methow Phase of the Forest Rehabilitation Project) for commercial thinning work, non-commercial hand thinning, and prescribed fire. This included drafting prescriptions for each stand or unit based on existing tree species composition, age, density, structure, and potential wildlife habitat. Bass continues to temporarily flag out possible commercial thinning units to allow staff, bios, and interested parties to independently examine the proposed acreage. Final boundary marking will be done closer to the bidding date when boundaries have been finalized.

Private Lands/Access

Douglas County Grouse Surveys: Biologists Braaten and Gallie spent a few early mornings this week monitoring Sharp-tailed grouse leks in NE Douglas County and counted 72 sharp-tailed grouse. They discovered one lek after being displaced from wildfire and also found a new lek.

Sharp-tailed grouse lek in Douglas County – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW



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

Wildlife Areas

Gun Range Illegal Garbage Burning: A fire was lit this week on the Methow Wildlife Area’s gun range on a pile of wood target debris by an unknown private individual who did not seek permission or stay with the fire to ensure it was completely extinguished. A report from a neighboring landowner & volunteer firefighter notified wildlife area staff about the fire in the morning. He said the fire department responded and were monitoring it, but did not see any issues with just allowing it to burn down. Manager Furnari asked Assistant Manager Sample to stop by and evaluate. Sample got there in the early afternoon and it was mostly burnt out. Sample noticed some smoke in a few spots, stirred it up and threw moist dirt over it. Sample watched and waited for about fifteen minutes to see if any other spots were still smoldering.



***Methow Wildlife Area Gun Range
burned debris pile 4/8/15 – Photo by
Anna Sample***

Private Lands/Access

Access Maintenance: Access Manager Graves spent time on the Wenatchee River this week installing new signs and cutting back vegetation from access roads.



Alice Ave – Photo by Joes Graves

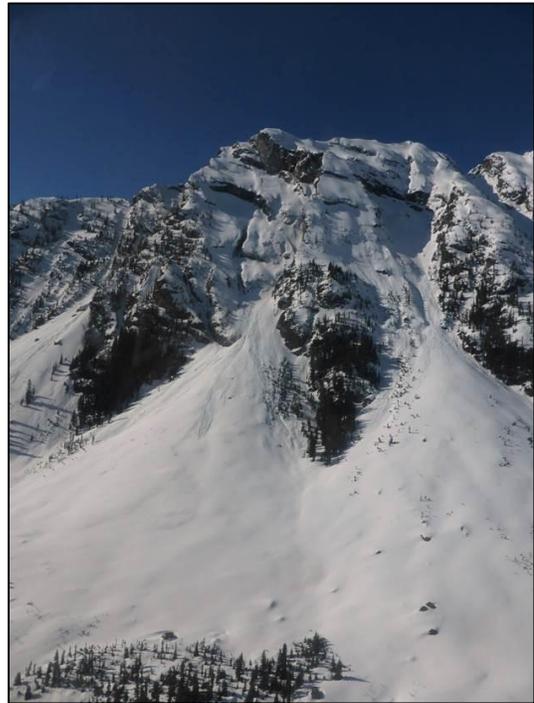


Dryden DOT – Photo by Joe Graves

Okanogan Access Highlights: Turkey season starts on the 15th with general fishing season right around the corner on the 25th. The spring residual spraying was wrapped up this week with a total of approximately fifteen acres sprayed. This is one acre above the yearly average. One note is that with the dry spring and very little moisture to set the chemical in the ground, the effectiveness to keep weeds and grasses at bay may be lower.

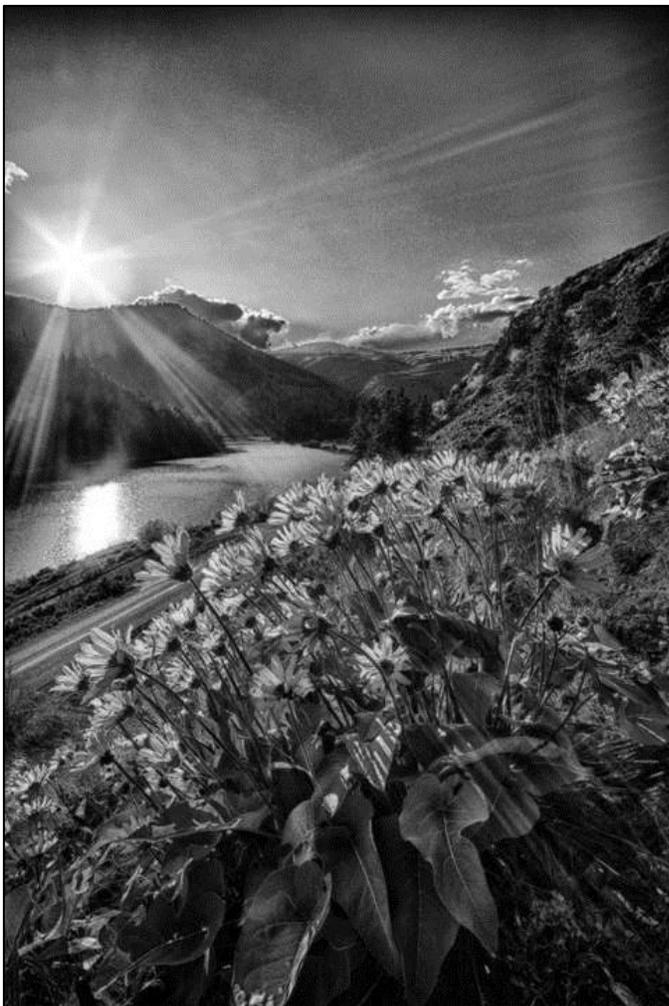


Douglas County Spring Sunrise – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW



North Cascades wolverine country – Photo by Scott Fitkin





From top to bottom: A pair of wood ducks near the headquarters bridge on the Sinlahekin, an adult bald eagle near Forde Lake, a mountain bluebird near Fish Lake, a Northern Shrike expelling a bolus near Sasse Pond on the Sinlahekin, partial lunar eclipse over the wildlife area on April 4th, arrowleaf balsamroot near Stalder Road on the Sinlahekin, and arrowleaf balsamroot above Fish Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area – Photos by Justin Haug

REGION 3

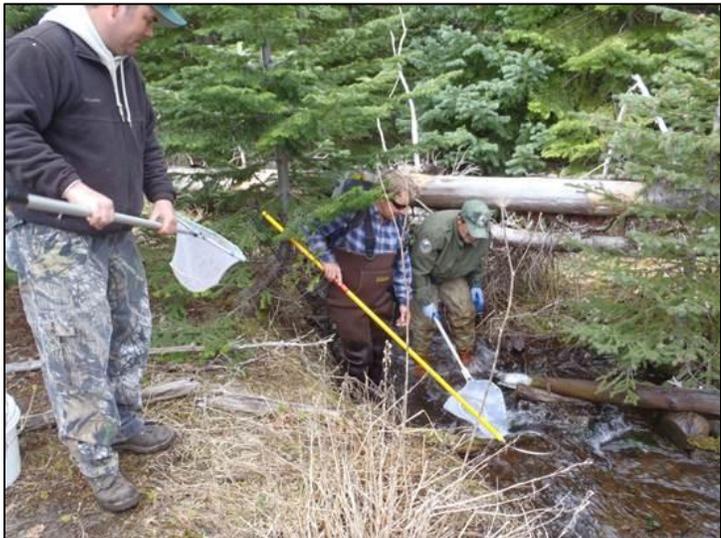
GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman checked vehicle counters and squirrel cameras in the NF Cowiche Area. Vehicle activity seems to have been pretty high on the weekend. Huffman pulled the trail cameras that had been set up in two locations to try and get images of a large gray squirrel that had been seen in the area. One camera caught several images of what was later confirmed to be a western gray squirrel (WGS). The second camera has one image that may be a WGS. Huffman completed wildlife observation reports and submitted them to Olympia.

Rock Creek Unit Fish Survey: Manager Huffman, Forester Mackey, Fish Biologist Anderson, and Habitat Biologist Bartrand conducted a fish survey on the upper reaches of Gold Creek in the Rock Creek Unit. The DNR stream information shows that there are no fish up to the problem culvert and some electro shocking by Plum Creek in 2001 had yielded the same results. However, the Forest Service has the same information on fish observations up stream (not survey data). Anderson and Bartrand were not able to locate any fish in sampling below and above the culvert in question, and they will provide a summary report. No changes are necessary to the DNR stream layer. The functioning culvert will not need to be replaced, allowing for an expensive RMAP project to free up funding for other needed RMAP work in the area.

Fish Biologist Anderson, Habitat Biologist Bartrand, and Forester Mackey shocking Gold Creek for fish on the Rock Creek Unit of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area



Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Sak and NRT2 Medina coordinated with local fire department staff to execute prescribed burns in the Bottom Rupley area of the Sunnyside HQ Unit.

Controlled burn on the Sunnyside HQ Unit



Mesa Lake Unit: Assistant Manager Buser reshaped the interior of the East Pigeon Pond at the Mesa Lake Unit. The upper end of the pond within the levee was above waterline so he is lowering the elevation and using the excess dirt to create a nesting island within the wetland.

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Project Collaboration: District Biologist Fidorra met with USFWS staff at McNary NWR to discuss ongoing WDFW-USFWS collaboration on wildlife projects including elk, burrowing owl, and ferruginous hawk surveys.

Canada Goose Nest

Surveys: District Biologist Fidorra, along with WDFW biologists Wilson, Bernatowicz, Moore, and Wetzell, completed the biennial Canada goose nest surveys of islands in the Columbia River. Fidorra recruited and supervised three volunteers from the Tri-cities area, which contributed a cumulative 37 volunteer hours during the surveys.



Elk Damage Techniques: District Biologist Fidorra and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with landowners bordering the Arid Land Ecology Reserve to discuss and test a potential new abatement technique for elk damage. A flashing Foxlight device will be placed along an existing elk trail once regular elk use has been documented by the game camera installed. We hope to determine if this device, developed for keeping predators from livestock pens, will have an impact on elk trespass.

Ferruginous Hawk: District Biologist Fidorra reviewed protocols for the 2016 statewide Ferruginous Hawk breeding surveys. Fidorra contacted colleagues at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) who will help contribute data from hawk territories on federal lands in District 4.

Region 1 Shrub Planting: Private Lands Bio Stutzman again traveled to Lincoln County to assist Region 1 staff with a shrub planting. Stutzman helped Lincoln County Private Lands Biologist Baarstad and three volunteers to lay fabric mulch and plant ~400 shrubs northwest of Wilbur.



Biologist Stutzman assisting with shrub planting in Region 1

Yakima County Sage Grouse: Biologist Stutzman surveyed the Yakima County sage grouse lek again this week where eight males were observed displaying. After the survey, Stutzman briefly searched the nearby area for satellite lek locations.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz corresponded with Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) biologist McAllister regarding a potential study of the effectiveness of “Seadust” deterring sheep from licking salt off highways. The company has indicated a willingness to fund a small study and WSDOT may have additional funds.

Western Gray Squirrels: Biologist Bernatowicz reviewed survey locations for 2015. Pictures from two cameras deployed in February and recently retrieved by Manager Huffman were reviewed. Western Gray Squirrels (WGS) were confirmed in an area where manger Huffman had reported non-California ground squirrels. A PhD candidate also reported possible WGS about 1.5 miles from the site. The land is mixed WDFW/USFS. The USFS is interested in further defining the distribution of WGS in the area.

A Western Gray Squirrel on newly acquired WDFW property in District 8



Goose Nest Surveys: Biologist Bernatowicz participated in the semi-annual survey of goose nesting islands in the Columbia River in Region 3. The timing of the surveys appeared to be good with few hatches and most nests with a full clutch. Waterfowl Specialist Wilson will compile the results.

Columbia River Goose Nest Survey: Biologist Moore worked with Biologists Bernatowicz, and Fidorra, Waterfowl Specialist Wilson, Conflict Specialist Wetzel, and WDFW Volunteers to

survey the Columbia River in District 4 and District 8 for nests. Overall the timing and weather were excellent. Very few nests had hatched and the survey results will be compiled by Specialist Wilson.

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Manager Lopushinsky worked with Olympia staff to update the Colockum Wildlife Area webpage, including having the Yoyo Rock boat launch added to the agency's online list of water access sites.

Plants Blooming: Spring has arrived on the Colockum as evidenced by the blooming of many showy native plants. Balsamroot, lupine, several species of Lomatium, and others are all blooming nicely.



Hedgehog cactus (Pediocactus nigrispinus) blooming on West Bar, Colockum Wildlife Area

Public Use: Public use has increased on the Colockum with people out looking for antlers, scouting for the upcoming turkey season, or just out for a drive.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris participated in several conference calls with lands and public affairs staff to discuss needs and timeline for upcoming public meetings on the Wenas Wildlife Area target shooting proposal. She also participated in a conference call with lands staff and AAG Schwartz to discuss risk and liability issues related to target shooting on the wildlife area.

KIMA TV Interview: Manager Confer Morris was interviewed by KIMA TV regarding the Wenas Wildlife Area target shooting proposal. The story aired on the Wednesday 6 o'clock news.

Wenas Wildlife Area Target Shooting: Manager Confer Morris provided comments on the draft talking points from public affairs for the Wenas Wildlife Area target shooting proposal. Manager Confer Morris also met with SM Posner to work on the power point presentation for the upcoming public meetings on the Wenas Wildlife Area target shooting proposal.

Access Program

Area Access Service: Access staff serviced the following access areas: Tim's Pond, Oak Creek, Mellis Rd, Fitzsimmons, Ponds 4 & 5, Buena, Zillah Bridge, Hyde, Whitstran, Snively, Duportail, Ringold, Vernita Bridge, Woodhouse, Lavender Lake, Bell, Teanaway junction, King horn Slough, Mattoon, Fio Rito, Thrall, MP 8-10, and Rowe.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Access: Access staff borrowed the ASV from Sunnyside Wildlife Area to mow kochia along the road ways at Pond 4. They also retrieved data from car counters at Vernita and Thrall and attended the Kittitas County pesticide recertification training.



Mowing kochia at Pond 4

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Colockum staff spent time this week preparing for the upcoming Memorial Day RMEF work party on the Colockum. Volunteers will be dismantling old barbed wire fencing, rolling up the wire and removing it from the wildlife area. Assistant Manager Hagan walked this old fencing and marked it with a GPS on West Bar, Tekison Creek and in the South Fork Tarpiscan. Hagan also retrieved a hydraulic wire roller from the Wells Wildlife Area for our use on the work weekend.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman, Assistant Manager Berry, NRT2 Kass, and NRW2 Farias and their spouses attended the Oak Creek Wildlife Education Corp Awards dinner at the American Legion Hall in Naches. Huffman presented years of service awards for 5, 10, 15 and 20 years of volunteering. Harry Redding received the 20 year service award. Harry started volunteering in 1989 the first year that senior volunteers were used at Oak Creek. He took a few years off in the 1990s, but has been at it ever since.

Wildlife Management

Elk Activity: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand and District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra toured multiple landowner properties along the southern boundary of Hanford on Rattlesnake Mountain. Some minor elk activity was observed on the private lands and over 100 elk were located about mid slope on the Hanford side of the fence. A trail camera was deployed to capture and document elk activity near historical damage areas.

Foxlights for Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with two landowners that border Hanford to discuss the use of Foxlights as a hazing tool along popular elk trailing areas. Both were very appreciative and receptive to new ideas to minimize elk damage.

Deer Hazing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to coordinate with a large wine grape producer in the Paterson area on deer hazing and possible kill permits.

Elk Damage: Conflict Specialist (CS) Wetzel was contacted by a landowner in Elk Heights about elk damaging alfalfa and fences. CS Wetzel and herder Leuck visited the site and provided the landowner with a DPCA contract for review. The landowner signed the contract but wants to harvest elk from May through August. He was advised about the restriction of hunting during that time period.

Green Canyon Fladry and Foxlights: Fladry and Foxlights were removed from a calving area at Green Canyon since calving is completed there for this year.

Elk Hazing: Herder Leuck hazed elk several days and evenings this week from the Bass Ranch. He observed about 400 elk in at least two groups in the area. The elk responded well to hazing in each instance.

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

Wildlife Areas

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom called Glenn Gerth – CAMP to discuss details of the bid process as it relates to the Sunnyside HQ shop. Manager Bjornstrom was hoping to facilitate a speedy turn-around on the bid award in order to give the contractor as much time as possible to build the shop. The shop needs to be completed by June 30, 2015.

Weed Control Costs: Manager Bjornstrom contacted Dave Heimer to request copies of per diem costs associated with weed control efforts on the Sunnyside HQ Unit as a result of 2014 spring wildfires. The costs will be passed on to the Attorney General's Office for review and consideration.

Restoration Costs: Manager Bjornstrom spoke with Assistant Attorney General Shorin to discuss restoration costs as they relate to insurance claims made on the losses incurred during the

2014 spring wildfires on the Sunnyside HQ Unit. Restoration costs are being disputed by the insured.

Windmill Ranch Compound Storage: Assistant Manager Buser worked with an Ag lessee to store six center pivot towers at the Windmill Ranch compound. The Ag lessee dismantled the pivot on Circle 5 to ready the site for a new system. The new system at Circle 5 will be operational by April 20, 2015. The towers from Circle 5 are being salvaged to replace three towers at Circle 9. The project to refurbish Circle 9 will be completed in late fall, 2015.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Common Loons – Platforms: Biologists Caldwell and Smith installed a loon nesting platform at another area lake in Region 4. The platform will be monitored periodically throughout the season. Another platform at this lake was retrieved and transported to Mill Creek for repairs. In addition, Caldwell and Smith checked on loons at another area lake, where one adult was present.

Loon nesting platform anchored on an area lake



Washington’s East-West Bear Research Project: Biologist Smith hiked in to document a den location used this past winter by one of the collared bears. Data was collected on various characteristics of the den, including width and height of the entrance and overall depth.

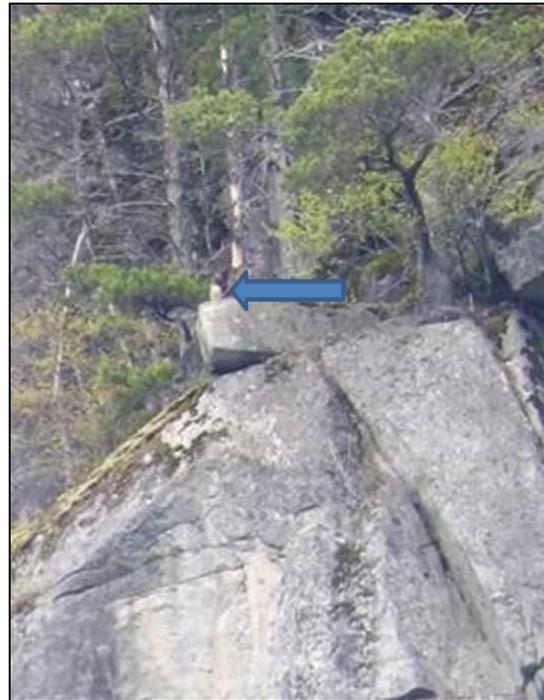
A den used this past winter by one of the collared black bears

Bear Timber Damage Sub-Committee: Biologist Smith attended a bear timber damage sub-committee meeting where a host of topics were discussed and topics requiring focused attention were identified.



Peregrine Falcon Management Conflicts: The Index Town Wall site was surveyed for Peregrine Falcon presence and activity. Two birds were observed but no determination of nesting or nesting location could be made. The size and distance from viewing areas make this a challenging area to survey. As these surveys are performed from public streets, the presence of a spotting scope tends to attract many interested members of the public. Follow-up surveys will be performed as weather permits. This is an annual activity in conjunction with Washington State Parks which manages the site and is a location with intensive rock climbing activity. The local climbing community works with State Parks to inform climbers of area restrictions when it is determined if and where the falcons are nesting.

Index Town Wall Peregrine Falcon photographed through spotting scope



San Juan Island Terrestrial Manager's Meeting: Biologist Milner attended the annual meeting in Friday Harbor. This two day meeting brings Agencies, NGOs, and other interested parties together to discuss conservation actions needed or occurring in the San Juan Islands. Of interest to everyone is how to encourage recreation activities that do not negatively impact the fragile resources in the islands. Staff from National, State, and County Parks presented their work on developing a Leave No Trace ethic and program that fits the needs of island life. Milner presented a talk on the citizen science project to look for sharp-tailed snakes that will roll out this month.

Staff from San Juan Islands National Historic Park led an exercise in Leave No Trace

Elk Herd Plan Update: Biologist Yarborough continued to work on the North Cascades Elk Herd Plan.

Raptor Nest Surveys: Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn briefly checked a golden eagle site and a peregrine falcon territory while engaged in other duties. One peregrine and no golden eagles were observed.



Lowland Pika Surveys: Unseasonably cold and snow/wet weather precluded a visit to known sites this week. Additional surveys for potential habitat were completed.

Wildlife Areas

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reported that field preparations have begun under the new agricultural lease. This new agricultural lease with Sno-Valley Farms provides for 150 acres of cropland on the Middle and West Lobe of the unit. The total acreage under agricultural lease is now 240 acres with approximately 60 acres of corn, grain, and grass retained for wildlife forage and cover. Manager Boehm also completed negotiations for a new private lands access agreement that provides public and WDFW access for the next four years. Additionally, Manager Boehm completed expanding gated access areas at two locations to allow for large farm equipment to enter and exit.



Wood Duck Nest Boxes Youth Project: Manager Kessler gave a presentation on wood ducks for a local Trail Life USA scout troop who has been building wood duck nest boxes. The boxes they have made will be installed along Tennant Creek south of Tennant Lake.

Nooksack Unit Wood Duck Boxes: A volunteer that installs and monitors wood duck boxes on the Nooksack Unit mapped out their locations and submitted the information to Manager Kessler. This location information will go into the mapped out locations for wood duck boxes on all the units of the wildlife area.

Lake Terrell Unit Noxious Weed Control: Natural Resource Tech Deyo applied herbicides on noxious weeds in the barley fields at Lake Terrell.

Lake Terrell Islands Closure: From March 1 to July 1, the island areas of Lake Terrell are closed to entry to protect nesting waterfowl. Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo installed additional float markers to the closure lines to make them clearer. Kessler also updated the aerial photo maps with the closure lines clearly marked and installed the maps on the reader boards at Lake Terrell.

Lake Terrell Water Control Beaver Prevention: Natural Resource Tech Deyo installed chain link fencing on the Restoration Pond water control on the Lake Terrell Unit. Beavers continue to pile up wood materials in an attempt to plug up the control. The chain link fencing will prevent them from plugging it up, and make it easier to remove new debris they pile up.



Chain link fence installed on Restoration Pond water control to prevent beavers from plugging it up

Nesting Waterfowl Banding: Natural Resource Tech Deyo banded a nesting female wood duck and a female hooded merganser on the Lake Terrell Unit.



Wildlife Bio DeBruyn banding a hooded merganser at Lake Terrell

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: The Leque Project Team met to discuss recommendations on the preferred design alternative to advance to the next phase of project design. The team reached consensus on a recommendation of a preferred option, and will advance through additional WDFW approval processes prior to selecting and announcing the preferred design. Projects Coordinator Brokaw wrote a synopsis of the team's recommendation and forwarded it to Regional Program Managers for review. The team also discussed the next steps for the upcoming project phase, which includes more detailed design and studies of the preferred alternative. The WDFW and DU Project Team will have a scoping meeting to determine a timeline after the preferred alternative is selected in May.

Private Lands/Access Management

Diversity/Wildlife Viewing Site: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Biologist Hans met with a landowner to discuss logistics for setting up a new diversity site on his property. While visiting the site this week they identified and viewed several pairs of Wood Ducks, Bald Eagles, Mallards, warbler species, and other waterbird species. Members of the public can also expect to see a diversity of other wildlife at the site. This property will be constructed and operational next week.



Spud House access site in Mount Vernon along the Skagit River. The dock washed up on our site during the flood stage and was cut up and removed.



Graffiti has been added to the fish shelters on Pier 86, located in Seattle

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

Wildlife Management

ALEA Grant Project Review:

Biologist Milner reviewed and scored more ALEA grant proposals. A total of 96 proposals have been uploaded for

review and scoring. Final evaluations will take place on April 15 & 16.

Wildlife Areas

Samish Unit: Curran Cosgrove checked a few of the ponds to monitor water levels and vegetation growth.

Johnson DeBay's Slough: Greg Meis disked and completed the final prep and Cosgrove and Meis spread and incorporated grass seed at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Hunt Unit. The area has been blackberries for a number of years, and was mowed and disked several times this late winter and spring to establish a seed bed for a grass area that will provide a new walking trail access point the planted fields and the slough for wildlife viewing.

Island Unit: Cosgrove spent two days disking areas in eight fields on the Island Unit. Progress so far this spring is about a month and a half ahead of normal, mainly due to low river levels.

Cosgrove and Meis spent a morning cutting out fallen trees and brush that were encroaching into fields on the Island Unit. Manager Rotton scheduled a field tour with Dave Heimer and Greg Hood to check field sites following first year treatment of the cattail in the Deepwater Slough Restoration site.

Nooksack Unit Car Top Boat Launch: Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo met onsite with Habitat Biologist Ingram on the Nooksack Unit to discuss improvements to the car top boat launch on Silver Creek. During the summer when the water level is lowest, we will install some new rock to improve the launch and make it easier and safer to use.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk Repair: Manager Kessler and a volunteer repaired a broken board on the Tennant Lake boardwalk. It appeared that someone vandalized the boardwalk by jumping on the board until it broke.

Lake Terrell Bass Fishing Tournament: The Borderline Bass Contenders bass club held a Saturday fishing tournament on Lake Terrell. It was very well attended.

Samish River Unit Wetland Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton met on the site with WDFW construction staff to discuss project details, scheduling, and cost estimates. The WDFW Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) provided a construction cost estimate for several of the larger elements in the project plans. Brokaw and Rotton will use that cost estimate to compare with the funds available in the grant contract from the Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) to build the project.

Samish Unit Enhancement Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw met with Ducks Unlimited (DU) staff regarding permits that will need to be secured from Skagit County prior to construction this summer, including different avenues DU and WDFW can proceed to qualify for a Shoreline exemption under County code.

A flock of snow geese spent some time at the Samish Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area last week



Private Lands/Access

Spring Bear Hunt Coordination and Management: Natural Resource Technician Otto placed all Department of Fish and Wildlife locks on North Skagit and Monroe gates. Biologist Hans continued preparing for the upcoming meetings by making last minute edits to the maps, updating GPS coordinates for the gates in both areas and by picking up extra access gate locks from Department of Natural Resources Forester Peter Hurd. Biologist Hans and Natural Resource Technician Otto organized all hunter materials and put them in individual folders for the Spring Bear Hunt meetings. Supervisory Biologist Caldwell, Biologist Hans, Natural

Resource Technician Otto, District Biologist Fenner Yarborough, and Officer Ludwig attended the North Skagit spring bear hunt meeting. Separately, Biologist Hans independently ran the Monroe Spring Bear Hunt meeting. Sergeant Maurstad was also in attendance and explained hunting rules and answered questions. Several hunters did not show up to the Monroe and North Skagit meeting and they will need to meet with Biologist Hans individually before they are allowed to hunt. She will contact these hunters next week to coordinate these meetings.

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

Wildlife Areas

Collaborative Efforts: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reported a large tire dump at the Ebey Island Unit to WDFW Enforcement. Approximately 200-300 tires were illegally dumped in the Ebey Slough parking lot on April Fool's night. Manager Boehm continues to work with the Department of Ecology to establish a plan to remove the tires.

Skagit Headquarters: Meis pruned dead brush out of the swale at the Headquarters Boat Launch Parking lot. Manager Rotton completed the South Padilla Bay lease agreement and forwarded it to Olympia for approval. Meis weed-eated and sprayed under the entry road fence line at the Headquarters Unit. Meis mowed the pheasant pens and around the back shop area yard.

Fir Island Farms Unit: Manager Rotton continued to coordinate with local vendors for contract planting on the restoration portion of the Fir Island Farms Unit. Manager Rotton, with assistance from the Regional Habitat Program staff, completed additional site markers for the Fir Island Farms site. Manager Rotton met with bid winner for the Fir Island Farms lease to tour the site and discuss the details of the lease agreement.

Nooksack Unit Agricultural Lease Statement: Manager Kessler coordinated with the farmer that has the agricultural lease on the Nooksack Unit. The farmer plants 100 acres of silage corn and leaves 10% standing after harvest for winter waterfowl feeding. Kessler provided the farmer with the annual Ag Lease Statement to solicit payment for the lease.

Private Lands/Access

Private Lands Access: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm finalized negotiations for securing access agreements with Everett Alexander. Access agreements were tied to a grazing lease which has terminated. Manager Boehm completed negotiations for a new private lands access agreement that provides public and WDFW access for the next four years.

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman coordinated with co-managers on updating fencing maps for elk exclusionary fence in the Day Creek area. Several options have been discussed which would mitigate elk damage to high value crops. Witman and Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell attended the Day Creek landowners

meeting with co-managers to discuss fencing options and other options that can be done to assist landowners to prevent elk conflict. Witman met with three agricultural landowners in Whatcom County experiencing deer damage to berry crops. Witman completed Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements with the landowners and discussed the private lands access program to provide hunting opportunities in the damage areas conducive to hunting. One landowner is interested in the Hunt by Reservation option for hunting deer on their property.

Witman returned to a historic bear damage area on Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands in Skagit County and did not observe any recent damage to trees. Witman will continue to monitor the area for bear damage.

Witman responded to a report of an injured elk on State Route 20 in Skagit County. Witman learned that there had been a vehicle collision earlier in the day and the injured elk was not located. Shortly after arriving at the area, WCS Witman located the injured elk. The injured elk was euthanized and collected by tribal co-managers.

Witman, Biologist Yarborough, and a Master Hunter Volunteer conducted hazing of an elk herd on agricultural land in the Acme area of Whatcom County. The elk herd consisted of 44 animals and was hazed onto public land. Seven elk were later seen on the property and re-hazed.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman assisted co-managers in locating property for an exclusionary cage study to estimate grass/hay crop loss due to elk grazing. The study has started in the Acme area and the elk appear to like grazing around the cages.



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

Equipment and Site Maintenance: Assistant District Biologist Cyra cleaned and organized the Wildlife Bay in preparation for a busy field season of recycling or disposing of unused material. Cyra also prepared and delivered the District 13 vessel for annual maintenance.

Field Season Preparations: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Bran Boehm continued repairs and maintenance on various motorized equipment that is used for vegetation management during the growing season. Further maintenance will continue next week in preparation for a busy field season.

Employee Training: Wildlife Area staff completed the Heat Related Illness training this past week.

Falconry workshop: Biologist DeBruyn assisted Officer Lee and Biologist Thompson with a one day workshop for enforcement and wildlife staff at Region 1 headquarters. The workshop on falconry practice and regulations was well attended and received.

District 14 Orientation: Manager Rotton and District Biologist Yarborough toured several Skagit Wildlife Area Units to begin to familiarize him with the Wildlife Area current management and history of the sites. Cosgrove met with District Biologist Yarborough at the Samish Unit for a quick field tour and explanation of habitat management projects on the site.

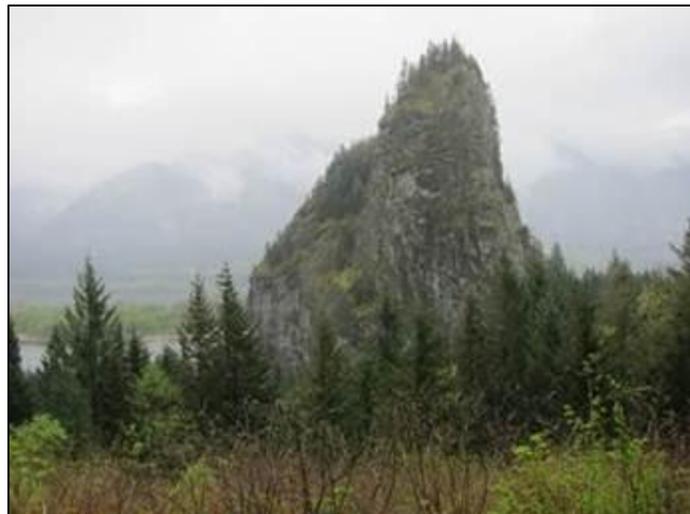
REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Peregrine Falcon Management:

Biologist Anderson conducted a site visit to Beacon Rock State Park to determine peregrine falcon occupancy as part of our WDFW/State Parks cooperative recreation management agreement. An adult peregrine falcon was observed flying near the known nest site indicating that the site is currently occupied. Follow-up observations will be made to determine nesting success and productivity.



Beacon Rock State Park

Beaver Reintroduction: Biologists Anderson met with representatives of DNR, Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group, Underwood Conservation Group, and a private landowner to discuss the potential of releasing beaver into a previously occupied wetland in the White Salmon River drainage. The current wetland and associated habitat look ideal for a future project to reestablish beaver into this part of the drainage. The next steps are to locate a site eligible for removing beaver and to organize transport and other logistics for a successful release.



Potential Beaver Reintroduction – White Salmon Drainage

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area April Elk Survey: Biologists Holman and Stephens conducted the April winter elk survey on the Mudflow Unit, which will be the final survey of the season. Thirty-six elk were observed on the valley floor. The high this season was 145 elk during the January survey.

Elk Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys: Biologist Holman conducted a hoof disease prevalence survey located primarily on Forest Service land. One group of elk was observed far below in the Cowlitz River Valley. All data generated from this spring effort will be submitted to Hoof Disease Coordinator George and compiled with efforts from volunteers. The survey involves locations throughout southwest Washington, encompassing private and public lands as well as different habitat types. The effort to document any discernible difference in the prevalence of the hoof disease condition geographically will continue through April.



Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

Nesting Structure Maintenance: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Assistant Manager Hand finished conducting maintenance on duck nesting tubes and installed new songbird nesting boxes on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. The nesting tubes were resupplied with straw and hay for nesting material, as well as being retrofitted with steel bars to keep the wire nesting structure from rolling upside-down during strong winds. The nesting tubes are used primarily by dabbling ducks like mallards and gadwall. A total of fifteen nesting tubes were prepped for the upcoming nesting season. An additional fifteen songbird nest boxes were placed in the North and South Units in areas that lacked sufficient tree cavities for songbirds to nest in.

Nesting tube maintenance

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Grazing Permit Field Visit:

Manager Van Leuven led a tour of a grazing permit area to complete an environmental assessment with the District Team. Region 5 Fish Biologist Byrne, Habitat Biologist Johnson, and Range Ecologist Burnham attended. Only one issue was noted, which should be simple to address.



Old Fence Wire Removal: Fifteen student volunteers from Lewis & Clark College took down about 0.3 mile of derelict 4-strand barbed wire fencing on the Soda Springs Unit. Although it was not a long fence line, it went through patches of thick shrubs and had several downed trees over the wires which made pulling the strands a challenge. The group worked very efficiently in coiling up the wire and hauling it to a pickup truck for disposal. Lewis & Clark College students have helped clean up old fencing on the Klickitat Wildlife Area each year since 2013. Their enthusiasm and efforts are greatly appreciated!





Lewis & Clark College barbed wire crew loading and toting barbed wire

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

Access

Mineral Lake: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes sprayed herbicide around the restroom parking lot, cut back brush, raked around parking curbs in the parking lot, and cleaned moss off the signs around the parking area. They also used the pressure washer and powdered bleach to clean and disinfect the vault toilets in preparation for the upcoming trout fishing opener this month.

Sprayed herbicide around the Mineral Lake restroom parking lot

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

Wildlife Management



Wild about Nature Presentation: Biologist Bergh gave a presentation on the ecology and management of the Mount St. Helens elk herd as part of the Wild About Nature series at the White Salmon library. The presentation gave a general overview of elk ecology and specifics about the herd and its dynamics since the eruption of Mount St. Helens. She also presented information on elk hoof disease and the Department's current research on different aspects of the disease. Attendance was good and there were many great questions from the audience.

D-10 Wildlife Conflict

Otter: Despite our best efforts, the river otters have penetrated the net pens on Mineral Lake and have eaten a substantial amount of trout. Conflict Specialist Conklin responded and removed the alarms and camera, and the fish were released from the pens.

Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin checked on Fladry fencing on a newly planted oat field in Randle. There were elk tracks all around the field but no reason as of yet for the elk to take the shock to enter the field. In addition, Conflict Specialist Conklin counted approximately 96 head of elk in a three mile stretch of Highway 12 starting at the city limits of Packwood.



Fladry fencing on oat field in Randle



Elk in downtown Packwood

D-9 Wildlife Conflict

Elk: The growers in Trout Lake Valley continue to sustain damage from high numbers of elk. Landholders are reporting seeing groups of 150 – 200 elk on their fields. The elk have been staying on the fields during the day since the damage prevention permit season ended April 1st. A Hunt by Written Permission contractor has been granting turkey hunters access to his forested property. There are hopes that next week's turkey hunting will move the elk out of the valley.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle: Biologist Tirhi and staff trapped and processed state endangered western pond turtles at the Pierce County pond turtle recovery site. This recovery program is now in its 24th year. It involves trapping all turtles over a two-week period, in particular breeding age

females, collecting weights and measurements on all turtles, and attaching radio transmitters to breeding age females. The females are then tracked thru the nesting season to their nest location. Each nest is caged for protection and subsequently the eggs are collected and taken to the Woodland Park Zoo, where they are hatched and young are reared for one year before being returned to the wild. During that year, the young grow exceptionally fast, which increases their survival after release and thus aids the recovery trajectory.

Biologist Tirhi processing western pond turtles for the 2015 season

Snowy Plover: Biologist Sundstrom began weekly snowy plover nest monitoring and nest searching at Midway Beach. In addition to nest searching and monitoring, daily opportunistic records of predators are recorded to aid Wildlife Services on where to concentrate their efforts. One plover nest that was discovered last week and was due to hatch Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday was found to have been depredated by a raven sometime between late Wednesday afternoon and before 0530 Thursday morning. Additionally, an unusual set of predator tracks were found nearby this nest. The tracks have been identified as those of a Great Horned Owl.

Great Horned Owl tracks in the sand

Sundstrom continues to monitor three known nests and will continue to search for more. This season is exceptionally early for nesting at Midway and Washington State in general. Currently plovers are known to be nesting at three separate locations in the early part of April.

Common Loon: Biologist Tirhi began arranging for loon breeding site surveys by requesting a report from headquarters for all loon occurrences for District 11 in the state database (WSDM) and by reviewing loon reports in ebird for the district. Tirhi has obtained survey protocol information from Region 4 staff, uploaded loon calls to smartphone for play back, and is purchasing a megaphone for playback. Surveys will take place this pilot year at two locations: Alder Lake (Pierce County) and Long Lake (Thurston County). Tirhi has also negotiated with NW Trek to survey and submit data for Horseshoe Lake, which is within the park and a traditional nesting site for loons.



Purple Martin: Biologist Tirhi assisted the Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium conduct its annual citizen science training for purple martin monitoring (as the zoo calls the program “Spot the Swallows). The training involves a half day, in house, at the zoo in which all facets of martins and data collection are reviewed. A second half day will take place at the Titlow Beach martin colony where citizen scientists will have the opportunity to test their martin identification and data collection skills. Fifteen volunteers have registered for training for 2015. Approximately 40% are return volunteers from 2014. Volunteers will be involved with monthly monitoring at four colonies and presence/absence surveys at an additional eight.



***Purple Martin Citizen Science Training,
Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium***

Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly Surveys

Sequim Site: Biologist Ament conducted her second survey of the season at this known TCB site on April 9, 2015. The survey met protocol, with full sunshine and prominent shadows for the entire thing. The temperature was > 55 degrees with a cool light breeze from the west. A total of 607 TCB’s were observed during the survey. The highest count at the site last season was 614 on May 1st. Survey forms were completed and submitted to Biologist Potter.

West of Port Angeles, Southern Extant Site: Biologist McMillan conducted a TCB survey on April 9, 2015 on the eastern portion of the site, Segments E-1 to E-46. Weather conditions were suitable, about 58 degrees with B-1 conditions. No TC butterflies or larvae were observed. There is a high presence of native host plants on the upper portion of the transect. Habitat throughout this zone is transitioning from open habitats to a higher density of shrubby, mixed forest.



***West of Port Angeles Southern Extant
site viewing uphill into the mix of
grassy openings intermixed with
shrubs and pockets of trees***

West of Port Angeles, Northern Extant Site: Biologist Ament and District Biologist McMillan conducted a TCB survey at the farthest west TCB site on April 8, 2015. The upper and lower survey routes were established and flagged at 25 meter segments last season. The weather conditions were very good for the survey. There was full sunshine and shadows present for the entire survey. The temperature was cool but did finally warm to >55 degrees. Biologist Ament conducted a survey of the Upper Route and counted a total of eleven TCBs. Biologist McMillan surveyed the Lower Route and eastern balds but did not observe any TCBs. Various other butterflies were observed in flight at the site during the surveys. A survey form was completed and will be provided to Biologist Potter.



Flagged survey route at known TCB Site west of Port Angeles

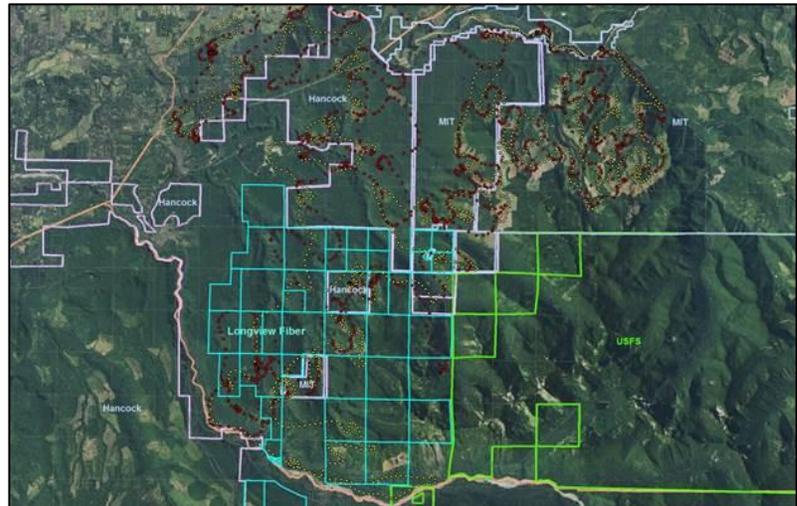
GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

North Rainier Elk Herd: Biologist Tirhi conducted a survey of the western half of GMU 653 with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe (MIT) and Hancock Timber Resource Group. The three agencies, along with USFS and Mount Rainier National Park, co-manage the herd and collaborate on elk surveys. The primary survey occurs in August in mid-elevation Mount Rainier and surrounding timber lands (e.g. eastern GMU 653), which constitutes the majority of the use for this herd and supports the highest number of elk. At the last North Rainier Elk Herd Technical Committee meeting it was agreed that some survey effort was needed periodically in the remainder of GMU 653, as well as GMU 652 and 654. To meet that need, the partners decided to split funding of one complete survey of western GMU 653. Muckleshoot's had also completed an additional full survey of this portion of the unit one week previous in order to provide two complete surveys of the western unit. A driving survey route using volunteers is being planned for 652. Hancock, who manages significant habitat in 654, agreed to survey that unit independently. Survey results were as follows: MIT flight = 85 elk, MIT/WDFW/Hancock flight=81 elk (1.52 hr survey), Calf:Cow = 42 and 39, respectively, Bull:Cow= 66 and 69, respectively. The high bull ratio suggests that there are more cows than we were able to locate during the surveys. If we apply our correction factor produced from research on collared elk in the upper White River drainage (2.4) to the survey results it brings the estimate to roughly 200 elk per survey. These survey results correspond well with those from the last time the unit was flown in 2012, during which 88 elk were counted in this same survey area (does not include one large group that traditionally inhabits urbanized areas of Buckley). We can conclude that there is a minimum of 200 elk in this portion of GMU 653 and likely as many as 300, if one considers

the high bull ratio. This information will be used to adjust estimates and set herd recovery goals in the redraft of the North Rainier Elk Herd Plan, which is currently being revised.

Flight paths of the two flights (red=MIT, yellow=MIT/WDFW/Hancock) with landownership



District 15 Elk Composition

Flight: With funds provided entirely by the Skokomish Tribe, Biologist Murphie participated in an elk composition flight with tribal biologists. Survey coverage included most of GMU 651 and portions of GMUs 621 and 636. Surveys were flown during the morning hours over a two day period. A total of 181 elk were classified in GMU 651. We detected only six of at least nine known herds from this unit. Two marked herds from GMU 651 were located, but found in thick cover, thus a composition count could not be made. Our post-season index of 15 bulls per 100 cows is within the acceptable range of management objectives. Radio-telemetry was used to locate marked herds in GMU 636. One herd was hidden in thick timber and not counted, while the other, located at the confluence of the Skokomish River forks, was comprised of 73 elk. Additional effort was expended in the upper Wynoochee portion of GMU 636, but only one 4-point bull was found. We attempted to locate an unmarked herd in the Lilliwaup Swamp portion of GMU 621, but were unsuccessful.

Satsop/Mason Deer Project: In 2009, WDFW initiated a study of the effects of forest management practices on black-tailed deer reproduction. Two of 8 study sites are represented in District 15: Mason and Satsop. The Mason cluster includes seven GPS collared does, while the Satsop cluster has five. We anticipate the collars for the three remaining fawns in the Satsop to fall off anytime now. By design they usually last a year or so. Biologist Murphie checked the status of the Satsop fawns last week and reports that they are still transmitting as alive. Biologist Murphie also spent time last week on data management activities, which included trying to resolve problems that arose following the fix of other computer issues. Additional time will be needed next week to address these issues.

Willapa Wildlife Refuge Advisory Group: Biologist Novack reviewed hunter harvest statistics from GMUs 673, 681, 684, and 699 for a presentation to the Willapa Wildlife Refuge Advisory Group meeting. Biologist Novack attended the meeting and presenting data on hunter harvest, as well as flight survey data from both waterfowl and elk surveys. Discussions with the Advisory Group and Refuge staff centered around improving the opportunity for elk archery and muzzleloader permittees.

Elk Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys: Biologist Michaelis conducted three surveys for elk hoof disease. Within one survey area he observed one animal which appeared to limp from an unknown cause. He attempted an additional survey which was cancelled due to heavy fog.

Biologists Sundstrom conducted one survey on Sunday in the Wahkiakum area of assigned survey points. The area had to be surveyed on a weekend due to a high volume of multiple active logging operations taking place during the work week. No herds were observed.

Biologist Harris spent considerable time working on the hoof disease surveys. One volunteer team had a slight misadventure last weekend. Shortly into their survey they ended up getting stuck. After spending several hours trying to get out they called AAA only to find out that they do not send tow trucks into the woods. They contacted Biologist Harris. He was on his way to the office to be in position to retrieve equipment and passes from volunteers when they finished their survey when he received the call. He was able to locate them in about an hour and then was able to pull them back onto the road. They had tried to turn around and the rear wheels went slightly off the logging spur road. While they were embarrassed, they soon were laughing, and other misadventures involving WDFW staff and other volunteers getting stuck were shared.

Access Areas

Access Manager Mitchell reports that his crew's efforts to get seasonal lakes ready for the April 25th opener is winding down. With a handful of lakes left to complete, the light at the tunnel is visible.

Lake Deveraux clean up includes Blackberry removal, cutting and chipping limbs, pressure washing restrooms, and A.D.A blacktop parking.



Koeneman Lake Trail: Agreements with Alpine Timber Company have been concluded and permission was granted to DFW to move a 200 yard portion of the 1.5 mile long trail. The trail had to be moved due to property line issues. Thanks to a combined effort between Region 6 access staff, two hard working volunteers, and Alpine Evergreen's forester, the project was completed on April 13, 2015, making the lake accessible for opening day.



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

Wildlife Management

Citizen Science: Biologist Tirhi hosted two citizen science interns and additional staff from Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium (PDZA) to assist with western pond turtle processing at the Pierce County pond turtle recovery site. Tirhi has been working with zoo staff for several years on citizen science and enlisted the zoo to engage in two specific pilot projects that have become quite successful: amphibian monitoring (Monitor the Marsh) and purple martins (Spot the Swallows). Although the amphibian monitoring includes training on all amphibians in the western Puget Sound region, Tirhi provides specific training on Oregon spotted frog. Through the program, Tirhi hopes to have more eyes in the field helping to locate breeding sites for this state endangered species. Tirhi started the purple martin monitoring program with the zoo in order to enlist trained volunteers to help monitor this priority species (but unfortunately one that receives little staff attention due to staffing limitations). Tirhi recently met with zoo staff to promote an additional program focused on great blue heron colony monitoring. 2015 will be the pilot year for that program. Due to the success of the citizen science program at PDZA, they have created a unique citizen science program, hired a coordinator, made the program the focus of their 25th Anniversary fundraiser “Zoobilee” in July, in which they hope to raise 50K to support the program. As part of Zoobilee preparation, a videographer was hired to film the citizen science interns working with Biologist Tirhi on western pond turtles. Tirhi and the interns were also interviewed. Tirhi was asked to speak to the benefits of citizen science and how it impacts her ability to complete important work.

Master Hunter Volunteer Coordinator Meeting: Biologist Sundstrom met with Bill Montgomery, Hunter Education and Master Hunter Volunteer Coordinator to spend part of the day together at Midway Beach. Bill was introduced to the snowy plover program and the seasonal preparation work that is required each year. The installation of signs and rope as well as the disassembly of them at the end of each nesting season provides an educational and different type of volunteer opportunity for a master hunter to add to their volunteer hour requirements. Bill also had the opportunity to view a plover nest and a few birds during his field trip.