Wildlife Program

Week of February 2-8, 2015

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Commission Presentations on Tufted Puffins and Steller Sea Lions: Acting Diversity Division Manager Penny Becker and Biologist Wiles gave presentations to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission regarding the Department's recommendation to add tufted puffins to the state endangered species list and its recommendation to remove Steller sea lions from the state threatened list. The Commission will make final decisions on both proposals at their next meeting, which will be held in Moses Lake on March 20-21.

Lynx: Biologist Jeff Lewis and Acting Diversity Division Manager Penny Becker drafted and submitted agency comments to the USFWS for their five-year status update for the lynx. Input for comments was provided during an internal WDFW meeting to discuss priorities for lynx conservation and during an interagency meeting held during the Wildlinks Conference in November of 2014. Carnivore Biologist Ben Maletzke (Game Division) and District Biologist Dana Base provided additional input for comments on habitat status, threats, survey results, and recovery actions.

Fisher: Biologist Jeff Lewis, Acting Diversity Division Manager Penny Becker, and Acting Deputy Assistant Director Eric Gardner submitted WDFW's comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Service's proposed rule to list the fisher as a threatened species in all or part of its west coast range and the Service's species report for the fisher. Forest Habitats Section Manager Terry Jackson and Biologist Gary Bell provided comments from the Habitat Program. In our comments, we provided reasoning for why WDFW's (and their partner's) ongoing fisher recovery project could preclude the need to list in Washington as well as our reasoning on how Washington could be excluded from a listed distinct population segment without slowing recovery. Contact Jeff Lewis if you are interested in receiving these agency comments.

Sage Grouse CCAA Workshops: Acting Diversity Division Manager Becker, Section Manager Wilkerson, and several WDFW staff from Regions 1, 2, and 3 co-hosted two workshops on the developing Sage Grouse Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (Sage Grouse CCAA) with various farmers and ranchers and representatives of the Washington Cattlemen's Association. The meetings were held in Creston on January 26th (about 30 attendees) and Ellensburg on January 29th (about 15 attendees). Communication was productive and we are incorporating the ideas and input into the next round of the Template for the Sage Grouse CCAA.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Bighorn sheep capture: Biologists Wik, Vekasy, Fortin, Woodall, Dingman, Dice, Thorne Hadley, Wade, and Cassirer (IDFG) coordinated and implemented a helicopter capture of 24 bighorn sheep along the Grande Ronde. Other department employees from Lands, Fish, and Habitat provided valuable assistance in implementing our second capture within a month. Captures occurred at four sites along the Grande Ronde River between Shumaker and Troy, Oregon. Disease surveillance sampling and collaring were the primary goals of the capture.

Processing a bighorn ewe under the cover of one of the hay barns acquired on the 4-0 Ranch Wildlife Area

A couple of motivated happy WDFW employees: Corrie Thorne-Hadley and Jeff Wade

Golden Eagles: ADB Vekasy assisted Research Biologist Watson with trapping a resident adult male golden eagle on the Wooten WLA. Blood samples were taken and are being analyzed for lead exposure, and we placed a GMS transmitter on the bird, which gives us two radio-tagged males in adjacent territories.

A golden eagle caught in the Tucannon

St John Moose: Biologist Lewis assisted supervisor McCanna with hazing a young bull moose that had taken up residence in St John. The moose was hazed two different days and was very resistant to leaving town. Supervisor McCanna, Officer King, and volunteer Weitze spent Saturday morning hazing the moose, which again did not want to leave town. McCanna will meet with the St. John City Council Monday evening to present options for the moose.

Moose in front yard, St. John

<u>Private Lands/Access</u>

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Expansion: Biologist Earl submitted a letter to the Washington State Conservation Committee to expand the range of the CREP practices in Garfield County (2.5 miles up Tatman Creek from the confluence with Pataha Creek and 1.8 miles up Linville Gulch from the confluence with Tatman Creek). The expansion of the practices available through CREP would result in more riparian forested habitat in the county, which would be a direct benefit to the wildlife species in the area. This increased opportunity for riparian habitat restoration would align directly with WDFW's goals for habitat restoration on private lands in Garfield County.

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

<u>Wildlife Areas</u>

SCWA Barn: WAAM Palmer spent a majority of the week dealing with the barn at the Sherman Creek WLA headquarters. This barn was built circa 1900, but was moved to its current location due to the filling of Lake Roosevelt. It is the only remaining building of the Kallstrom farm. Palmer has been moving equipment and supplies, which have accumulated in the barn since the state purchased it as part of the wildlife area in the late 1940s, in order to determine the extent of framing damage due to a leaky roof and drainage issues. The intent is to replace necessary framing and the roofing before the snow starts falling next winter. Palmer is also taking inventory of supplies no longer needed at SCWA to be offered up to other wildlife areas.

The east side of the barn roof has no obvious issues and will likely only need new strip sheathing and roofing

Notice the sag to the roof on this west side of the barn. New posts will need to be set to level the eave and dirt work to re-contour the ground and provide proper drainage away from the barn.

Winter Conditions

District Biologists

District 1: A weird week: Whereas a year ago in 2014 most of the winter's snow in NE Washington did not fall until February, this winter the precipitation in February has turned wholly to rain even in higher elevations well above the valley bottoms. As of mid-week, valley temperatures were as high as the low 50s (degrees F) and rain was falling daily. These conditions are much more consistent with March than February. Today, February 6th , the 49 degrees North Ski Resort still reports 28 inches of snow on the ground at the lodge (probably very soggy snow) and 48 inches on the summit of Chewelah Mountain (elevation = 5,773 feet) where rain is also currently falling.

District 2: Weather in District 2 included very mild temperatures reaching the 50s, with heavy fog and rain throughout most of the week.

District 3: Warm and wet conditions prevailed through much of the week. Significant precipitation occurred on multiple days during the week, as well as record highs.

Private Lands

District 1: Weather during the early part of the week was cool and foggy, with some snow flurries. High temperatures ranged from the low to upper 30s. Weather later in the week turned to rain and unseasonably warm temperatures in the 40s.

District 2: Daytime temperatures in low-40s to mid-50s with nighttime temperatures in the mid-30s with light to steady rain several days this week.

District 3: It was windy and drizzling rain most of the week with daytime temperatures in the 50s and nighttime temperatures in the upper 30s.

Wildlife Areas

Swanson Lakes: Swanson Lakes: Mostly rainy or cloudy, but some sun on occasion, especially on Saturday. Very warm this week, with highs into the mid-50s. No snow cover.

Blue Mountains: Warm and wet for the week. Snow levels are extremely low in the Blue Mountains. While up on the Mountain Road, AWAM Dingman drove out to Rose Springs Sno-Park to look at snow levels (or lack thereof).

Rose Springs Sno-Park on February 3, 2015. The picture pretty much sums up snow conditions in the Blue Mountains – dismal! On a normal year there should be 2 – 4 feet of snow at this location. The road closed sign marks the beginning of the groomed snowmobile trail.

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

Wildlife Management

Raptor Banding: Biologists Atamian and Lowe banded a female goshawk for a Master falconer.

Female goshawk

REGION 2

WOLVES: Nothing to report

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

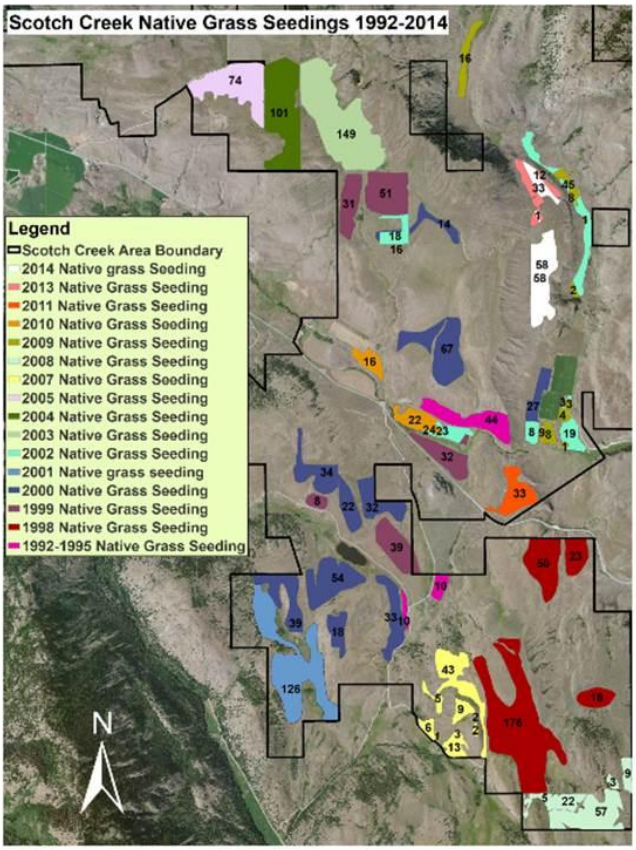
Eagle Research: Research Scientist Watson has ended the offal monitoring season since eagles are changing behavior and starting to focus on the breeding season. Volunteer Fischer collected the cameras from the last sites and returned all equipment to Biologist Heinlen. Mr. Fischer's efforts represented the majority of sites monitored for this project and we owe him a big "Thank you" for all his time, effort, and the great eagle photos and data he obtained.

Bald and Golden Eagles on an offal pile – Photo by Volunteer Bob Fischer

Pygmy Rabbit Winter Surveys: Biologist Gallie, Natural Resource worker Hastings, and U of I students Stephanie, Lindsay and Daralyn continued to survey Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area, making use of what little snow was available. An additional 542 acres were surveyed and 27 pellet samples were collected

Wildlife Areas

Scotch Creek Native Grass Seeding 1992-2014: Assistant Manager Dupont continued creating and editing shape files in Arc GIS of past native grass seeding fields, both at Scotch Creek and Chesaw. The map below, still in draft form, shows shrub-steppe restoration on 1,875 acres over 22 years on the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area. Bryan also developed shape files of the Eder WLA unit showing lands within the life estate that will be part of the emergency grazing lease area. Manager Olson met with landowners to inform them of this situation.



22 years of shrub-steppe Restoration efforts on the Scotch Creek WLA – Bryan Dupont

Pateros Unit Deer Fence: Improving weather in late January allowed continued work on this fence along the border of the Pateros Unit and Naumes Orchard. While a functional fence was completed several weeks ago, adjustments to the fence are still needed to correct some the deficiencies brought on by the construction during very challenging weather conditions. In the past week or so, Natural Resource Technician Kevin Vallance and Maintenance Mechanic Ed Pierson fabricated six one-way deer gates for installation in the deer fence. The design of the gate was based on elk gates used by Natural Resource Technician Jody Taylor on the Wenas Wildlife

Area. Jody was extremely helpful in providing design details and ideas for modifications for mule deer.

As soon as the gates were completed, WCC crews from Spokane and Wenatchee installed five of the gates. One gate will be installed later when conditions improve for access to the installation site, which is still covered with snow and ice. Deer have already been observed using the gates and several others have tracks showing use.

Newly constructed one-way deer gate – Photo by Kevin Vallance

Wenatchee WCC crew with newly installed one-way deer gate – Photo by Ron Fox

Pateros Unit Emergency Protective Measures: This week WCC crews from Spokane and Wenatchee also completed installation of straw wattles and seeded grass in seven small drainages on the Pateros Unit impacted by the Carlton Complex Fire. The wattles and grass seeding were completed with the goal of stabilizing the burned over drainages and keeping debris and runoff off of the county road on the west side of the area.

WCC crew installing straw wattles on the Pateros Unit – Photo by Ron Fox

Methow Forest Rehabilitation Project: Aside from the Post-fire sale, Restoration Forester Jamie Bass has continued to plan for the coming year's work on the Methow Wildlife Area for remaining unburnt timber stands. Bass continued work on consultation, beginning to draft out consultation documents and environmental checklists. Bass also met with Department Archaeologist

Katherine Kelly to discuss costs and feasibility of cultural resource surveys for the 400+ acres of harvest. Effective protection measures for cultural resources in future logging operations were also discussed. In addition, Bass discovered some of the land, though managed by WDFW, is still property of USFWS, which could cause issues over land management. WDFW staff are working on consulting with USFWS to make sure the needed ecological thinning can progress without issue. Manager Furnari submitted RCO Grant Expense documentation to Olympia staff after receiving information from other staff for their work-time & other expenses charged to the grant. Manager Furnari signed OPF for the project's contractor invoice that was forwarded to Region 2.

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

Wildlife Management

Columbia Ridge Elementary School Science Fair: There were approximately 40 entries to the Columbia Ridge Science Fair with participants in kindergarten through fourth grade. At least one student plans to attend the Washington State Science and Engineering Fair in March. Biologist E. Duvuvuei helped to judge the third grade entries to the fair. It was very entertaining to talk to the students about their projects and see their creativity! There were many interesting projects and unique demonstrations and displays. Each student presented their project individually and they did a great job!

Wildlife Areas

Douglas County Weather: Warm temperatures, plus rain Wednesday through Friday resulted in a rapid and substantial runoff in the Bridgeport area. Saturday, the 7th, Foster Creek and its tributaries were swollen with muddy water best characterized as too thick to drink, too thin to walk on. On the Bridgeport Unit, West Foster Creek overwhelmed a culvert and resulted in a washout of county road North Oil, while on the West Foster Creek Unit, it is likely that the above mentioned project, so glowingly reported on earlier in the week, sustained moderate to severe damage.

North Oil Road, Bridgeport Unit – Photo by Dan Peterson

West Foster Creek project site – Photo by Dan Peterson

Winter Conditions

District 5

Past Weather: Temperatures have been mild with lows in 30s and highs in the 40s.

Short-Term Forecast: The 10-day forecast is relatively warm with temperatures ranging into the mid-40s.

Long-Term Forecast: The winter season is forecasted to be warmer and drier than normal.

Habitat: Green vegetation with little to no snow cover.

Snow Depths: Snow depths are at 0" at lower elevations with minimal and very patchy snow at higher elevations.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date.

Animal Condition: No reports of animals in poor condition that can be attributed to winter conditions. Animals observed to date appear to be in great condition.

Mortality: None reported or expected in short-term.

District 6

Recent Weather: The District experienced a warmer than normal week with some light snow then significant rain showers.

Short-Term Forecast: Above normal temperatures are forecast again this week with rain to start and end the week and dry weather in between.

Long-Term Forecast: Warmer than normal temperatures and normal amounts of precipitation are forecast for the remainder of the winter and early spring.

Snow Depths: Snow depths declined at lower elevations with many valley bottom areas and south slopes now snow-free. Only the highest elevations added to the existing snow pack and snow water equivalent values remain above average at Hart's Pass along the Cascade crest. Deer winter range areas generally have below average snowpack for this time of year with considerable bare ground all the way up to mid-elevations on south slopes.

Snotel sites –*
Hart's Pass (6500 ft): 84 in
Salmon Meadows (4,460 ft): 21 in
Muckamuck (4,470 ft): 17 in
**No snotel sites exist in core deer winter range areas.*

Habitat: With below average snowpack and considerable bare ground, forage is available throughout the District on most deer winter range areas outside of the burn. Within the burn, forage is limited. However, some green forage is available at lower elevations.

Animal Concentrations: In general, deer remain well distributed on the landscape and the low snowpack has allowed some animals to drift back up to higher than average elevations for mid-winter. Significant numbers of deer still remain around some orchards near Pateros.

Animal Condition: In most areas, deer generally look to be in average condition for this time of year.

Mortality: Some mortality of smaller than average fawns has been reported.

District 7

Past Weather: Low precipitation and higher temps have characterized the early portion of the winter.

Short-Term Forecast: Warmer temperature and consistent rain through Monday next week.

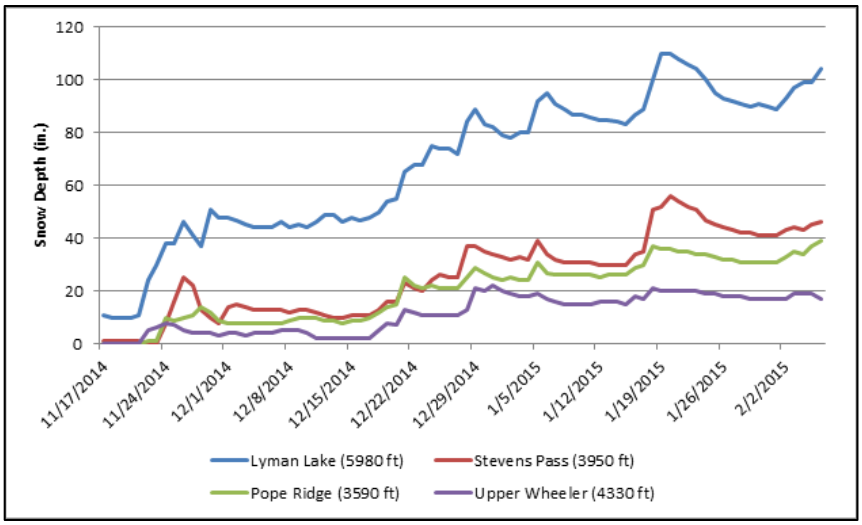
Long-Term Forecast: The long-term forecast for winter 2014/2015 is for higher temperatures and drier conditions.

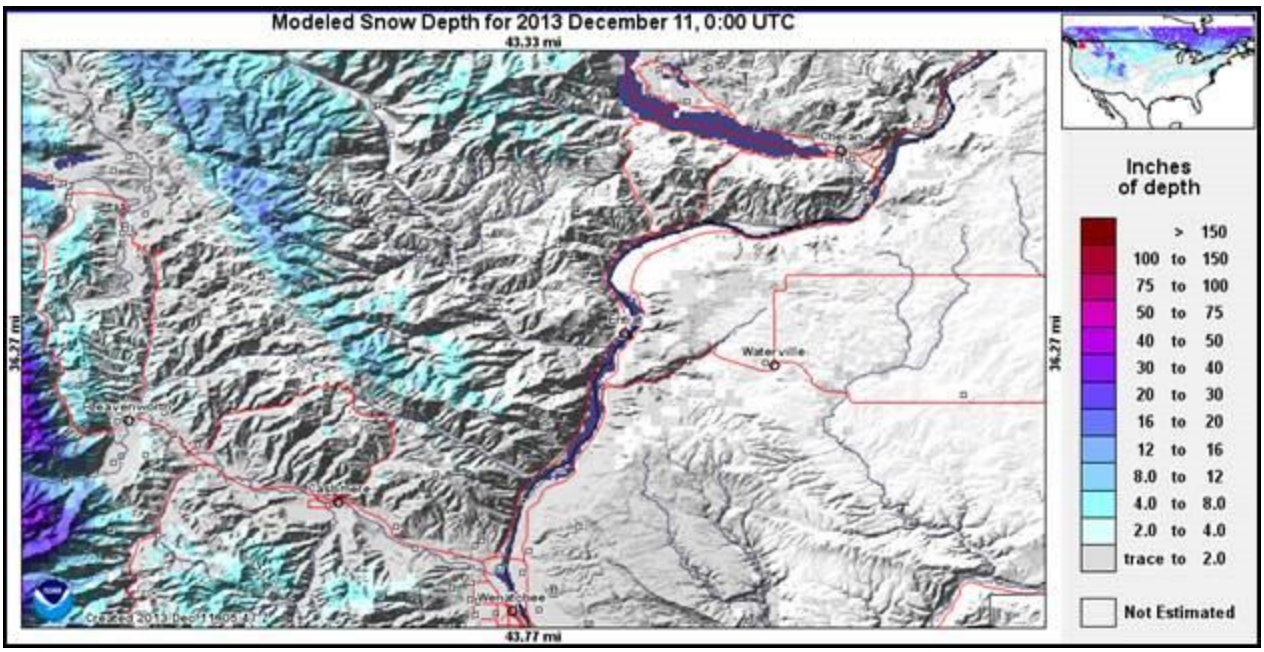
Habitat: Recent fires have reduced landscape capability. The late onset of higher snow depths have allowed deer to occupy a larger than normal wintering area. Evidence of green-up in areas below 2500 ft. on south facing slopes.

Mortality: No unusual mortality events have been discovered or reported.

Snow Depths:

Snow depth data derived from four Snotel sites in Chelan County. The relationship between elevation and distance from the crest of the Cascade Mtns. is depicted in this chart. Sites at lower elevations yet closer to the crest have deeper snow depths than sites at higher elevation yet farther from the crest (example: Stevens Pass vs. Upper Wheeler).





Modeled snow depths in Chelan and Dougals Counties. The reductions in snow depths and distribution resulting from recent warm weather rains are evident in this graphic.

Recreational Opportunities: Saturday, February 7th, the North Central Washington Audubon Society sponsored a tour of the Waterville Plateau and the local Bridgeport –Brewster area. During a stop at the Bridgeport Bar Unit, the group, led by Dr. Dan Stephens of Wenatchee Valley College, observed a wide variety of species, including a northern shrike, a common loon in flight, northern pintails, bald eagles, and white crown sparrows. They then proceeded to the Washburn Island Unit in search of tree sparrows and a Harris sparrow that was recently found on the area.

Bridgeport Bar Unit and the North Central Washington Audubon Society – Photo by Dan Peterson

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman and Forester Mackey checked out the completed portions of the Oak Creek Large Wood Replenishment Project (pictures below from Ernie Farmer WCC Crew Lead). Huffman and Mackey also continued up Oak Creek due to a lack of snow cover and checked out several of the Oak Creek Timber Sale units so that Mackey had a better feel for the marking in the units.

Before and after pictures of one section of the Oak Creek Large Wood Replenishment Project

Oak Creek Staff repaired a section of elk fence in the west valley after receiving information from someone that the fence was down. Conflict Specialist Wetzel was in Ellensburg so Oak Creek Staff located the broken off post and down wire. The post was replaced with a rock jack and the fence patches were stretched back to the gate post. The rest of the fence in the area was checked with no other holes or downed posts located.

Oak Creek Staff continue to feed elk at the Nile and Junction Feed sites. Schedules were modified to cover the weekend and elk continue to be on the feed sites in seasonally high numbers.

Peak Elk Counts for Week:
Headquarters-
Junction- 480
Nile-289
Sheep-
Cowiche-

Winter Weather: Weather this past week was wet and mild. There are chances of rain early this week, with most of the week being partly sunny with highs in the upper 40s and 50s.

Elk are in the area and come into the feed site occasionally. Access to vegetation remains good with no snow. Grass is starting to green up.

Elk are in seasonally good condition.

Wenas Wildlife Area Winter Feeding

Mellotte Feed Site elk numbers: 370 animals.

Feeding continues on a light scale. Assistant Manager Taylor moved the tractor down to Mellotte and started feeding out of the barn. Elk are in seasonally good condition.

Winter Weather: Weather continues to be mild, with above normal temperatures. Several significant rainfall events throughout the week resulted in close to one inch of rain. Temperatures for the coming week will continue to be above normal, with highs in the 50s and lows in the 30s. However, no precipitation is expected after Monday.

LT Murray Wildlife Area Winter Conditions: Elk numbers stayed steady with an actual count of 626 in Watt and 541 in Robinson. Weather was unseasonably warm with highs in the upper 40s, lows in the 30s, and rain throughout the week. Next week's weather forecast is calling for highs in the mid 50s and lows in the upper 30s with rain to continue through Monday.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom spoke with Hatchery Manager Erickson about the Ringold habitat restoration project that Assistant Manager Buser is currently working on. The site is almost seeded and shrubs are going to be planted once the conditions are favorable.

NRT2 Medina monitored waters levels at Johnson Wetland, and Hay Stack Ponds, turned off the vales on the Rice Paddies, and started water on the 90 Acre field to provide habitat for waterfowl

Wildlife Management

Stutzman identified GPS coordinates of recently reported pronghorn sightings in Benton County and spent time in the field looking for the large (>40) group that has been reported.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz participated in a conference call and worked on logistics for next week capture. Permission was obtained from various landowners to stage operations.

2014 Harvest: Biologist Bernatowicz reviewed raw harvest data for 2014. Permit antlerless success was generally below average, especially in the Colockum. New permit levels were calculated for 2015 in the Colockum, which increased about 40%. In reviewing the raw data, Biologist Bernatowicz noticed many permit hunters reported harvest in both general and permit. In most parts of the state, the error is minimal as filters are in place to remove "illegal" harvest. However, over most of District 8, there are general antlerless elk seasons (3911 and 3912) in most GMU's.

Sick Deer: Biologist Bernatowicz responded to a report of a sick deer. The fawn was found lying in a stall unable to stand. The fawn was euthanized. A field necropsy found the deer had pneumonia. Pictures were sent to Dr. Mansfield. Other organs appeared normal and no evidence of adenovirus found. The deer likely had bacterial pneumonia.

Lungs of deer suffering from pneumonia

Turkey Damage: Biologist Bernatowicz discussed nuisance turkey issues in the Hidden Valley area with conflict specialist Wetzel, NWTF, and Region 1 staff. A NWTF member will review the situation for possible solutions, which may include trapping/moving.

Golden Eagle Offal Study: Biologist Moore retrieved the last camera of the season for Jim Watson's study. Golden eagles were not observed but numerous corvids, coyotes, and a rough legged hawk were.

Wild Turkey Conflict: Biologist Moore went with Conflict Specialist Wetzel to investigate turkey complaints east of Cle Elum. Approximately forty wild turkeys were seen at the residence and many others were in the area. The turkeys were ranging throughout the property and were entering the barn to forage. Conflict Specialist Wetzel is investigating how to proceed with the situation.

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

<u>Wildlife Areas</u>

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart worked with Real Estate Manager Leah Hendrix and Mule Deer Foundation Regional Director Dan McKinley regarding reallocation of MDF funding. In 2008, MDF donated funds to WDFW for a land acquisition project that later fell through. The funds are now being considered for reallocation toward assessment and appraisal of the Campbell property. Manager Winegeart visited with Donna Campbell to make sure the family is still a willing seller.

Assistant Manager Hunt completed a comparison between the comprehensive DNR list of recent formal forest road abandonments on the L.T. Murray, and our list of requested abandonments taken from six Forest Practice Applications (2010 to 2014). DNR has now caught up a huge backlog, and given us formal abandonment on over forty more miles of old, long closed forest road systems. There are more out there, but that's a huge addition. Hunt also began updating RMAP Form A road status forms, and requested a map from DNR's GIS shop that will identify RMAP road status, ownership, and include our new forest road system within the Gnat Flat acquisition.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris provided a map showing a layout for the proposed Sheep Company shooting range to Marv Fucal, CAMP Engineering Aide, along with overview maps at several different scales. She also had a 'check-in' call with Section Manager Posner to discuss current tasks and the project timeline. Confer Morris reviewed RCO shooting range applications, including layout designs, for Hayward Hill and Cowlitz, and sent an e-mail to Archaeologist Kelly regarding the definition of the process for getting cultural resources clearance for the site.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom began working with District Biologist Finger on Register-to-Hunt information that will be placed on the WDFW website. Information being considered for posting includes access site information and historical waterfowl harvest data.

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

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Berry and NRW2 Farias traveled to Tumwater to pick up Forester Mackey's new motor pool vehicle. On the trip over they came across a stranded vehicle on a sharp corner just west of the tunnel near Rimrock Lake. The vehicles small camper had come unhitched and the vehicle and trailer were blocking the lane. Berry dropped off Farias to assist in hooking the trailer back up while Berry went back near the tunnel with his safety vest to slow down traffic coming out of the tunnel. Everyone made it safely back onto the road.

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored grape plant budding in a vineyard near Smith Canon in Franklin County that has a history of deer damage. Very minor damage has been noted so far this year. Propane gas cannons and hazing will be implemented if the deer damage escalates.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand reviewed CR-102 rule making documents for upcoming deer and elk general season and special permit accuracy.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored harvest of DPP permits in Elk Area 3721. No elk were reported this past week on DPP permits. Harvest since the August 1 opener is forty-nine antlerless and six spike bull elk.

Private Lands Bio Stutzman spent much of the week on the phone contacting landowners to address a number of access program issues including retrieving permission slips, getting A-19 payment forms signed, and contract renewal/signatures.

Stutzman did a brief field visit for a landowner considering the SAFE program and contacted two other interested landowners about doing field visits this week to address their questions and concerns about having to reseed.

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

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris met with Assistant Manager Taylor to discuss upcoming spring RMAP projects on the WLA and additional road maintenance that may be

necessary to complete the work. They also discussed renovations of the Mount Vale residence that would increase its energy efficiency, including installation of a heating/cooling system, improved insulation, and new, double-paned windows. Confer Morris will submit a Capital Project Request for the upgrades.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: On Monday Manager Huffman welcomed the new Oak Creek Forester Greg Mackey. Most of the day was spent with orientation and paperwork. Mackey reviewed policies and began completing training in LMS. Mackey spent additional time later in the week on LMS training. Mackey also developed a list of needed supplies and Huffman placed an order.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart consulted with Range Ecologist Burnham and RD Livingston regarding the future vision for a Martinez sheep grazing allotment on the LT Murray. 2014 grazing summary data were sent by USFS, and Manager Winegeart will piece together a bill for forage utilization across our checkerboard ownership in the allotment.

Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt phone conferenced with Rusty Gigstead regarding the Parke Creek Fence Project. CAMP is about ready to send it out for bids.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manage Bjornstrom worked on facilities improvements at the Windmill Ranch facilities including purchasing materials for fabricating locks for the granaries, mounting the new bench vise, and patching holes in the shop wall.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Biologist Smith visited a King County bear den to document site characteristics (den size, terrain, surrounding plant species). The den was dug under a live tree and used for part of the winter by an adult female black bear.

Wildlife Management Consultation/Permitting Requests; Municipal, Private Utilities, other: Biologist Anderson continued work and review for requests of assistance regarding species or habitat management consultation for urban wildlife (e.g. osprey nests, eagle territories, heron colonies) given construction or land-use alteration work; per local municipal code requirements to work with WDFW.

It is the time of year when all the heron plan assistance requests come in. Many projects near heron colonies, due to local code, request WDFW for non-jurisdictional consultation to meet their permitting and code requirements. These can include residential, business, and currently a couple with University of Washington. This is due to the WA Growth Management Act regarding wildlife planning and occurrence consideration in land-use change proposals.

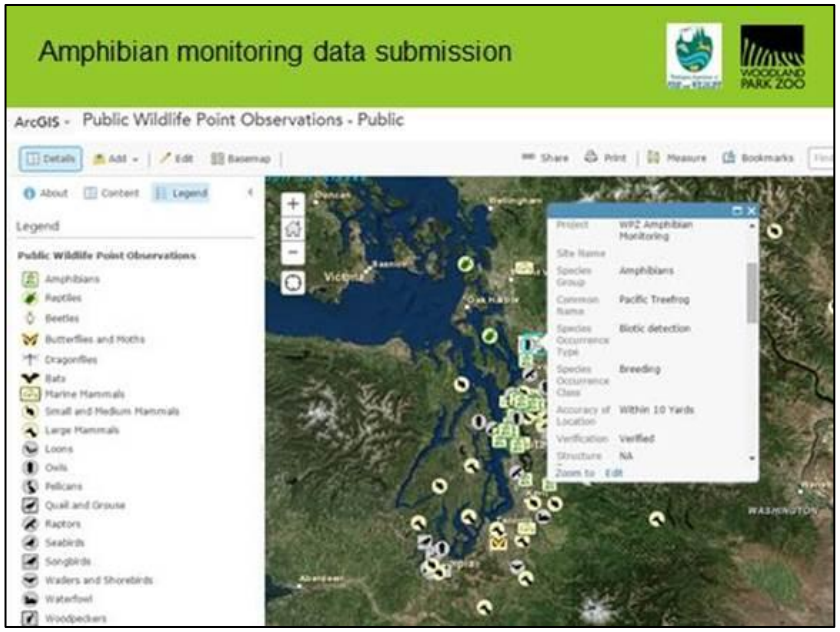
Also, osprey nest removal requests on built structures (e.g. cell towers) start to come in a wave. This is due to the impending return of osprey from their wintering grounds and infrastructure managers wanting to remove nests to provide for safety or avoid damage situations in their maintenance and upgrade work. More on WDFW Priority Habitat and Species Recommendations and how WDFW provides assistance at the local and broader planning levels can be found here: http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/

Citizen Science – Amphibian Egg Mass Monitoring with Woodland Park Zoo: Biologist Anderson and Woodland Park Zoo staff provided outreach and training to volunteers enrolled in the WDFW-WPZ Amphibian Egg Mass Monitoring project. 70+ volunteers are enlisted, many returning. A portion of them, mostly new volunteers as they are required to take the training, spent a morning going over logistics, required safety and volunteer needs, survey needs and resources, identification and general amphibian ecology, conservation and issues with the most rapidly declining vertebrate taxa on earth. Biosecurity measures as well as invasive species consideration and decontamination were also discussed. The volunteers have chosen sites and will now be working with the zoo and Anderson to refer to resources and get started!

A portion of the group met that afternoon to go through a field practicum in which Anderson and zoo staff went through the protocol in the field, discussed general techniques in survey, influential weather factors, how to use the WDFW wildlife observation phone application in the field, and real-time demonstration of decontamination measures. All those that participated were provided with a WDFW Decontamination Level 1 field brush for removing loose material off of field equipment on site. Thanks to the WDFW Aquatic Invasive Species Unit for providing these brushes for distribution and support of increasing awareness in Aquatic Invasive Species, departmental resources, and information on such, as well as emphasizing citizen knowledge and participation in outreach and reporting of invasive species of concern.

Wildlife, native or invasive, can be reported at our public observation website via the web or one's smartphone: http://wdfw.wa.gov/viewing/observations/

Classroom training – Citizen Amphibian Monitoring participants



Field Training and web/phone data tutorial

Sharp-tailed Snake Citizen Science Project: Biologist Milner worked on the protocol we will ask people to use on San Juan Island when participating on the project, which is designed to determine locations where the snake may occur. Milner also consulted with partners from the San Juan county Land Bank and San Juan Islands National Park about launch dates, publicity, etc.

Elk Trapping: Biologist Yarborough and DeBruyn continued to find new bait sites, move traps, and monitor trail cameras in the trapping effort along HWY 20. They also delivered materials to a master hunter who is volunteering to weld up some new traps for a joint project with WSDOT to monitor elk movements relating to elk/vehicle collisions.

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Project: Science Tech Anderson and Biologist DeBruyn and cooperators from Puget Sound Energy and the Trumpeter Swan Society continued to conduct field surveys this week to monitor for sick and injured trumpeter and tundra swans. WDFW responded to public inquires placed via the hotline throughout Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties. This week, ten trumpeter swans and one Tundra swan were collected, all in Skagit County. A grand total of 171 swan carcasses have been collected this season (November 2014-present). Gizzard and liver samples were collected for contaminant analysis. Tracheal and cloacal swabs were taken to monitor for other diseases. Power line strikes contributed to five mortalities recovered this week, with "unknown" cause of death making up the remainder of mortalities. Swan mortalities recorded as unknown causes of death are swan carcasses recovered in and or near roosting areas and appear to have succumbed to disease. Laboratory results will confirm or deny the suspected presence of avian diseases.

	Lead	**Power line Strike**	**Trauma**	**Unknown**	**Feather Pile**	**Total (per county)**
Sumas						
Whatcom		22	4	37	12	75
Snohomish	4	6	5	4		19
Skagit		30	4	34	8	76
San Juan				1		1
						171(Grand Total)

Annual Marine Waterfowl Aerial Survey: Assistant District Biologist Cyra along with Marine Waterfowl Specialist Evenson and Assistant District 15 Biologist Murphie continued with the winter marine waterfowl survey and were able to survey four of the five days this week. A final survey day or two remain. These marine waterfowl surveys, the longest running trend surveys of their kind on the west coast, are used to monitor the population health of waterfowl, marine mammals, and other marine avian species throughout the Salish Sea. Additionally, the data are used to help establish season setting along the Pacific Flyway. These surveys, especially this year, would not be successful without the continued excellent service provided by Kenmore Air and Chief Pilot Chuck Perry.

View of the 50 meter wide transect lines used during the winter Marine Waterfowl Surveys

Wildlife Areas

Nooksack Unit River Flooding: Heavy rains during the week caused additional localized Nooksack River flooding on both the Tennant Lake and Nooksack Units. The south end of the Nooksack Unit once again flooded due to the river overtopping the dike. Roads were closed due to the flood waters in the area. Manager Kessler will assess the new damage to the dike when the river water level falls this week.

Flooding on the Whatcom Wildlife Area

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project Open House: Projects Coordinator Brokaw drafted a press release and signs to post at Leque Island for an upcoming public Open House scheduled for Wednesday February 25th at 6:30 pm at Stanwood Middle School. The WDFW and DU Project Team developed an agenda for the Open House, and planned staff members to host stations during a break-out session.

Leque Island Project Stakeholder Committee: Projects Coordinator Brokaw sent a survey to members of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee to collect input on the design alternatives under consideration, and to get feedback on how the stakeholder process is working for each of the members. Information from this survey will be used to assist WDFW in selecting the preferred design, and to shape future stakeholder processes organized by WDFW. Results will be compiled on February 16th and will be posted on the project webpage when the preferred design is selected at the end of March.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw reviewed and provided responses to vendors who submitted information regarding a sole source contract the WDFW Purchasing Office proposed to purchase new water quality loggers for the project.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports swan populations at the lake seem to be increasing since the waterfowl hunting season has ended. Bird watchers are common visitors, wanting to see the majestic birds.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Frohning Dairy to discuss planting plans for the coming season. Frohning Dairy would like to expand crop acreage on the unit, which will increase forage and cover for wildlife.

<u>Private Lands/Access Management</u>

Since September, this area has exhibited strong use by migratory birds, especially waterfowl. This forage area, and others like it, provides vital nutrients and a safe stopover to migratory birds during their long and arduous winter and spring migrations. Approximately 80 acres of barley were planted at this location.

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

Wildlife Management

Swan Mortality: Biologist Smith continues to assist The Trumpeter Swan Society and volunteers with gaining access and collecting sick/injured swans in the Snoqualmie Valley over the weekend.

X-ray of swan showing ingested shotgun pellets

Community College Field Studies – Shoreline CC: Biologist Anderson consulted with students at Shoreline CC regarding a field study of amphibians around the college. The students provided their well written proposal and intent to Anderson. Anderson provided some suggestions for keeping the survey effective and low-impact, taking biosecurity measures, and how to easily share their findings with WDFW while meeting their class requirements. It is good to see community colleges encouraging practical field efforts for achieving classroom needs, degrees, and real life experience for students.

Sky Valley Recreation Meeting: Biologist Milner attended the regular Sky Valley recreation meeting to catch up on plans and activities among partners on the Highway 2 corridor.

Spring Bear Hunt: Biologist Caldwell and Yarborough met with a representative from Sierra Pacific to discuss the upcoming spring bear hunt. They also discussed adding areas in future years.

Wildlife Areas.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk Renovation Project: The remodel of the Tennant Lake raised wood boardwalk continued with our Capital & Asset Management Program workers laying down gravel along the path to the boardwalk. Manager Kessler also hiked in and removed beaver dams to drop the water level of the lake to help with the gravel work.

Lake Terrell Hunting Blind Cleanup: The Whatcom County chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association worked to clean up all the hunting blinds at Lake Terrell. They removed two bags of garbage left in the blinds.

Skagit Wildlife Area Waterfowl Program: Meis removed reserve signs at the Fir Island Farms Unit. Meis and Cosgrove checked Game Reserve buoys at the mouth of Deepwater Slough on the Skagit Estuary Game Reserve. Buoys are removed seasonally to be cleaned and used next

during the waterfowl hunting season. Cosgrove continued a slow drawdown of water at the Samish Unit. More stop-logs and other water control devices were removed. An increase in post-season waterfowl activity was noted this week. Cosgrove and Meis continued with the removal of boards for a slow drawdown of water on the Island Unit. Lower water levels allowed for the removal of the stop-log boards at the Barn Field water control structure.

Corson Preserve: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm joined WDFW real estate services staff Kye Iris at a meeting with Snohomish County Parks to discuss County properties that may be considered as a replacement for the Corson Unit.

Private Lands/Access Management

Layout Blind Removal: Otto and Deyo removed wooden layout blinds from four units across three counties and secured them in the off-season storage.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination

Hunter Education support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey, along with the Regions 2, 3, 5, and 6 HE Coordinators met in Ellensburg on January 28th to review and update the Kalkomey draft Power Point presentation for the traditional hunter education classes. The draft was a good starting point, but needed refinement and correction so as to be pertinent to Washington State game rules and regulations, present first aid and survival policies, and safety practices. The working session was very productive and volunteer Steve Mills, who was also in attendance, took the material generated at the meeting and during the week was able to send corrected Power-Points for chapter 6 ("Handling Firearms Safely") and chapter 8 ("Muzzleloading") out to the Hunter Education Coordinators for review. Coordinator Dazey also reviewed the new Power-Point for the on-line Field Skills Evaluation that volunteer Steve Mills prepared. Coordinator Dazey also mailed three instructor applicant packets to hunter education volunteer applicants who had passed background checks and were ready to continue the Pre-Service Training process. Coordinator Dazey sent to Olympia the applications of Hunter Education Instructor applicants who had decided not to continue to seek certification. This allowed the hunter education division to clean out their data base of those instructors who were not still seeking certification as hunter education instructors. This also allows the Region 4 Coordinator Dazey to concentrate on the instructor applicants who are still interested in becoming instructors.

Chief Instructor Assistance: Chief Instructor Financial Reports (CFR) were due into Olympia by 1/31/2015 and need to be filed for possible audits. Coordinator Dazey sent letters to the small number of instructors in Region 4 who had still not filed their CFR's. Coordinator Dazey also followed up with phone calls to instructors making sure that they understood the importance of filing their CFR's.

Pre-Service Training for Instructor Applicants: Hunter Education Coordinator Steven Dazey secured two venues for Pre-Service Training (PST) for Hunter Education Instructor applicants. One venue in March is at the Boy Scout Camp Pigott for Snohomish county area applicants. The other venue is at the Black Diamond Gun Club for King County applicants. Dates for the King County PST are still to be confirmed, but will probably be in April. All Hunter Education

Instructor applicants need to successfully complete Pre-Service Training prior to becoming certified as an instructor. Pre-Service Training consists of two sessions. The first covers how to put on classes, the material to be covered, Department policies, and tips and techniques to teaching. The second session gives the applicants an opportunity to actually teach a class and be evaluated on their teaching ability. Invites went out to twenty Snohomish County instructor applicants.

Terry Hoffer Award Nominations: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey started to evaluate the Terry Hoffer Award nominations received. So far, 17 nominations have been received. It is planned to have the entire evaluation process finished in time so as to be able to make the award presentation at the March statewide In-Service Training in Wenatchee. Coordinator Dazey created a scoring matrix and evaluated the applications as a starting point. Final evaluation of the applicants will occur at a Hunter Education division staff meeting where the top candidates will be forwarded to the final selection committee. The final selection will be made by a committee consisting of last year's recipient, a representative of the Game Wardens association, a representative of the Washington Hunter Education Association (WHEA) and the Hunter Education Resource Organization (HERO). This year many quality nominations were submitted and it will be difficult to evaluate and select one winner of the award.

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

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Manager Rotton and NRS Meis worked on draft agricultural lease summaries for the 2015 agricultural year. Contacts were made to growers to discuss the upcoming agricultural season. Manager Rotton performed administrative duties, including vendor payment and monthly administrative reports. Cosgrove and Meis purchased salvage lumber to be used for foot bridge and hunting blind material. The Nature Conservancy has been salvaging barns and other structures on their Port Susan project area. Manager Rotton met with Wildlife Area Advisory Group member Art Kendal to tour the location and discuss his proposal for an ADA viewing blind along Wiley Slough. Manager Rotton began contacting local growers about upcoming contract bid opportunities for the Samish Unit and Fir Island Farms.

Island Unit: Cosgrove and Meis arranged for the purchase and installation of chisel plow shanks for an implement used for agricultural and moist-soil management enhancements, primarily on the Island Unit. A local vendor will attach the shanks and do other welding work to improve the plow before this spring. Manager Rotton contacted Habitat Biologist Brenden Brokes to find out about available gear for the fish exclusion work to be done for the remainder of the ditch maintenance work on the Island Unit.

Fir Island Farms: Manager Rotton examined potential area of pre-project cat tail control of the Fir Island Farms site. Meis and Manager Rotton worked on cover crop planting plans for the Fir Island Farm Restoration Project.

Leque Island: Manager Rotton examined the issues related to a rare-bird siting at the Leque Island Unit and reports of harassment of the long-eared owl. Meis posted signs to inform the public about wildlife viewing guidelines and harassment regulations were posted. Enforcement has been notified of the issues and will make efforts to increase patrol of the area.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm contacted the Snohomish County Environmental Cleanup Crew to assist with the removal of illegal dumping of construction debris at the west parking area.

Community Involvement: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reviewed existing Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) Guidance documents as he prepared for the first WAAC meeting for 2015.

Private Lands/Access Management

Data Entry and Analyses: Tech Otto and Deyo entered use survey and hunter success survey sheets into excel. Biologist Caldwell began conducting Waterfowl use analysis.

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell opportunistically performed hazing tactics on a bachelor group of 17 bull elk on a property that is currently granted a damage permit. WCS Witman and WC Supervisor Caldwell responded several times to a frustrated landowner about landscape damage occurring on his property. Issues surrounding mutual cooperation, threats of shooting animals, proper ways to prevent elk damage, WDFW responsibilities, and future objectives were discussed to lower hostilities. The landowner has erected a small roped fence in attempts to deter the animals from eating his trees and shrubs. WCS Witman and WC Supervisor Caldwell extended his fence and added fladery to help deter herbivory by the animals. They also mounted an auditory deterrent device to scare of animals from the damage area. Follow up meetings will be made with the landowner and to check on the land.

Landowner Meetings: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell met with multiple landowners in Skagit County to discuss damage and permit issues.

Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and District Biologist Yarborough met with SPI representative Sand to discuss bear, elk and deer related damage, hunting, and access. Forester Sand stated that they are happy with the working relationship they currently have with WDFW. He also stated that SPI would like to expand their current management efforts with WDFW. Each of the expansion options were discussed with the group and will be brought forward in 2016 as possible changes. Further follow up meetings will be held with Regional Program Managers, Wildlife Conflict Program, and Game Program staff to discuss further actions.

District 12 Elk Conflict Management: Biologist Smith met with landowners with complaints of elk activity on agricultural (Christmas trees, dairy farms) properties in King County. Non-lethal and harvest options were discussed with landowners. Landowners agreed to install fencing (new or upgrades to existing) in several locations to attempt to exclude animals from plantings. A combination of Landowner damage permits and Master Hunters may be employed at select locations.

Elk in a King County agricultural field on a recent evening

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

Wildlife Management

District teams, including District 12 biologists Anderson and Smith, met with Regional Wildlife Manager Link, Acting Diversity Manager Becker, and Lands Section Manager Wilkerson to discuss Diversity planning and efforts in Region 4.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Black-tailed Deer Research Project: Monitoring of black-tailed does and their associated young continues in both the Coweeman and Washougal Study clusters. Currently in the Coweeman cluster, seven adult does that were captured in 2014 remain alive and these females have two surviving young. Currently in the Washougal cluster, two adult does that were captured in 2014 remain alive and these females have three surviving young. During the May-June birth period all adult females associated with each study cluster will be monitored frequently and multiple attempts will be made to capture their fawns.

Columbian White-tailed Deer Relocation Project: In cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Biologists Holman participated in this week's segment of the on-going effort to relocate Columbian White-tailed deer. Biologist Emeritus Miller and retired Enforcement Officer Brightbill participated as well. The deer are being moved from Puget Island as well as the

Oregon mainland near Westport Oregon to Ridgefield Refuge. This week, one adult buck and one adult doe were captured by drop net and moved to Ridgefield. The near-term goal is to establish an additional population of the Federally Endangered deer on secure habitat and further the overarching challenge of de-listing the species. For more information on the Columbian White-tailed deer relocation project see U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's website at: http://www.fws.gov/refuge/julia_butler_hansen/conservation/columbian_white_tailed_deer_recovery.html

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area February Elk Survey: Biologists Homan and Stephens conducted the February winter elk survey on the Mudflow Unit and observed 79 elk on the valley floor. A collection of herd composition was not attempted due to high winds and rain.

Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys: Biologist George continued with preparations for the upcoming citizen science hoof disease prevalence surveys scheduled to take place in the months of March and April in Regions 5 and 6. Preparations included discussions with private landowners for potential access, continued map creation, and sample survey point adjustments. The hoof disease prevalence surveys are vehicle based surveys where teams of two will travel 50 miles around a sample point looking for groups of elk and determining the number of limping animals within the group. Binoculars and reliable transportation are necessary to conduct surveys. Training is required and will take place at five locations during the first week of March. Volunteers will need to attend one entire training session and will be able to choose where they would like to survey at that time. Anyone interested in participating can register for a training session at http://wdfw.wa.gov/about/volunteer/events/.

John Day Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project Site Visit: Biologist Anderson, along with WDFW Biologists Weinheimer (Fish), Johnson (Habitat), and Verhey (Renewable Energy Projects), conducted a site visit to evaluate a proposed closed loop hydroelectric project near the John Day Dam. This project is associated with an existing wind power facility and is primarily located on private land near the John Day Dam. The project is being proposed by the Klickitat PUD. Follow-up discussion will take place this spring to determine what natural resource issues WDFW will want to see evaluated.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Milfoil Control Planning Meeting: Natural Resource Technician Davis joined a group that is working with the East Klickitat Conservation District to plan a milfoil control effort at the mouth of Rock Creek. Eurasian milfoil is an exotic aquatic weed that forms dense mats of floating vegetation in freshwater. This weed alters the ecology of the areas it infests to the detriment of many native species, fouls the propellers of fishing boats, and has been blamed for the drowning of swimmers. The group is comprised of representatives from several agencies. Davis is providing input from WDFW's perspective and also drawing on his experience with milfoil control in previous employment.

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

Oak Habitat and Riparian Plantings: Wildlife Area staff finished planting over 4,000 trees and shrubs in the North and South Units of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area this past week. These plantings are part of a multi-year effort to enhance Oregon white oak and riparian habitats on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. The initial riparian plantings along Lake River were completed this year, with subsequent planting to occur in the next couple of years to replace trees that do not survive. The Lake River planting has taken ten years to complete with over 15,000 trees and shrubs planted within 25 acres. Species that were planted this year were: Oregon white oak, Oregon ash, Black Cottonwood, Black hawthorn, Red osier dogwood, red and blue elderberry, serviceberry, pacific crabapple, snowberry, douglas spirea, and wild rose.

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

Wildlife Management

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A Special Late Season Goose Hunt: The 2015 Management Area 2A Special Late Goose Season began on Wednesday, February 4th. The purpose of this special late season hunt is to assist landowners in mitigating crop depredation due to geese. This hunt, which is open to select Master Hunters, will take place on participating properties from February 4th through March 7th on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Currently there are a total of seven farms in three counties (Wahkiakum, Cowlitz, and Clark) registered in the program. Four properties are experiencing active goose damage. The remaining three properties are either not experiencing active damage or are reporting only intermittent depredation by geese.

It was an early morning start for Master Hunter Mike Mathews, Youth Hunter Luke Mathews, and Master Hunter Dave Odell on the opening day of the Special Late Season Canada Goose Hunt at New Columbia Garden Co. Inc., also known as Fazio Farms

Master Hunters (from left to right) Bill Pallis and Bill Kusulos take a moment to pose with their dogs, Tico and Abby, before heading into the field on February 4th for the Special Late Canada Goose Season Hunt

Landowners experiencing damage from geese on agricultural properties within Area 2A can sign up for assistance through this program at any time throughout the season. Landowners interested in participating should contact the WDFW Region 5 office at 360-696-6211 for more information on how to be included. Master Hunters who are selected to participate in these hunts will need to abide by the same regulations and possess all of the same authorizations required to hunt geese during the regular season in Area 2A. Successful hunters will need to check geese at a designated check station by 5 p.m. Hunters with no harvest will report by calling the WDFW Goose Coordinator no later than 5 p.m. on the day of their hunt. Check station hours and locations are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Vancouver Station and 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Woodland Station, unless specified otherwise to hunters by the WDFW Goose Coordinator. Regulations and requirements for participation can be found on pages 3, 6-7, and 9-10 of the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season Pamphlet or check online at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01635/wdfw01635.pdf

Elk Area 5062 (Trout Lake): Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald contacted the Master Hunters that drew tags for the Elk Area 5062 hunts. She followed up on their success, their ability to gain access to private lands, and if they had any suggestions on the hunt. Most hunters were able to harvest an antlerless cow elk with just 1-2 days of hunting. They expressed gratitude to the landowners for allowing access and expressed concern for the level of damage the farms were receiving from the elk.

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

D-10 Wildlife Conflict

Elk Damage: Conflict Specialist Conklin visited nine farms that were all experiencing elk damage. Several Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements were signed and she provided non-lethal equipment to one of the land owners. Conklin also issued ten damage and kill permits to land owners this week. Three of the permits will be utilized for charity. In addition, Conklin deployed two Master Hunters this week. One hunted a farm in Wahkiakum County and one will hunt a dairy in Randle.

D-9 Wildlife Conflict

Deer and Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald coordinated two Master Hunters to hunt deer and elk on Klickitat County farms experiencing wildlife damage. She also directed a youth doe hunter to a farm near Goldendale with a large amount of deer damage. A ranch renewed their Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) with WDFW and received depredation prevention permits after allowing over twenty hunters access during various elk seasons this past year. A farm with a Hunt by Written Permission agreement with WDFW signed a new DPCA to help manage elk damage. Two elk were harvested with depredation prevention permits on farms in White Salmon and Trout Lake this week.

Injured deer in Goldendale: Biologist Bergh and Conflict Specialist McDonald corresponded with a Goldendale resident who reported a deer fawn with an arrow in its face. The fawn was

not on the reporting party's property the following morning when staff was available to attend to the animal. Continued monitoring of the situation will occur.

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

WDFW Wildlife Capture / Helicopter Training: Biologists Holman, Stephens, George, and Bergh, along with Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald, attended a safety training session on aerial wildlife capture in preparation for the upcoming elk project studying the effects of hoof disease (TAHD) on the survival and productivity of elk. Deer and Elk Section Manager Nelson, Elk Specialist Hoenes, and Deer Specialist Hansen were also in attendance. Biologist Myers, who has extensive experience with helicopter capture of ungulates, taught the course, which focuses on the various safety and logistical issues surrounding capturing wildlife using helicopters.

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D-10 & MSHWA Winter Conditions

Past Weather: November temperatures and precipitation were both below normal. Light accumulations of snow fell on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area the last weekend of November and at the end of December. There has been no additional snowfall on the MSHWA since the first of the year. Temperatures for December were above normal with slightly less than average precipitation. The average temperature for the month of January was slightly above normal and precipitation for the month was below average.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will fluctuate between 4,000 to 11,000 feet during the upcoming week. The 6-10 and the 8-14 day forecast are for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The February forecast is for above normal temperatures and precipitation, and the three month forecast is for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

Habitat: Forage is available at middle and lower elevations.

Snow Depths: Lower elevations are currently snow free, with minimal depths at the middle and upper elevations.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The third winter elk survey was conducted on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area on February 6th, with 79 elk being observed. Collection of herd composition was not attempted due to high winds and rain.

Animal Condition: Animals appear to be in good condition.

Mortality: Two elk mortalities were observed by staff adjacent to the MSHWA this past week.

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.
The Public is reminded the portion of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle, and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30, 2014, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Mild conditions have continued in District 9 with heavy precipitation this week in the South Cascades and Klickitat County.

Winter Severity: The Klickitat Wildlife Area continues to have all areas open and available to wintering deer. There is no concern for the current severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County. The eastern portions of Klickitat County have had no snow accumulation this winter and deer are reported in good condition.

Habitat: Habitat is open and forage available below 3,500 feet in most of the south Cascades. The current snow pack in the south Cascades is extremely poor and well below normal.

Animal Concentrations: Elk concentrations are being seen in western Klickitat County and deer are very active and moving with no snow or other weather conditions impacting behavior.

Animal Condition: Animals appear to be in good condition and numerous deer have been seen in the past week with healthy fawns.

Mortality: None documented this week.

Public Contacts: No concerns raised by the public this week.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Sentinel Landscapes (Prairie): Biologist Tirhi represented WDFW at this month's Sentinel Landscape meeting focused on prairies. The participants reviewed current work related to several prairie initiatives and then were asked to review a landscape map looking at potential habitat acquisition sites and priority sites across Thurston County.

Oregon Spotted Frog: In response to a request to present information related to Oregon spotted frog to the Thurston County Conservation District, Biologist Tirhi arranged for a two-hour presentation in which Tirhi and Deanna Lynch (USFWS) provided an overview of spotted frog

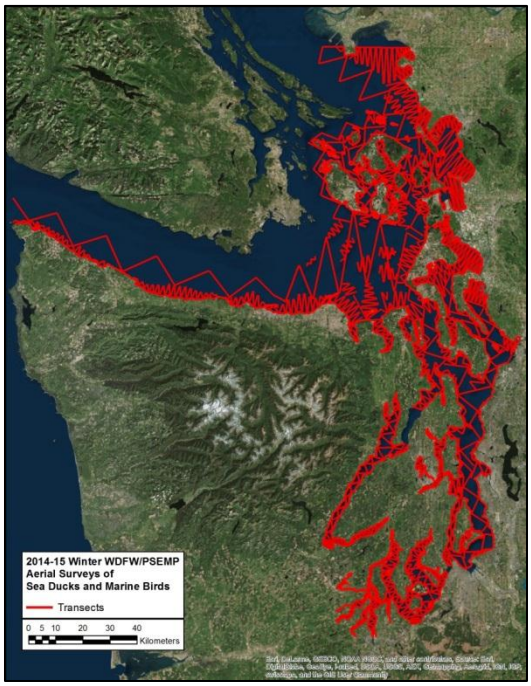
listing, biology, and distribution; Michelle Stevie (City of Olympia) provided an overview of the citizen science amphibian monitoring program in Thurston County. Marty Cheney (NRCS) provided an overview of working lands management to aid spotted frogs. Bonnie Blessing (volunteer and consultant) provided an overview of habitat enhancement work at a local oviposition location on Salmon Creek. The presentation was well received and participants left with a better understanding and comfort level for working with private landowners to seek additional spotted frog occupied habitat and to manage for the benefit of both frogs and working lands.

Streaked Horned Lark: Biologist Tirhi and Hannah Anderson (CNLM) co-lead the second annual meeting of the South Puget Sound Airport And Federal Lands Streaked Horned Lark Working Group. The meeting is attended by site managers for each of the occupied lark breeding grounds in South Puget Sound, as well as staff from WDFW, USFWS, and FAA. The topic of this meeting was surveys (what they provide and what they don't provide) and launching into Habitat Best Management Practices (BMPs). This four-hour meeting was very well received with a very thorough discussion by the group of airport/federal lands normal operation needs, survey and data needs, impacts of site use to larks, and the beginnings of discussion regarding mowing regimes. The intent is to allow enough time each meeting to thoroughly discuss a topic and collectively draft BMPs that work for both larks and site managers. Many research needs are also identified. Biologist Stinson (WDFW) is drafting up the meeting notes and he, Tirhi, and Anderson will reconvene after the field season to work on homework assignments before the next group meeting in July/August.

Streaked horned lark

Snowy Plover Winter Surveys: This week, Biologist Sundstrom, along with District Wildlife Biologist Novack, was able to survey Midway Beach for western snowy plovers as part of the USFWS Winter Snowy Plover Survey. Simultaneous surveys were being conducted at Leadbetter by USFWS personnel and Graveyard Spit by Shoalwater Bay Tribal personnel. Sundstrom and Novack located one flock of 22 snowy plovers, while no plovers were located at either Leadbetter or Graveyard Spit. Other coastal areas, including Damon Point, Oyhut Spit, Connor Creek, and Copalis Spit, were surveyed the week before, also resulting in no plovers detected.

Also during the Midway Beach survey, Sundstrom and Novack observed 11 Snow Buntings and 12 larks; 7-11 of those larks were identified as Streaked Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris strigata*) and one identified as the pale subspecies *Eremophila alpestris enthymia*. The horned lark observation is important because it has been many years since Sundstrom has detected them during the winter surveys at Midway Beach.



Aerial Seabird Surveys: Biologist Murphie reports that they finished their survey effort last Wednesday with a final flight through the San Juan Islands. Murphie transcribed all remaining survey data and forwarded to Specialist Evenson for further analysis.

The following is a report from Joe Evenson:

Waterfowl Survey & Sea Duck Specialist Evenson and Assistant District Biologists Murphie and Cyra completed the 2014-15 Annual Winter Aerial Survey of Sea Ducks and Marine Birds within the inner marine waters of Washington State. A total of 18 survey days were flown this winter to complete the survey.

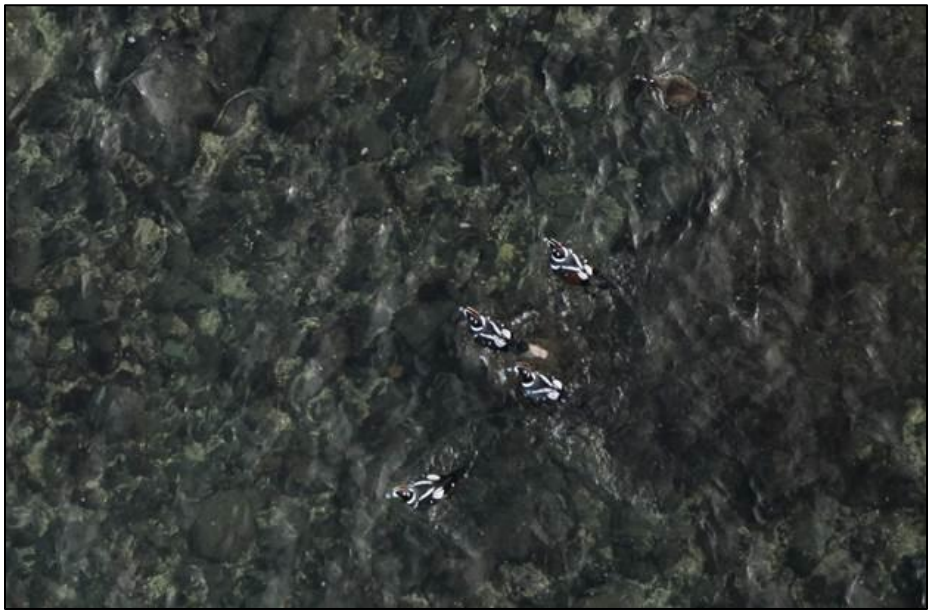
This is the 23rd winter that these surveys have been conducted. These surveys are the longest data set documenting trends of winter marine bird distribution and population indices in the greater Puget Sound. These surveys are used to document population index levels of sea ducks that will determine next year's harvest limits. In addition to birds, marine mammal sightings are recorded, and trends in harbor and Dall's porpoise have been documented.

As part of the survey efforts this year the crew worked on the R&D of obtaining images from the survey to estimate species proportions of scoters, goldeneyes, mergansers, and loons (species groups that have a proportion of observations classified to species group level). They plan on implementing imaging during next winter's survey to better estimate species proportions for these groups.

The efforts and professionalism of Chuck Perry, chief pilot of Kenmore Air, are much appreciated and are key to the success of this project.

Biologist's Cyra and Murphie observing marine birds

Survey crew: Biologist Murphie, Pilot Perry, Specialist Evenson, and Biologist Cyra



Harlequin ducks

Black-tailed Deer Study Pysht Doe Capture: Biologist McMillan and Biologist Ament assisted Cliff Rice with the doe capture on Feb 3rd, collaring five does before 2pm. These new 2015 does are all located between the Dungeness River and Morse Creek, south of Hwy 101.

Biologist Ament and Pilot Jess photograph while Researcher Rice encourages a doe to stand up

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

Private Lands

Biologist Sundstrom and Scientific Technician Capelli removed the signs from the posted Reservation Hunt and Feel Free to Hunt locations in the Brady area. No pit blinds were found and overall very little trash or spent shells were found. A big thank you goes out to the hunters who were conscientious and respected the private lands that allowed public access for waterfowl hunting.

Other

Biologist Sundstrom responded to an email about a dead banded Bald Eagle in Ocean Shores. The bird was found but turned out not to be an eagle. The 'bands' on the Albatross were zip-ties which the folks who volunteer for COASST (Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team) apply to each dead bird they encounter each time they encounter it.

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

Dead Trumpeter Swan

Wildlife Management

Biologist Sundstrom received a phone call from Grays Harbor PUD about a dead Trumpeter Swan in the Brady flats area. When the PUD responded to an outage, the workers observed the swan dead below the power lines. Sundstrom retrieved the swan and confirmed the cause of death as electrocution. The strike was located along a pair of lines where no diverters are installed.

Amphibian Road Mortality Project, Thurston County (Landscape Planning): Biologist Tirhi participated in a conference call with Planning Director Scott Clark, Ann Marie Pearce (Thurston County Stream Team), Molly Levitt (TC), private consultant Joanne Schuett-Hames, Michelle Stevie (City of Olympia) and volunteer Bonny Blessing to discuss the on-going Citizen Science Amphibian Road Mortality project in Thurston County (purpose and process) and continuing participation by the county. Staff also discussed a potential Transportation Alternatives Proposal (TAP) grant application for the project. A great discussion was had, the county understands the need and supports the project, and the collaborators took homework assignments.