

Wildlife Program

Week of April 27 – May 3, 2015

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Headquarters Wolf Activities

Trapping Effort Preparation: Prepared capture kits and collars for crews to begin trapping efforts. This included purchasing and organizing capture equipment, collar refurbishment, and upgrades with two different companies, purchasing new collar batteries, reprogramming collars, and making sure they function properly, etc.

Monitoring Activities: Coordinated with private and public landowners throughout Washington about current and future monitoring activities during 2015. Coordinated with tribal biologists about monitoring activities on and around reservations.

Smackout Traps: Spent two long days setting traps within the Smackout territory. Checked traps daily and scouted for new wolf sign within the Smackout territory.

Wolf Capture: Captured and collared one wolf in the Smackout territory and communicated that with local livestock producers and appropriate agency staff.

Wolf Territory: Spent most of one day showing USDA-WS personnel around another uncollared pack's territory in northeastern Washington.

Remote Camera Placement: Checked several remote cameras placed for monitoring uncollared packs in northeastern Washington.

Colville National Forest Wolf Activity: Communicated with Air Force personnel and a Forest Service Biologist about recent wolf activity across the Colville National Forest.

University Wolf Projects: Coordinated with University of Washington and Washington State University field staff and graduate students about logistics, contacts, and known wolf activity in regards to their respective projects in northeastern Washington.

I-90 Collision: Coordinated with WDFW Enforcement staff from Region 4 and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding a canid that was struck by a vehicle on I-90. The incident is currently under investigation by USFWS.

Region 1 Wolf Activities

Commissioner Contact: Supervisor McCanna was asked to contact a Stevens County Commissioner regarding a new grazing lease on private timber ground. McCanna discussed what the department had recommended for the grazing lease.

New Hire Paperwork: Supervisor McCanna completed the appropriate paperwork for a new hire to assist with wolf and wildlife damage conflicts.

Smackout: Biologist Shepherd received an evening call from a rancher in the Smackout area concerning a cougar near his cattle and house. An enforcement officer who was already up in Northport that night on another complaint was sent out and the cougar was dispatched.

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

Huckleberry Area: Biologist Shepherd discussed crop damage issues with a farmer and talked to the Chewelah food bank to set up a deer removal. Biologist Shepherd discussed kill permits and a crop damage claim with the farmer/rancher in the Huckleberry Mountains.

Wolf Deterrence Plans: Biologist Shepherd completed four deterrence plans.

Public Contact: Supervisor McCanna received two calls and several emails from a person working with Defenders of Wildlife to discuss possible wolf sign and videos within district two.

Huckleberry Deterrence Plan: Wildlife Conflict Specialist (WCS) Bennett, WCS Shepherd, Supervisor McCanna, Wolf Biologist Becker, and Regional Wildlife Program Manager Robinette all contributed to the first submittal of the Huckleberry Pack Deterrence Plan. As more producers participate throughout this year; changes and additions will be made to this living document.

Wolf Updates: WCS Bennett submitted the monthly wolf update to different producer groups in eastern Washington. Sightings, camera work, and reported depredations about wolf activity for Lincoln, Spokane, and Whitman counties were submitted to the president of the Spokane County Cattlemen. Similar wolf activity from the Huckleberry pack area was submitted to a Huckleberry area producer to be distributed to other area producers.

Columbia County Cattleman's Calf: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley received a call from a livestock producer on Eckler Mountain southeast of Dayton. He said he found a recently killed 250 pound calf in his pasture and his cattle were extremely wild with him when he tried to check out the scene. Conflict Specialist Hand, along with Sergeants Mossman and Rasley, investigated the site of the kill and were not able to positively tell what killed the calf. We deployed a camera and the cattleman was very pleased with our quick response after we received the call.



Dead Calf



Site where calf was killed

Umatilla National Forest Grazing: Biologist Earl met with the Range Manager for the forest to gather grazing allotment dates and numbers. The Forest Service just updated their map system, which is causing a small issue. Hopefully next week they will have the bugs worked out so Earl can obtain the pasture layers to overlay the known range of OR15.

Collar Data: Biologist Earl continued to monitor OR15's data so that he could correlate movements with the grazing allotments that begin in June on the Umatilla National Forest.

Tucannon Pack Information: Biologist Earl and Conflict Specialist Rasley worked on filling in known data for the Tucannon pack on SharePoint for the wolf update meeting next week.

DPCAL Contracts: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley and NWR Wade continue to enter DPCA_Ls and DPCAs into Novatus. All A-19s and livestock check lists were sent to Olympia this week.

Remote Cameras at Asotin Wildlife Area: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice and Regional Wildlife Manager Kevin Robinette pulled the cameras in the South Fork of Asotin Creek. One camera was placed on a deer carcass. No wolf pictures were captured. Pictures included golden eagle, striped skunk, bobcat, black bear, deer, elk, and turkeys.

Region 2 Wolf Activities

Lookout Pack Information: Specialist Heilhecker talked to a rancher in the Lookout pack's territory regarding the timing and number of cows moving on to the forest, the grazing rotation, the status of range riders, and attending the range rider training workshop in May. She gave the rancher the latest location information and a trapping update for the Lookout pack.

West Fork Wolf Reports: Biologist Fitkin and RPM Monda deployed a remote camera in the West Fork Methow drainage in response to a string of wolf reports in the area over the last couple of years, the latest of which occurred this winter. They placed the camera at what appeared to be the site of an old deer kill with several old probable wolf scats in the area.

Wolf Sightings: Specialist Heilhecker responded to a call regarding two animals, reported as wolves, north of Brewster. The individual stated several people are seeing the animals consistently between 5 and 6 p.m. from the county roads and back decks of their houses. Photographs of the animals have been taken. The animals are making a loop north of Brewster to Old Highway 97, to Davis Canyon, to the Chiliwist Wildlife Area, over to Dent Mountain and around North Star and Valley Roads. The majority of the area is private land with hard-packed, gravel county roads, which limits tracking. Specialist Heilhecker spent time in the area but so far has not found sign of the animals. She is waiting for the reporting party to send the photographs so identification can be confirmed. Specialist Heilhecker spent time in the field looking for signs of the Lookout pack.

Okanogan Wolves: Biologist Heinlen followed up on a report of wolf tracks in GMU 239 documenting a probable single adult animal walking up a dirt road. Two remote cameras were placed in the area in an attempt to learn more about this animal.

Probable wolf track – Photo by J. Heinlen



LANDS DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Vegetation Rehabilitation Project: Kurt Merg visited fields near the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area (WLA) headquarters in which native grass was planted last fall. The grass seedlings look good, and the drill rows are fully occupied. Broad-leaved weeds are abundant in some places in the fields, but the Sinlahekin WLA staff has applied herbicide to control them. Merg took baseline photos of the plots within those fields to which he applied weed-suppressive bacteria last fall.

North Douglas County Bacterial Plots Evaluated: Kurt Merg took photographs of three plots to which he applied weed-suppressive bacteria in the Fall of 2013. These high-resolution photos will be evaluated digitally at WSU for cheatgrass abundance and vigor. Although it generally takes three years for bacterial populations to become sufficiently established in the soil to suppress cheatgrass, at two years there is little evidence from the plots where bacteria have been in residence that it is effective.

Private Lands/Access CRP SAFE Forb Plots Evaluated: Kurt Merg joined Region 2 Private Lands staff and two Natural Resources Conservation Service employees to evaluate forb success in Douglas County CRP SAFE fields. Planted forbs were present in most fields, but varied in both abundance and diversity. Next to the structural diversity afforded to wildlife by native grass stands, forb abundance and diversity drives the value of shrubsteppe to wildlife.

Sage-Grouse CCAA: Janet Gorrell prepared for and scheduled a meeting with WDFW, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Washington Farm Bureau, Washington Cattlemen's Association, and USFWS to discuss coverage of herbicides in the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances.

Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan Inventory: Richard Tveten conducted RMAP inventory work on the Phase 3 Heart of the Cascades acquisitions on the LT Murray WLA. Many of the major roads are controlled by the Forest Service. However, WDFW will be responsible for numerous roads built by the previous landowners who focused on commercial forest management. Richard was able to verify that many of the roads were abandoned to standards. Some of the open roads need work. A few segments with serious maintenance problems may need to be abandoned. More inventory work is still required.

Rustlers Gulch and LeClerc Creek Forest Management Update: Both the FPA and SEPA for Phase 1 of the Rustler's Gulch project were completed and submitted before the end of April. Rod Pfeifle is looking at access into Unit 2 of the LeClerc Creek Unit, which involves crossing DNR, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and private ownership. Rod and Daro Palmer have started flagging thinning unit boundaries.

Oak Creek Forest Restoration/Meeting with Hampton Log Buyer: Greg Mackey, Brian Mize (TNC Forester), and Rod Pfeifle met with the log buyer from Hampton Affiliates to look at the

Oak Creek Project. It was also a good opportunity to talk about plans for future projects. The buyer was able to talk about what kind of logs his company is looking for.

Firebreak Planning in Lincoln County: Kurt Merg relayed research results on native plants in firebreaks to Jason Lowe of the BLM. Merg encountered these results last week at the National Native Seed Conference. The Winnemucca district of BLM has been using native species in firebreak planning and has not only lessened impacts on sage grouse, but also has improved performance of the firebreaks. This may be a useful precedent for BLM's firebreak program in burn-prone areas of Lincoln County.

Spartina Crews: The North Puget Crew conducted maintenance at planting sites on the Skagit Headquarters, Debay Slough, and Cherry Valley units. The Willapa Bay Crew did a preliminary survey from the South Bend boat launch to Smith Creek in the airboats and no *Spartina* was located. The crew installed a drive motor on the Puget Sound Crew's Marshmaster. Russ Nunez took Joe Buchanan's group out to look for red knots and decide where to set up the capture locations.

Willapa Bay Technical Advisory Group Meeting: Dave Heimer, Les Holcomb, and Russ Nunez attended the Willapa Bay Technical Advisory Group Meeting (TAG) in South Bend. Washington Department of Agriculture (WSDA), DNR, the Shoalwater Tribe, and the Pacific County Weed Board were in attendance. The TAG discussed funding, crew size, and start times, as well as how Willapa operations fit into the larger statewide *Spartina* eradication effort. WSDA's new Coastal Coordinator, Mac Watson, was in attendance and described his multi-faceted role.

WSDA Grays Harbor *Spartina* Contract Amendment: Dave Heimer reviewed the draft amendment for the WSDA Grays Harbor contract and discussed the ramifications with Chad Phillips. The amendment would stop all spending until the new biennium. We agreed to allow some spending in June to achieve survey and eradication work for FY2. Dave completed an update of activities conducted in Grays Harbor and emailed the update to Chad.

Vegetation Monitoring Associated with WDFW Grazing Permits: Jeff Burnham conducted long-term vegetation monitoring on the Quilomene and Oak Creek wildlife areas. Jeff generated sample monitoring points for the Upper Parke Pasture on the Quilomene. He also updated locations and map products for the monitoring effort on the North Cowiche acquisition.

Sage-Grouse CCAA: Janet Gorrell corresponded with Nature Serve staff, as well as Cynthia and Mike, regarding the possibility of reconciling ecological site/ecological system stratification systems. Nature Serve has taken a stab at this in the past (and might again), although not in Washington specifically. Whatever we end up recommending or using in the document will have implications for how monitoring is conducted and reported.

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

Adopt an Access Program for Weiss and Lake Kapowsin: Steve Sherlock attended and presented the department's Adopt an Access Program presentation at the Earth Day Festivities for the Toray Composites Company (TCC) near Puyallup. TCC is a composite recycling company very interested in adopting both Lake Kapowsin and the Weiss access area located on the Puyallup River. The group would accept responsibilities for maintenance of the two sites.

Drought Planning for Water Access Sites: Steve Sherlock continues to working with CAMP and the regions to prioritize water access sites that are likely to need boat ramp extensions to maintain access to the water during low water levels resulting from the drought. Public use, project feasibility, cost, and other factors are being evaluated so the department is ready to proceed if the Legislature allocates drought funds.

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

Land Information System: Paul Dahmer attended several meetings of the LIS Workgroup and subcommittees working on this Wildlife Program Initiative.

Department of Ecology Nonpoint Pollution Management Plan Review: Janet Gorrell and Jeff Burnham reviewed "Washington's Water Quality Management Plan to Control Nonpoint Sources of Pollution" to determine if the Wildlife Areas HCP will be compliant with standards established in the document.

Cultural Resource Management Field Work and Coordination: Kat Kelly visited the Methow WLA to address various proposed projects that will require ground disturbance. Work includes RMAP, forest practices, spring development (replacement of burned infrastructure), fenceline, shooting range enhancement, and other maintenance projects.

State Agency "Executive Order 05-05" Working Group: Kat Kelly attended the monthly meeting with the State Agency "Executive Order 05-05" working group. The group worked on developing categorical exclusion lists and tribal coordination. Kat also met with the Forest Practices Board's Cultural Resources Roundtable. The group discussed DNR's Statewide Habitat Conservation Plan, USFWS involvement, and practical responses to small landowner needs.

Crane Road Fire Reparations: Paul Dahmer met with Nate Pamplin, Joe Shorin (ATG office), Jim Brown, and Dan Peterson to discuss strategy to secure funds to address losses from the 2012 fire that burnt portions of the Wells WLA. A field visit is scheduled for June.

Development of Forest Management Tracking System: Rod Pfeifle, Greg Mackey, and Richard Tveten met and discussed developing a systematic way to inventory forest management needs and track activities. A system will be built using GIS to create forest management polygons, conduct stand assessments (initially on computer and later on the ground where appropriate), and track proposed projects. Much of the initial work on the computer can be

completed this winter. The system will also track projects including on common spreadsheets, including all of the steps throughout the pre-sales process. Richard Tveten also met with Shelly Snyder to discuss the feasibility of different approaches and tools associated with GIS.

Evaluation of the Forest Matrix Cruising Program: Rod Pfeifle and Greg Mackey have been looking at potential cruise calculation software packages and have found that Forest Matrix software could potentially fit our needs quite well. We will also be asking for references so that we can discuss how the Forest Matrix Cruise Program has worked for other clients in the Pacific Northwest. Ipad Minis can be used for data collection and data transfer back to the office. DNR is seriously considering the Forest Matrix Cruise Program as well.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Vegetation Monitoring Training: Jeff Burnham attended three days of training in Reno. The instructor group included notable federal range scientists from BLM, U.S. Geological Survey, Agricultural Research Service, and NRCS, some of whom wrote standard data collection protocols. They addressed questions about various implementation options and explained how quantitative and qualitative information can be used together. BLM staff from the Wenatchee office attended as well, and Jeff discussed possibly coordinating work in Douglas County.

Leadership Training: Paul Dahmer and Richard Tveten completed the two-day segment of the five-day leadership training module.

Methow WLA Cultural Resource Training: Kat Kelly conducted WDFW Cultural Resources Training with staff (Sherri Furnari, Rob Wottlin, and Anna Sample).

State Cultural Resources Training in Ellensburg: Kat Kelly joined other instructors from Washington State Department of Transportation, DNR, State Parks, and Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to provide a full week of focused cultural resource training for state employees. Department staff that attended include: John Hagen, Justin Haug, Ross Huffman, Kristen Kuykendall, Pete Lopushinsky, Jenni Novak, Nick Parkert, Raychel Parks, and Joshua Rogala. All did very well and received certificates of completion.



Figure 1: Learning about prehistoric archaeology at the Yakima Training Center



Figure 2: Learning about historic archaeology and historic structures at the Olmstead House (Olmstead State Park)

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Ruffed Grouse Drumming Survey: Biologist Annemarie Prince completed one ruffed grouse drumming route for the Kalispel Tribe. The Kalispel Tribe is conducting grouse drumming counts in Pend Oreille County this spring.



Other signs of spring in District 1: Strutting turkey and drumming ruffed grouse

Lincoln Cliffs Bighorn Sheep: Biologists Lowe and Oyster continued ground telemetry on bighorn sheep in the Lincoln and Whitestone areas. All three of the radio-collared ewes in Whitestone are known to have lambs. Seven lambs have been observed in that area so far. One of the collared ewes and at least four non-collared ewes have lambed so far in Lincoln. Lowe also spent time talking about sheep observations with locals in Lincoln. Lowe met with the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council for a telemetry training session and to review protocol and other details with the volunteers who will be assisting with lamb monitoring.



Wildlife Areas

Food Plots: Biologist Thorne Hadley worked with the Blue Mountain Pheasants Forever in providing food plot seed to Biologist Dingman so the Tucannon at the Hartstock Game Management Unit could be seeded.

Food Plot. Seed provided by Blue Mountain Pheasants Forever Chapter #258



Asotin Creek Wildlife

Area – 12th Annual RMEF Work Party: Wildlife Area staff spent quite a bit of time this week preparing for the annual RMEF work party at Smoothing Iron Ridge. Thirty-six volunteers signed in this year and they came from all over the state to participate. Nearly five miles of steel tee posts used for an electric fence were pulled from Cooper Canyon and the South Fork of Asotin Creek. The posts were taken to the South Fork hayshed and stacked for re-use in future fencing projects. The volunteers also removed approximately three miles of derelict interior stock fence along the county road in Warner Gulch. The fence hasn't been used for several years and was hanging up elk and deer as they moved across the wildlife area. Several springs and stock tanks were also cleaned up, as well as some work completed on our never-ending tree thinning project west of the buildings in an old agricultural field. As usual, this was a great work party and there was already talk and excitement about next year's event.



Kevin Robinette along with RMEF volunteers Roger Williamson and Ann Satter cleaning a trough at Smoothing Iron Ridge



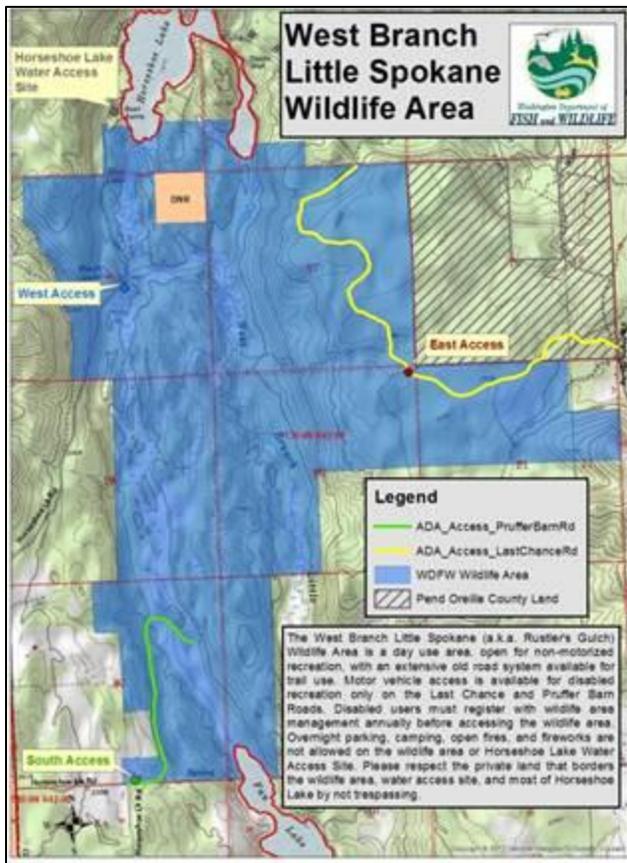
Fence removal along Warner Gulch

Trough cleaning at Cook Ridge on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area

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

Wildlife Areas

SCWA & WBLs Maps: WAAM Palmer completed and printed updated versions of maps for West Branch Little Spokane WLA and the Sherman Creek WLA trail system to be posted on kiosks.



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

Wildlife Management

Commissioner Contact: Supervisor McCanna was asked to contact Commissioner Dashiell regarding a new grazing lease on private timber ground. McCanna discussed what the department had recommended for the grazing lease.

Private Lands/Access

SE Washington Regional Envirothon: Biologist Lewis worked with other local conservation groups to conduct the annual Envirothon for SE Washington. The event is attended by local high schools that want to compete in different natural resource topics. Local natural resource professionals present testing on topics such as water quality, soils, forestry, wildlife, and current environmental issues. Lewis prepared and conducted the wildlife test for the event.



Students taking the identification portion of the wildlife test



Closing remarks at 2015 SE WA Envirothon

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

Private Lands/Access

National Wild Pheasant Conservation Plan Coordinator: Supervisor McCanna participated on a conference call led by Nebraska director Jim Douglas to put together a job announcement for this new position which will probably be stationed in South Dakota. Drafts were sent out for review and another conference call will take place next week to finalize the announcement and qualifications.

Cougars east of Chewelah: A dead ram was reported as a potential wolf kill. Injuries associated with death did not indicate wolf or cougar, as did any other evidence such as tracks or scrapes. State and county personnel agreed the most probable predator to have caused the injuries was a single domestic dog. Subsequent photos and sightings indicate three cougars were responsible. The camera was checked every day and multiple cougars returned to the kill, which was 150 feet from the house. Biologist Shepherd advised the public in the general area and dealt with complaints. Biologist Shepherd discussed the issue at length with Enforcement officers, who are deciding what to do.

Cougar sighted on Golf Course: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley received three calls this week of a cougar that was running around and across the Wine Valley Golf Course located five miles west of Walla Walla. This issue quickly turned into numerous calls from the small hobby farms that surround the golf course. Advice was given to all on what they can and can't do to protect their pets and livestock.

Cougar in Clarkston Heights: Biologist Earl and Officer Sabo responded to a treed cougar in the Clarkston Heights. The reporting party (RP) stated that his dog had run a cougar up a tree. By the time Earl and Sabo arrived, the cat had jumped out of the tree and fled the scene. Earl, Sabo, and two (2) Clarkston Officers spent a large portion of the morning trying to locate the animal with no success.



Cougar in a tree in the Clarkston Heights

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Northern Leopard Frogs: Biologist E. Duvuvuei finalized a supply list in preparation for eDNA surveillance of chytrids fungus and northern leopard frogs (NLF). Biologist Finger and E. Duvuvuei consulted with WSU's Caren Goldberg regarding eDNA sampling design, site distribution, and collection strategies. The meeting was very helpful and the biologists are becoming more comfortable with this venture into the world of eDNA sampling. Biologist E. Duvuvuei completed more extensive egg mass surveys within the northern leopard frog management area (NLFMA) this week. No NLF egg masses were located, but seven NLFs were observed. One captured frog had swollen thumb pads, which indicates a breeding male.

Female Northern Leopard Frog (41mm Snout to Vent Length) in an area with “good” breeding habitat – Photo by E. Duvuvuei



Washington Ground

Squirrels: Biologist Finger discussed Washington ground squirrel reintroduction site selection with USFWS Mid-Columbia Complex Biologist Lucas. USFWS is interested in getting more directly involved in Washington ground squirrel translocation and is considering all of its refuge lands in Washington and Oregon as potential sites to engage in reintroductions. Armed with numerous geospatial products predicting ground squirrel distribution and landscape porosity, Finger offered to provide some GIS assistance with scoping out refuge parcels for consideration and may choose to engage on the ground depending on where the site selection occurs. Biologists Finger and O. Duvuvuei, with assistance from Access Manager Graves and Diversity Division Biologist Wiles, conducted an extensive Washington ground squirrel survey throughout the Gloyd Unit encompassing the recently discovered population. Thanks to Graves and Wiles for the assistance with this survey!

Sage Grouse Lek Counts: Sage grouse lek counts are nearly complete for the year. The high count of males attending lek sites are used to index the breeding population and view trends over time. The count to date is at 255 on 18 active leks. This total is an increase over last year’s total count of 218. While this is great news, virtually all of this increase can be attributed to finding two new lek sites and “relocating” a lek that was previously thought to be inactive (or a satellite to an adjacent lek). When looking at leks counted in consecutive years to gauge the actual rate of change in the breeding population, the total count difference between 2014 and 2015 was only two, for a less than 1% increase. These results finally break the trend of four straight years of decreasing lek counts. One of the new leks and the “relocated” lek were actually fairly close to existing lek sites that have seen large decreases in their counts, suggesting, that some of the observed decline over the last couple of years could be attributed to a redistribution of grouse on the landscape, in response to large turnovers in SAFE/CRP (nesting habitat).

Pygmy Rabbit Capture and Release: The team conducted two capture/release events this week. On Tuesday they worked at the Beezley Hills breeding enclosure with the assistance of University of Idaho students, Kelsi Potterf, Katy Farmer, Meghan Bromley, and Lindsey Rush. The team captured 29 rabbits, including 27 new kits and two adult recaptures. Ten of the kits were underweight (<125 grams) for releasing to wild and were placed in the nursery. The remaining 17 were released to the wild on Sagebrush Flat (SBF). All the adults were released back into the breeding enclosure.

One of the nursery kits. They definitely have the cute going for them!



On Thursday we worked at the SBF enclosure. We were again joined by TNC volunteers Lauren Miheli, Erik Alancar, Robing Stanton, Jane Prince, and John Marshall. We were also joined by Westside High School out of Wenatchee. They are frequent visitors to the project and their help is greatly appreciated. We captured 19 rabbits, including 13 new kits and six adults (five recaptures and one new). Two kits were retained in the nursery and 11 were released to the wild on SBF. The new adult was equipped with a PIT tag, and all adults were returned to the breeding enclosure. Also on Thursday, the nursery at SBF was checked. Three of the four rabbits were captured. One was still underweight and returned to the nursery, and the other two were released to the wild on SBF.

Wildlife Areas

Methow Wildlife Area Noxious Weed Spray Application: Assistant Manager Sample applied a spray application to an infestation of white top (*Lepidium draba*) on the Geestman property ag lease on the Methow Wildlife Area. A total of 60 gallons was applied to plants that formed sparse to moderately dense cover over about three acres of the property and extended into the ag field. This plant also exists on a steep, sandy hillside next to this area, which wasn't sprayed at this time. Assistant Manager Sample plans to visit the area next week to re-spray anything that was missed as well as to spray the hillside. Maintenance Mechanic Wottlin instructed Assistant Manager Sample as to the proper and appropriate rate for the chemicals added to the tank mix, including a dry flowable.

While at this property, Assistant Manager Sample checked on the scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*) that was sprayed a week prior. The plants look as though the spray treatment was effective.

Photo taken 4/30 – Geestman Property Ag Lease – Photo by Anna Sample



Private Lands/Access

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE): Biologist Comstock met with two landowners about their SAFE fields. Landowners were provided updates on site status and recommendations for further site management and maintenance needs to meet SAFE requirements. Biologist Comstock, along with Biologist Braaten and Supervisor Cotton, met up with NRCS staff and Kurt Merg to visit Douglas County SAFE fields that had been enrolled in 2010 and 2011. During the site visit we assessed seeding success, site preparation methods, and biophysical differences in sites that contributed to the restoration success. Biologist Dougherty conducted some SAFE field checks for three different SAFE participants. Overall the fields were in good order and will be ready for forbs seeding this fall. However, the grasses in one field were not very well established and everything may have to start over. Private Lands Biologist Braaten attended a field tour in Douglas County to look at SAFE forb and grass seeding sites with NRCS staff. It was a great opportunity to view successes and works in progress.



Douglas County SAFE Fields – 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

Private Lands/Access

NCW Envirothon: Private Lands Biologists Braaten, Comstock, and Dougherty manned and judged a wildlife station at the 2015 Envirothon at the Badger Mountain Ski Area, Douglas County. High school teams from Okanogan, Brewster, Bridgeport, Chelan, Waterville, and Quincy were in attendance. High schools from the region participated in this competitive event with support from natural resource professionals, who tested students' knowledge on a range of topics, including wildlife, soils, and hydrology. Team Okanogan took 1st place with 77% of questions answered correctly.



Biologist Braaten shows off a sage-grouse hen, while Biologist Comstock closely examines an elk skull

Bridgeport Information Fair: Saturday, Fidel and Dan staffed a WDFW information table at a city wide event featuring recreation and other community service providers in the local area. Although turnout was not spectacular for this on-off event, Fidel had some very good interactions with folks from this largely Hispanic community when explaining WDFW’s role, mission, and recreation opportunities.

Fidel Rios describing recreation opportunities at the Bridgeport Information Fair – Photo by Dan Peterson



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

Other



*Pair of burrowing owls near Bureau of Reclamation property outside of Ephrata –
Photo by O. Duvuvuei*

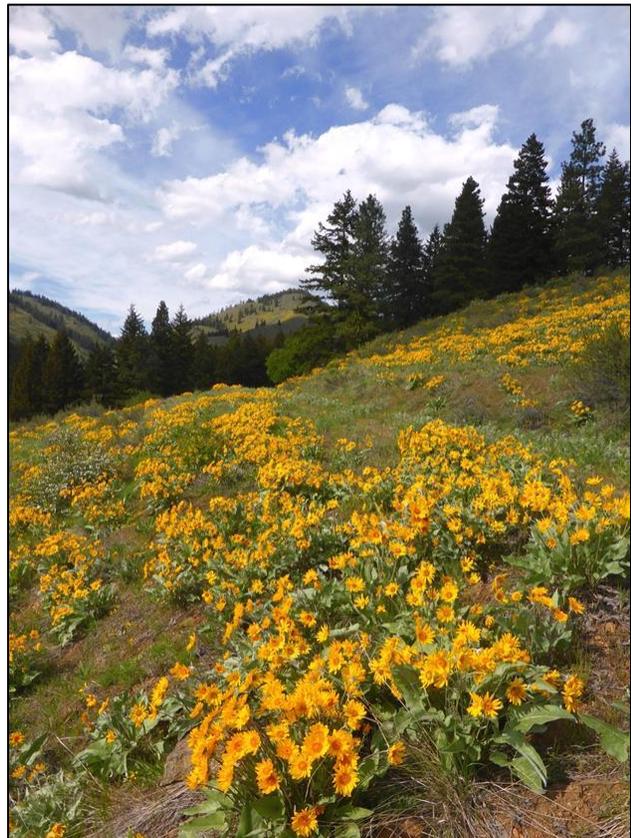


Badger – Remote Camera Photo by J. Heinlen



Floating Loon nesting platform – Photo by Matt Marsh (USFS)

Blooming Balsamroot – Photo by Scott Fitkin





Female common merganser – Photo by Scott Fitkin



Mountain goats at a natural salt lick – Photo by Scott Fitkin



Rubber boa in classic defensive posture – Photo by Scott Fitkin

It's not easy scrambling up to this rattlesnake den & a portion of the Methow Forest Rehabilitation Project scheduled for thinning this winter – Photo by Sherry Furnari



REGION 3

NO HIGHLIGHTS THIS WEEK

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

2015 Breeding Waterfowl Aerial Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra prepped gear and reviewed the survey SOP for the annual breeding waterfowl surveys that began this week. Cyra provided flight following services for several days and flew as an observer for two days covering most of the south and east Puget Sound. This two to two and a half week effort surveys transects across the entire state and involves numerous District, Assistant District, and Tribal Biologists as observers. It also depends on very generous staff support for flight following duties and the expertise of the Hillsboro Aviation staff.

View of a large pond and wetland complex in the south Puget Sound during the annual breeding waterfowl survey



North Cascades Elk Herd: Biologist Yarborough met with members of the Seattle City Light Wildlife Management Resource Committee to discuss the Mitigation Land Program. This program provides habitat for the North Cascades elk herd based on movement data collected by GPS collars.

Highway 20 Public Safety Issues: Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn met with a biologist from The Washington Department of Transportation to discuss public safety issues along SR 20. This is an area of concern because of the increasing amount of elk on the roadway which could result in more wildlife – vehicle collisions.

Common Loon Survey: Biologist DeBruyn checked two lakes at which there have been past loon sightings during the breeding season. No loons were detected.

Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture: Biologist Milner attended the monthly meeting that featured shorebird research and management as the main topic. Partners from Canada joined interested US partners.

Wildlife Areas

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with staff from Sound Salmon Solutions to discuss restoration planting and maintenance plans for the Waterwheel Creek Project. New funding from King County will provide up to ten additional acres of riparian planting as a continuation of the project. Sound Salmon Solutions is conducting volunteer-based planting events for the next three weeks. Manager Boehm continues to work collaboratively with the Dike District on the repairs to the dike that breached in December 2014.

Waterwheel Creek Restoration being prepared for additional planning



Lake Terrell & Intalco Waterfowl Trapping: Natural Resource Tech Deyo continued trapping waterfowl on the Lake Terrell Unit. Many more wood ducks were trapped and banded. Deyo and Manager Kessler then relocated the trap to the Intalco Unit for more trapping there.

Waterfowl traps used in banding effort



Trail Life USA Wood Duck Nest Boxes: Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo worked with young scouts from Trail Life USA to install wood duck nest boxes on the Tennant Lake Unit. The scouts had built the boxes themselves using materials purchased with duck stamp funds. They then hiked into Tennant Creek to hang ten of the boxes. The scouts had a great time, and did an excellent job. Next year they will help clean out the boxes and get them ready for that nesting season.

Scouts from Trail Life USA installed wood duck nest boxes on the Tennant Lake



Invasive Scotch Broom Control: Natural Resource Tech Deyo sprayed herbicides on invasive scotch broom on the Lake Terrell and Intalco units.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw communicated with USFWS to get further information regarding a requirement to replace farmed snow goose forage on a property nearby in the event that it is converted to intertidal marsh as a result of a restoration project. USFWS staff advised that there is not a process by which WDFW can retroactively request an amendment to the grant contract that was used to acquire a portion of the property. Therefore, replacement snow goose forage must be provided. Additionally, Brokaw reviewed an abstract prepared by Pacific Northwest National Laboratories (PNNL) for a paper and presentation regarding the hydrodynamic modeling work completed for Leque Island, and how the modeling work was used to influence the selection of the preferred alternative design.

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

Wildlife Areas

Volunteer Opportunities: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Bran Boehm continues to work with WDFW Volunteer Coordinator Steve Dazey to sign up community and Master Hunter volunteers for upcoming field work. Master Hunter volunteers are currently assisting with a parking lot monitoring project on the four pheasant release sites.

Lake Terrell Pheasant Pen Repairs: A Master Hunter volunteer worked two days to repair portions of the pheasant pens where old poultry wire had broken down. He started installation of the new wire.

Lake Terrell Triploid Trout Release



Samish River Unit Wetland

Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Manager Rotton reviewed a cost estimate provided by the WDFW Construction Shop to build the project, and compared it with the budget in the contract with the Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS). In the contract agreement, it states that NRCS is to reimburse WDFW for 100% of the project costs. The construction estimate is higher than the budget in the contract, so WDFW and NRCS are working to close the gap in the difference, and will then likely amend the budget. The NRCS engineer provided more detailed material quantities, which may assist with reducing the cost estimate. Additionally, Projects Coordinator Brokaw submitted documents to the Skagit County Auditor that are required prior to the issuance of some of the county permits.

Samish Unit Enhancement Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw reviewed and forwarded a boilerplate Right of Entry permit form to Ducks Unlimited that will be used for the project. Additionally, Skagit County issued a Shoreline Exemption permit for the project to stockpile excavation spoils on the adjacent dike. Excavation spoils will be used by the local diking district to maintain the district dike that runs along Padilla Bay through the property.



Hazard tree removal project along dike top trail on the Wiley Slough Restoration site

Island Unit: Cosgrove monitored field conditions and drainage on the Island Unit. Cosgrove disked areas in seven fields in preparation for agricultural and moist-soil enhancements. Manager Rotton coordinated with volunteers on the cooperative agreement for the barge and boat for this season and discussed the upcoming ferry operations for corn and barley planting on the Island Unit. Cosgrove coordinated future ferrying and planting operations with volunteers.

Private Lands/Access Management

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site Management: Otto finished cleaning-up the few remaining waterfowl hunt units of the 2014/15 season after water levels receded. Otto was able to consolidate all of the gathered garbage from the waterfowl hunt units and take photos. This routine maintenance effort is extremely valuable to the landowners and something that the Private Land Access Program prides itself on. By removing garbage, Private Land Access Program staff strengthens relationships, maintains trust between private landowners that allow public access, and removes potentially harmful products that could harm the environment.



Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site garbage recovered by Private Land Access staff after the 2014-15 hunting season

Spring Bear Hunt Management: Natural Resource Technician Otto completed surveys on the North Skagit and Monroe spring bear units. Otto found one gate with a missing lock and another gate where the lock was broken and unusable. Otto fixed each problem immediately. While in the Skagit Unit, Otto cleaned up garbage from an abandoned car that was behind one of the unit gates and recorded GPS coordinates of 2015 bear damage. Biologist Hans and Otto fielded many calls and emails from hunters regarding tree damage questions and gate access issues. She coordinated with Otto to remedy the gate issues in the Monroe hunt area. Biologist Hans also spoke with the first bear harvester of the season! The hunter emailed pictures and said he will successfully fill out and submit all of his 2015 Spring Bear Hunt Hunter Packet in the mail. She will follow-up with the hunter if she does not receive the necessary information within the week. Furthermore, Biologist Hans met with Grandy Lake Timber Company to obtain a signed contract and provide a 2015 lock for the company. This company wants to expand the bear hunt area and she will be meeting with the company rep in the coming weeks to look at the area and discuss future possibilities.

Migratory Bird Forage Enhancement Meetings: Private Land Supervisory Biologist Caldwell met with a landowner in Snohomish County about allocating a specific area of his land for migratory bird forage enhancement. The landowner agreed to allow the Private Land Access Program to plant barley on his land this coming summer so that forage would be available to migratory birds during their winter migration. This is the first of many great partnerships between the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and private landowners to promote wildlife management, conservation and recreational opportunities for the public. Natural Resource Technician Otto met with multiple landowners in Whatcom County to discuss migratory bird forage planting projects on their land for the 2015/16 waterfowl season. With luck, several of these landowners will be willing to participate in providing forage to migratory birds in 2015-16.

Private Land Access Management: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell reviewed 2014-2015 waterfowl hunting site details in order to determine sites that had very low to no use during the hunting season. All identified sites will be individually evaluated by staff for enrollment consideration in 2015-16. All enrolled sites are evaluated on an annual basis in order to provide the public with the highest quality hunting experience possible.

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

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman provided guidance to a Snohomish County landowner experiencing a Canada goose attacking a domesticated goose. The domestic goose has been confined out of sight with the hope that the Canada goose will leave the area. Specialist Witman finalized Master Hunter assignments to a bear damage area in Whatcom County. Witman will continue to monitor the success of the hunt. Specialist Witman monitored an elk herd that had previously been hazed in the Acme area of

Whatcom County. The elk herd currently consists of 28 animals, down from the previous high of 44 which were hazed several weeks ago.

Specialist Witman responded with WDFW Enforcement to a treed cougar in Skagit County. The cougar had been involved in a livestock depredation the previous day and returned during the night where it was treed by the landowner's dog. The cougar was observed with an ear tag from a 2013 capture and was euthanized due to previous and current livestock depredations. Specialist Witman collected images from a camera from a private property in Whatcom County that had a livestock depredation approximately one month ago. The camera revealed photos of deer and coyote but no large predators were observed.



A small group of chronic problem elk in Whatcom County. These elk have been continually hazed to reduce damage to property.

Elk Habitat Management Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman attended a meeting with other Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife staff, Seattle City Light, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and several private entities to discuss future management plans to provide elk habitat and forage in Skagit County. This meeting was a great way for individual stakeholders and partners to get together and talk about strategies and future objectives.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Cosgrove used the riding mower to mow and maintain roadsides, dike tops, native plant areas, and fields at the Headquarters Unit. Cosgrove sprayed noxious weeds at Headquarters, Fir Island Farms, Jensen, Erickson, and Samish units. Weeds targeted include poison hemlock, blackberry, thistle, and mustard. Manager Rotton and Meis assisted Lands Agent Kye Iris with clearing a trail along one of the old pheasant properties for access to view the property with the upcoming listing of the site for sale.

Fir Island Farms Unit: Manager Rotton continues to work with Environmental Planner Jenna Friebe regarding construction and land management details for the Fir Island Farms projects. Rotton completed the Fir Island Farms lease and is working on a contract planting agreement for the Fir Island Farms project planting area. Cosgrove mowed the parking area and native plantings at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit and Fir Island Farms Unit. Manager Rotton requested an estimate for the removal of ditch spoils on the Fir Island Farm Unit and coordinated with Dike District and the lessee on the project.

Leque Island: Meis sprayed poison hemlock along field edges and small infestations at the Leque Unit.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator

Hunter Education Instructor Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey activated one hunter education class in Region 4.

Teaching Team Evaluations: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey evaluated two teaching teams this week. Both teams were in the south King County area, with one in Ravensdale and one in Black Diamond. Both teams are doing a good job delivering the hunter education program. While at the team in Ravensdale, Dazey, along with Coordinator Dan Boes, presented years of service certificates and plaques to three of the team members. Forty years to Instructor Lyle Lewis, 25 years to instructor James Campolo, and 5 years to instructor James Benson.

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

Performance Development Plan & Evaluation: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell conducted an annual Performance Development Plan & Evaluation for Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman. This comprehensive plan and evaluation are reviewed and conducted twice a year to ensure that individual and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife needs are being met.

Wildlife Conflict Section Monthly Conference Call: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman attended a monthly Wildlife Conflict Section conference call. These calls occur in order to inform and update all conflict staff around the state of Washington on pressing issues, training opportunities, legal matters, and region specific ideas and input.

Beaver Management and Conflict Reduction: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell researched and familiarized himself with beaver management in western Washington and organized materials to inform the public on ways to prevent, reduce, and alleviate beaver related problems in Region 4.

Performance and Development Plan: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued the third and fourth class of the Leadership Training classes provided by WDFW. Manager Boehm also began the PDP process for his report, Access Supervisor Derek Hacker.

Ebey Island Tire Dump: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that the large tire dump that occurred April 1, 2015 in the east parking lot of the Ebey Island Wildlife Area has been cleaned up. Manager Boehm coordinated with the Snohomish County Environmental Cleanup Program and the Department of Ecology to have the tires removed at no cost by a tire cleanup program offered through Ecology. Manager Boehm states he was getting “tired” of the dump site but grateful for the support provided by Ecology and Snohomish County staff.

Ebey Tire Dump

Funding and Next Biennium

Preparation: Projects Coordinator Brokaw reviewed grant funding resources that have been secured to fund a portion of the Projects Coordinator position for the next biennium, and forecasted future projects and goals for the next biennium in preparation for performance development planning.

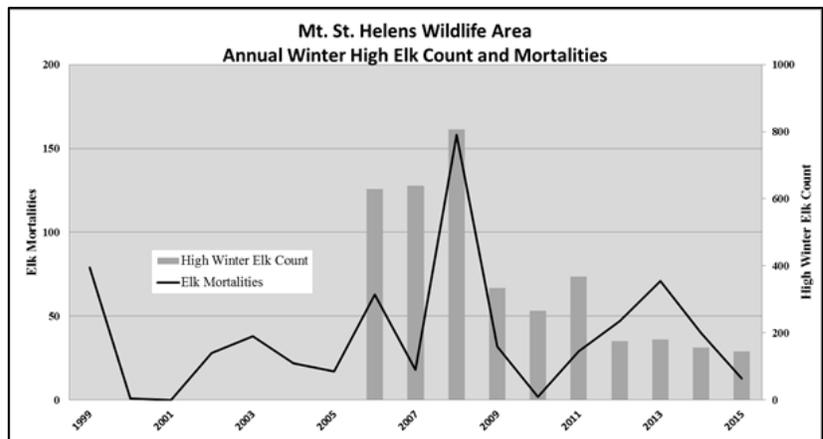


REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Elk Mortality Survey: Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald, Assistant Manager Hand, and Biologists Holman and Stephens, along with 16 volunteers from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, conducted the annual survey of winter elk mortalities on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Mudflow Unit. This survey has been conducted since 1999 and is used to provide an index for winter severity. This year’s count was 13 mortalities, with a winter elk count high of 145 for the Wildlife Area. Both the low elk use of the Wildlife Area and small number of mortalities reflect the mild 2014-15 winter. Thanks to all of the volunteers for their work on the annual survey. See the figure below illustrating the annual mortality count from 1999 to 2015 and high winter elk counts from 2006-15.



Elk Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys: Biologist Holman conducted a hoof disease prevalence survey in Lewis County located primarily on industrial forestland. Twenty-one elk in five different groups were observed during the survey. Biologist Stephens also conducted a hoof disease prevalence survey in the Ryderwood GMU on industrial forestland. Nineteen elk in five different groups were observed during the survey effort. All data generated from this effort will be submitted to Hoof Disease Coordinator George and compiled with efforts from volunteers. The survey involves locations throughout southwest Washington and encompasses 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 concluded May 2.



Elk during prevalence survey

Western Pond Turtle Program:

Biologists Anderson assisted the western pond turtle field crew with setting traps for another week of captures. In addition, Biologist Anderson coordinated the transport and handling of select wild western pond turtles for radiographs at Washington State University (WSU). This week's turtles taken to WSU make a total of seven animals that are being radiographed to determine the variations in bone density between wild and head start turtles.

Western Pond Turtle Notching: Biologists Bergh, along with Volunteers Frank and Kate Slavens, traveled to the Oregon Zoo to help prepare 19 young turtles for release on May 13. These turtles were caught by hand last spring or collected in nests last fall. They were brought to the zoo as part of the head starting program, which aims to grow the turtles large enough so that they are less vulnerable to predation. Each turtle was outfitted with a tiny PIT tag (like those used in cats and dogs) that will be used to identify it after being released into the wild. In addition to marking them with PIT tags, they were also given notches on their outer scutes that correspond to a WDFW numbering system. When the PIT tags fail or no PIT tag reader is available, an individual turtle can still be identified by its notches.

Western Pond Turtle Trapping: Biologists Bergh, Doorly, and Stephens continued the trapping effort to catch western pond turtles at the Sondino population site this week. This spring's trapping effort has two goals: one is to find wild turtles that are between 1-5 years old for a study on how bone density and morphology might affect the turtle's susceptibility to shell disease, and the other is to perform a health assessment and collect samples that will help determine if there are genetic differences between healthy turtles and those with shell disease. This week a total of 81 turtles were captured. Twenty-nine of those turtles were not recaptures from last week and were sampled for genetics, and two wild turtles aged 1-5 were captured and brought to WSU. Hatchling turtles were being captured opportunistically and brought to the Oregon Zoo as part of the head starting program to grow them large enough to be less vulnerable to predation. At the end of last week, enough hatchling turtles were caught for

the program this season, so while biologists are continuing to observe them, they are no longer being captured.



A western pond turtle hatchling swims by a lily pad



Find the hatchling basking



Many western pond turtles will bask together peacefully if the spot is right

Red-Knot Capture: Biologists Stephens and George assisted with an effort to capture and mark red knots with leg flags and equip them with radio transmitters. This effort is a flyway-wide collaboration to understand the movements, habit use, and survival of these shorebirds. WDFW biologists from headquarters and USFWS biologists from Alaska were coordinating the capture effort. The birds were captured using a rocket net set-up on an island in Grays Harbor. This subspecies of red knots winters in Baja, Mexico and breeds in Alaska and Wrangel Island, Russia. Red Knot populations are believed to have undergone a drastic decline over the past several decades and these birds are vulnerable to climate change and environmental changes that impact food availability.



Red knot captures

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Fuels Reduction Project, Phase II: The contractor began work on the second phase of this project and Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven issued a woodcutting permit to get rid of some of the slash generated by the work done last weekend. Van Leuven resurveyed the work area to mark any new squirrel nest trees, improve project boundary marking as necessary, remove old barbed wire fencing, and establish photo points.

Grazing Permit: Permit documents have been finalized and Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven is gathering signatures from the permittees. Technician Davis checked the water troughs this week and they seem to be functioning. Davis and Van Leuven added reinforcements along the edges of the metal water trough in Sheep Canyon to extend the life of the structure. Also, holes in the bottom of the trough were plugged to stop the loss of water. Van Leuven counted cows, calves, and bulls as they were brought to a gathering point on neighboring property May 2. The permittee will herd these animals onto the grazing permit area on May 3.



Water trough before



Attaching Reinforcement



Water trough after

Klickitat Wildlife Area Management Planning Meeting with the WAAC: Representatives from WDFW Wildlife and Habitat Programs met with the Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) on April 28 to gather input for the new management plan. The meeting was productive and WAAC members contributed good ideas for consideration as well as feedback on WDFW proposals.

Roads: The seasonal road closure on Sheep Canyon Road has been lifted and the gate is open. This makes one more mile of road available for vehicle travel. The WDFW road maintenance crew worked on the Soda Springs Unit this week, completing all requested work in short order. They cleaned the dirt out from under two cattle guards, filled a large hole in the Sheep Canyon Road, added rock to eroded segments of Old Headquarters Road, cut off an ATV trail around a road gate, and graded a dirt road. They added rock to improve the surface of certain sections of the Sheep Canyon Road.

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Scotch Broom Removal on the Mudflow: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and volunteers from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation worked two consecutive days on the Mudflow Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area to remove scotch broom. Over the course of the two days, about 60 acres were cleared of scotch broom. Volunteers used pruners to cut the scotch broom, and the remaining trunk was then treated with an herbicide to kill the plant. Scotch broom is highly invasive and will out-compete grasses, seedling trees, and other plants, thereby reducing the amount of available forage for elk that winter on the area.



Before



During



After scotch broom removal

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

Access

Stinson Flats: The usual group that inhabits the site every May to celebrate was back in good numbers this year. It looks like the crowd is slowly getting bigger again with approximately 20 campsites occupied at midweek before the Beltane “Festival” they observe.



Stinson Flats

Vancouver Lake: Unfortunately, the windows on the restroom were broken or shot out again. Access staff Spangler and Rhodes picked up and hauled 460 pounds of trash to the dump this week.



Vancouver Lake

Oneida: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes ordered and then replaced the stolen toilet seat in one of the restrooms.

Oneida

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



D-10 Wildlife Conflict

Bear Damage: Conflict Specialist Conklin verified bear damage to conifers in east Lewis County. The depredation was quite extensive in this stand of trees.



D-9 Wildlife Conflict

Nuisance Bear: Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald responded to two reports of a nuisance bear in Trout Lake. The bear broke into a chicken coop and ate a hen and two chicks. McDonald met with the two reporting parties and seven other residences and left Living with Bears information at several other nearby homes. Three homeowners will clean up their compost piles and take down bird feeders. Birds can usually find a great deal of wild food this time of year, and bird feeders can often draw in hungry bears. The bears will eat directly from the feeders and pick up the seed spilled by the birds. For information on how to live well with your wildlife neighbors visit:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/>



Chicken coop damage

Bear Timber Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald verified bear damage to conifers on private industrial timberlands in Skamania County. Fresh and historical damage was observed within the stand of trees.



Damaged tree



Stripped bark



Spring flowers



View of Mount St. Helens

Wildlife Conflict: Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald signed a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement with a barley farmer east of Goldendale with deer and turkey damage. Two toms have been harvested by local hunters since the beginning of turkey season. She issued pyrotechnics to help haze wildlife off of the field.

REGION 6

ORV Damage at Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly Site: While conducting a TCB survey at a known population site on DNR land west of Port Angeles on May 3, 2015, Biologist Ament observed evidence of fresh off road ORV use in several locations along the survey route. She had conducted a survey of the same route on April 19, 2015, and the ORV tracks were not present during this survey. This area is posted “Closed to ORV Use” due to the importance of protecting endangered TCBs and their habitat. Some log barricades were actually put in place last year to protect sensitive landing sites where TCB ovipositioning has been documented. Along with ORV tracks, Biologist Ament also documented a new fire ring that had recently been used. She took photos of the evidence of illegal activities and will provide a report to local DNR Manager Turner. She worked on re-positioning the log barricades and also broke-up the fire ring and dispersed all evidence of the recent use. See photos below.



ORV tracks observed in sensitive TCB habitat areas

Snowy Plover: Biologist Sundstrom spent three days at Midway Beach and one day at Graveyard Spit this week. Two new nests were discovered at Midway while one nest may have hatched at Graveyard. The brood at Graveyard could not be located, but additional surveys next week will confirm the nest either hatched or met its demise from unknown causes. No nests at Midway since the first nest made it to the hatching date. Eight nests have been found so far and five of those nests have been lost.

Biologist Sundstrom spent the better part of one day at Midway Beach recording GPS locations of each sign post. Sundstrom had received a complaint from a landowner who believed the signs were on his property. After downloading the points and overlaying onto a digital map, none of the signs appear to be on the property. The points did reveal that the east-west line on private property where permission has been granted by a different private landowner is actually shy of

the true property line by over 50 feet – these signs will not be moved this season to recapture that additional 50 feet but will be adjusted next season to incorporate all the permitted property for the benefit of the nesting snowy plovers.

One of two new nests discovered at Midway

Volunteers protecting Plovers: Biologist Novack spent time coordinating and preparing for volunteer assignments to patrol the plover nesting area during upcoming low tides, when razor clam digging will be allowed.



One volunteer patrolled the boundaries of the Midway Beach Plover nesting area during the razor clam dig on May 2 and 3. The volunteer made a number of contacts with recreationists to ensure that people did not intrude onto the nesting area. The volunteer also handed out educational pamphlets and monitored the activity of scavengers and avian predators known to deplete on plover nests (three Crows, two Ravens, and one eagle on 5/2, and one eagle on 5/3).

Red Knot: Biologist Michaelis assisted Scientist Buchanan and researchers from USFWS-Anchorage with capturing Red Knots in Grays Harbor. On Friday they captured only three knots and equipped them with radio transmitters. Over the past few days, many thousands of birds have appeared in the local area where captures are being conducted. The goal this year is to equip 50 birds with transmitters to allow other researchers in Alaska to define critical use areas. Currently, Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay are one of few known important sites where knots stop to feed and rest before continuing their long migration. Recently a team of researchers from Mexico have joined the effort and they monitor and mark the same population in that country.

Prairie Restoration: Olympic Wildlife Area staff members assisted with prairie restoration work at West Rocky Prairie. Herbicides were applied to help with the eradication of non-native oat grass. Staff members also assisted Manager Belson with the cleanup of remaining debris from the barn that had previously burnt down, located at the North Scatter Creek parking lot.

Bear Issues: Biologist Harris met with a representative for a small forest land owner. He spent most of the day discussing the damage issues and clarifying changes the department has made to the damage program and informing him that the department is currently reviewing the program. The representative was also surprised to hear the program has changed from Enforcement to Wildlife management. Biologist Harris also verified additional damage from last year at this site.



Picture from last year



Picture from this year