

Wildlife Program

Week of February 16-22, 2015

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wolverine: Biologist Jeff Lewis attended a two-day meeting with state agency representatives, wolverine biologists, and statisticians in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, to develop a Competitive State Wildlife Grants proposal for wolverine monitoring and conservation in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, and Colorado. Much of the discussion involved the shaping of the five parts of the proposal: a connectivity analysis, reintroduction feasibility/planning, monitoring strategy development, a pilot monitoring project for the winter of 2015/2016 in Wyoming, and the implementation of a four state monitoring project in the winter of 2016/2017. We are providing input on the proposal as well as a letter of support and budget match information to representatives from Idaho, who are shepherding the proposal this week to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Sage Grouse CCAA: Section Manager Wilkerson and Environmental Planner Teske, along with Range Ecologist Burnham and Private Lands Biologists Comstock, Braaten, Baarstad, and Stutzman, led a work session with several members of the Washington Cattlemen's Association, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Washington Department of Natural Resources regarding the sage grouse CCAA in Ellensburg on 18 February. Significant progress was made and a follow-up meeting to continue the work is scheduled for 26 February.

State Wildlife Action Plan: Wildlife Diversity Division recently hosted several outreach opportunities regarding the State Wildlife Action Plan update; three in-person workshops, held at Mill Creek, Olympia, and Ellensburg, and one webinar. The purpose was to introduce preliminary products, and to invite input from conservation partners and stakeholders. While the workshops were sparsely attended, those present provided useful feedback and comment.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Areas

Cooperative agreement: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area staff is still working with WDFW's Region 1 Real Estate staff and BLM to come up with a cooperative agreement for crossing private land to restore the 66-acre BLM Marlin Hollow field this coming season. Wildlife area staff would need to cross approximately a quarter mile of privately owned CRP land to access the BLM Marlin Hollow field. This agreement will be in place before any work on the BLM Marlin Hollow field takes place.

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

Wildlife Management

Turkey Trapping in Dayton: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley, Biologists Wade, Thorne Hadley, and Vekasy, and Officer Vance were able to set up the rocket net in Dayton. After some hazing, the turkeys came into the bait site. We trapped thirteen turkeys, and after banding the birds we were able to transport them back up into the mountains and release them on our Feel Free to Hunt lands. This was approved by Assistant Biologist Vekasy. As of this morning the turkeys are staying in the same area we released them.



After a successful trapping effort with our rocket net



All the turkeys were released back into the mountains on a Feel Free to Hunt site

Wildlife Conflict: Biologist Earl met with a cooperator in Cloverland who is experiencing a large amount of damage due to the 400+ head of elk currently residing in the area. Earl and Conflict Specialist Rasley discussed the various options that WDFW has. Earl and NRT Wade made several trips to the area to help haze the animals.

Elk herd in seeded fields near Cloverland



Wildlife Areas

KFES 4th Grade Forest Health Education: The Kettle Falls Elementary School 4th graders returned to Sherman Creek WLA this week for the forest mentor field day. The students learned different forest management objectives and strategies from the perspectives of a private

industrial forester, forest health specialist for the DNR, and wildlife area management for WDFW.

KFES 4th grade students standing next to a small ponderosa pine snag with cavity nest – Photo by Daro Palm



REGION 2

WOLVES

Okanogan County Wolf Management: Biologist Heinlen placed trail cameras near the area of a documented wolf photo obtained by a UW research crew east of Tunk Mountain in GMU 204. Early indications are that this is a lone animal.



Gray wolf – Photo by UW Researchers

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Northern Leopard Frogs: Biologists Finger, O. Duvuvuei, and E. Duvuvuei met with WSU's Dr. Caren Goldberg, PhD students Erim Gomez and Travis Seaborn, Genetics Lab Technician Mikki Brinkmeyer, and CNWR Biologist Gordon Warrick for a tour of the NLFMA and potential reintroduction sites. The team toured the A and B ponds of the NLFMA, Marsh Units One and Two at the CNWR, and the Gloyd Seeps area. Habitat conditions, management strategies, and sampling designs for collection of eDNA were discussed. eDNA samples will be collected in July to determine and compare the presence/absence of chytrid fungus at the NLFMA to the release sites. eDNA will also be used to confirm the presence/absence of Northern Leopard Frogs at the release sites as well as several other locations that have documented presence of Northern Leopard Frogs within the last decade.



During a tour with WSU, CNWR Biologist Gordon Warrick describes refuge management strategies and habitat conditions of Marsh Unit One, a potential reintroduction site for Northern Leopard Frogs – Photo by Rich Finger



Washington Ground Squirrels: Biologists Finger, E. Duvuvuei, and O. Duvuvuei trapped ground squirrels at the Sagehills Golf Course. Over the one day trapping effort, thirty-one ground squirrels were trapped (twenty-three females and eight males). The squirrels were released at the Steamboat Rock release site. Females are pregnant at this time of year; therefore, the twenty-three released females should result in approximately 150 additional squirrels once pups emerge. This translocation effort should help boost the existing, small population and help establish a healthy, robust population.

Finishing up the release at Steamboat Rock
– Photo by Rich Finger

North Cascades Wolverine Research: The generally mild winter and frequent freeze-thaw events have resulted in more frequent trap visits and captures of non-target species this season, including the first ever coyote capture this past week. Amazingly the animal managed to squeeze through a small, unsecured viewing door after its first capture (see photos and video). Low snowpack and the mild weather forecast will likely bring an early end to this capture season sometime in mid-March. We know we still have 3-4 wolverines in the vicinity of our traps and are still hoping to catch one or more before the effort concludes.



Coyote squeezing out of a wolverine trap – Photo by WDFW remote camera

Mountain Goat: Biologists Gallie, Volsen, and Bridges conducted a helicopter survey of mountain goat units along the south and north shores of Lake Chelan in District 7. Normal survey protocol focuses on summer habitat use. However, the goal of this survey effort was not only to assess mountain goat numbers via sightability modeling, but also to compare data with ongoing boat-based surveys conducted by the Chelan County PUD under FERC requirements. The results from the aerial flight will be used to compare observations from boat surveys to the goat population to gauge future survey efforts.

Early morning fog presented difficult survey conditions and thus delayed our start. Mixed snow conditions made confident counts of goats problematic along the south shore, therefore we choose to focus on the North Shore survey, where fog and snow conditions were more suitable for survey. During this mild winter, mountain goats were not using traditional winter range, which provided an additional challenge to surveying them. We were able to complete surveys in two blocks and get partial coverage in three others. Raw count results were seventy-six total goats with fifty-four adults, six yearlings, and fourteen kids, with two unknown, and an adult:kid ratio of twenty-three. Sightability modeling will change those figures slightly when analyzed. Boat-based surveys conducted by Chelan PUD the day following our aerial flight returned only fifteen mountain goat observations, all from the south shore, while seventy-six goats were recorded along the north shore during aerial surveys.

An image of mountain goat surveys conditions along north shore of Lake Chelan – Photo by J.Gallie



Wildlife Areas

Chiliwist Scotch Thistle Survey: Manager Haug surveyed portions of the Chiliwist for new infestations of Scotch Thistle (see picture to the right). The very invasive weeds' germination has significantly increased following the Carlton Complex Fire. Much time and man-power will have to be spent this early spring to make sure these new plants do not go to seed. With temperatures increasing, herbicide applications will be possible in the coming weeks.

A large infestation of Scotch Thistle Rosettes at the Chiliwist Wildlife Area

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

Wildlife Management

Citizen Science: The Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association has finished surveys for wild turkeys this winter. One area has yet to be reported on (so numbers will change slightly), but in total three surveys were conducted on thirty-three wintering sites in Chelan County. A total of 582 turkeys were counted with 80 of them being mature toms. This represents a 10% increase in the total number of birds over last year (among sites with adequate counts in successive years), but a 20% decrease in mature toms.

District 5 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Temperatures have been warming with lows in the mid-30s and daytime highs in the mid-50s.

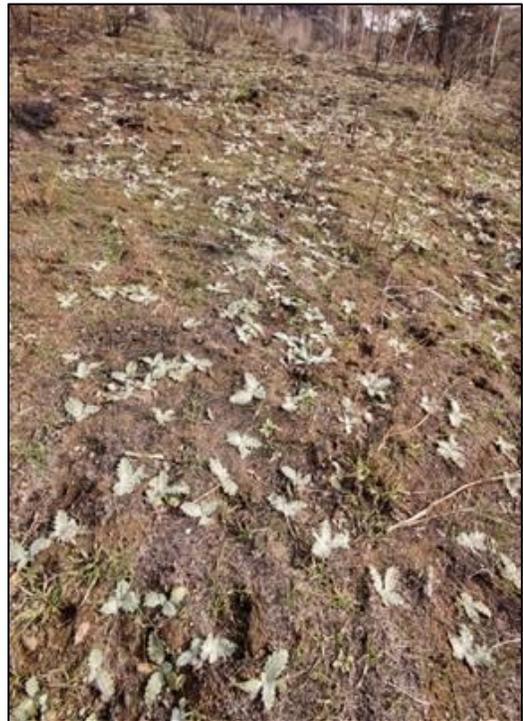
Short-Term Forecast: The 10-day forecast is relatively warm with temperatures ranging from the low-30s at night and the low-50s during the day.

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: 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 Winter Conditions

Recent Weather: The District experienced another dry and warmer than normal week.

Short-Term Forecast: Near normal temperatures with a few scattered showers are forecast for the next 7-10 days.

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

Snow Depths: Snow is gone from the lowest elevations in the District and is melting quickly, particularly on south facing slopes at middle elevations. The lowest elevations and most all south facing slopes at middle elevations in core deer winter range areas are bare. All areas and elevations in the District lost snow pack this past week.

Snotel sites –*

Hart's Pass (6500 ft): 73 in

Salmon Meadows (4,460 ft): 17 in

Muckamuck (4,470): 11 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 deer winter range areas outside of the burn. Within the burn more residual forage is being exposed daily and new green-up is starting to accelerate at the lowest 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 late winter. Pressure on orchards near Pateros appears to be easing.

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

Mortality: Some mortality normal for this time of year has been reported.

District 7 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Warmer than normal winter conditions resulting from El Niño occurring this winter.

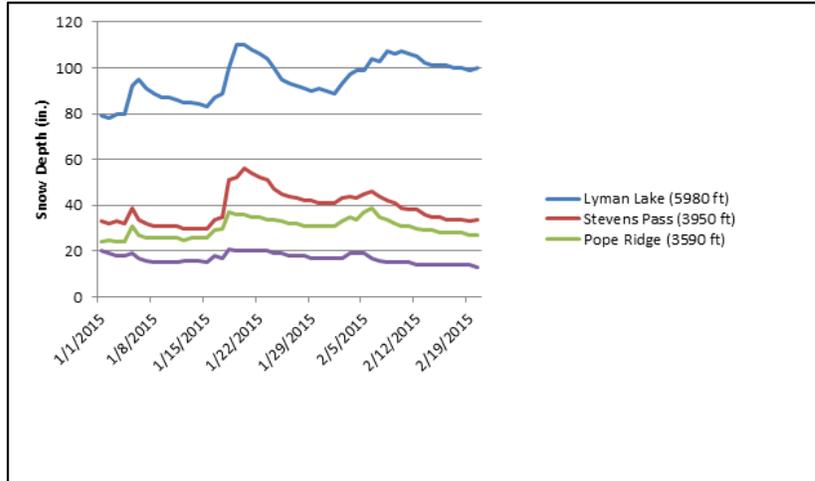
Short-Term Forecast: Predicted weather for this coming weekend is temps reaching up to 60 degrees. A possibility of snow at higher elevation is predicted for later in the week.

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

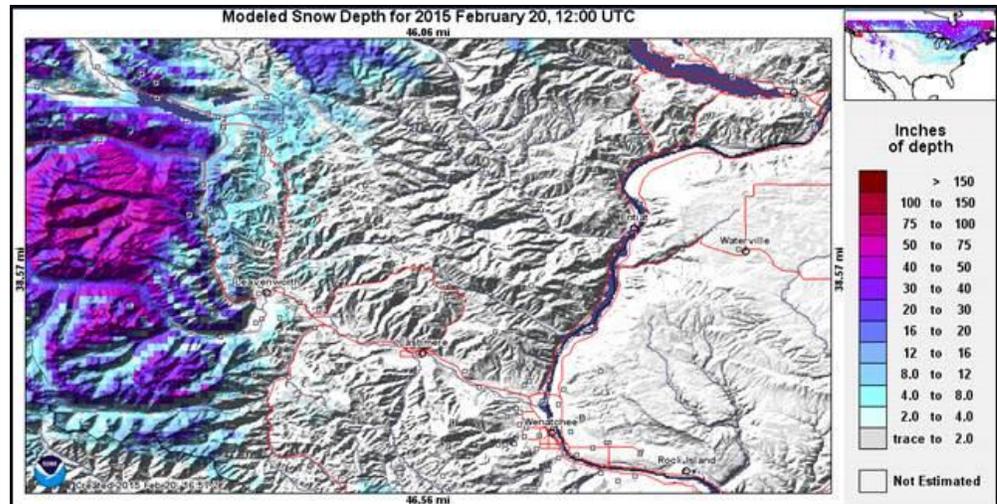
Habitat: Evidence of green-up in areas below 3000 ft. on exposed slopes. Snow levels have risen to above 6006 feet.

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

A chart showing snow depths at four Snotel Stations in Chelan County



Model outputs of current snow depths at low elevations in Chelan County. The low snow level areas west of the Columbia River are normal winter ranges for mule deer.





From top to bottom – Rough-legged Hawk south of Davenport, group of swans on Conners Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, pine grosbeak eating serviceberry buds, group of Mule Deer enjoying early green-up on the Chiliwist Wildlife Area, and a view of the Sinlahekin Valley from above Forde Lake on Aeneas Mountain

– Photos by Justin Haug

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Oak Creek staff continued to feed elk at the Nile and Junction feed sites. Elk numbers are starting to drop and hay is being cut back. The current plan is to be done with feeding this week. Manager Huffman coordinated with the US Forest Service, who is working on logging around the Nile feed site. The contractor wants to start harvest in the area soon and Huffman approved moving up the date they are allowed into the area from late March to early March.

Manager Huffman met with Becca Wassell and Kat Strathmann from the Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group. They were awarded a SRFB grant for restoration in the Oak Creek Watershed. The meeting focused on timelines for planning and implementation of the grant. A majority of the work will take place on US Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy ownership in the South Fork Oak Creek, focusing on removing the old road prism and placing logs in the creek. There will be work on WDFW with riparian plantings and some prism removal. Following the office meeting, the group went to the field to look at the recently completed sections of the Oak Creek Large Wood Replenishment project.

Manager Huffman prepared the three Trafx counters for deployment, loaded the ATV, and went to the field to place the counters on the NF Cowiche Creek property. Huffman set up the three counters on the main roads to measure use and documented a lot of ORV use in the area (pictures below). The roads are easily accessible out of Yakima and connect into DNR and US Forest Service lands to the west. There is a lot of weekend use in the area with dispersed campsites in meadows and a lot of tracks in the mud. While traveling the road through the creek bottom, Huffman observed three large gray squirrels at different areas along the creek. Huffman contacted District Biologist Bernatowicz who is going to set up cameras and bait stations in the area this coming week.

Peak Elk Counts for Week:

Headquarters-

Junction- 255

Nile-247

Sheep-

Cowiche-

Winter Weather: Weather this past week was very mild with highs in the 50s. This coming week is a continuation of the same with some colder nights with below freezing temperatures. There is no precipitation in the forecast.

Access to vegetation is good with a lot of grass green up.

Elk are in seasonally good condition.

Wenas Wildlife Area Winter Feeding

Mellotte Feed Site elk numbers: 0 animals

Feeding ended on Monday, February 23. Elk are hanging out on the slopes around the feed site, with sufficient green up to keep them occupied. Elk are in seasonally good condition.

Winter Weather: Weather continued to be mild, with above normal temperatures up into the 50s and low 60s last week. Temperatures for the coming week are expected to be closer to normal, with highs in the upper 40s to low 50s, and lows in the 20s to low 30s. Slopes continue greening up.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Tech Hill checked plant growth at the redeveloped Green Gate springs. Both noxious weeds and desirable plants are sprouting. It seems as though the Fusilaid herbicide treatment applied last December has been effective at controlling many of the weedy annual grasses.

Herbicide effectiveness – area left of the fence was sprayed, area right was not sprayed



Winter Conditions

Elk: Elk numbers trended with weather patterns. As temperatures elevated elk numbers dropped in both lots. Watt numbers dropped 450-500 head, ending with a total of 125 head. Those elk moved to the south slope near the mouth of Taneum Creek. The Robinson herd dropped to about 250 head, but picked back up late in the week.

Weather: Morning lows were in the 30s through mid-week, moderating to mid-40s late in the week. Highs were in the upper 40s to near 60 late in the week. Next week's weather calls for a colder start early in the week with 20 degree mornings, warming mid-week with rain predicted.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Colockum staff completed planting sagebrush seedlings as part of a fire restoration grant from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Six thousand seedlings were planted with a crew of fifteen people.

Workers plant big sagebrush seedlings at the Colockum Wildlife Area



Wildlife Management

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz radio tracked collared animals in the Yakima River Canyon. Fourteen of the fifteen captured sheep were found alive and well. No radio signal has been heard from one animal despite extensive searches. The radio collar was recycled, so possibly failed.

Biologist Bernatowicz read a recent study from Montana on the impact of various factors on bighorn sheep populations. Montana found drastic reductions in recruitment rates for multiple years following all-age disease die-off events. The impact of pneumonia outbreaks on subsequent recruitment rates was highly variable. This phenomenon has been noted in other states and is the main reason for the current study in the Yakima River Canyon. The paper was not exactly clear on results versus testing procedure, but reported very high prevalence of the *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* bacteria in one herd, though there was high lamb recruitment. The herd with high prevalence was later used for augmenting other populations.

Big Game Surveys: Biologist Bernatowicz corresponded with agency staff and MIT biologists about elk and deer surveys. We plan on flying Colockum elk and PMU 33 deer in the near future. The plan is to do follow-up ground surveys on PMU 33 deer to estimate fawn recruitment.

Yakima Canyon Sheep Study: Biologist Moore searched the canyon for a VHF collared sheep that has not been found since the capture. Moore worked the most advantageous ridges in hope to gain a VHF signal, but it was not found. Additional time will need to be spent to gain a visual on the animal.

Wolf Report Investigations: Moore followed up on recent wolf reports in the district. Some marginal sized canid tracks were found in multiple locations near the area described by the reporting party, therefore a camera station was set up.

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

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris participated in a conference call with Environmental Engineer Hansen, CAMP, and Section Manager Posner to discuss a process/timeframe for hiring an Architectural Engineering firm to provide final designs and acoustic analysis for the proposed Sheep Company Micro Range. Confer Morris also reworked a GIS map of the layout of the proposed range and worked with SM Posner to finalize the overall scope of work. They also developed a draft outreach strategy and coordinated on cultural resource requirements. Confer Morris commented on a draft fact sheet that SM Posner then provided to Public Affairs to finalize. The fact sheet will be used for meetings with the neighbors, WAAC, local user groups, and general public.

Assistant Manager Taylor cleaned up a chair that had been burnt in the middle of Buffalo parking lot. Boards, staples, nails, and other burnt items had to be raked up to keep vehicles from being damaged. While there, he also went out to the Buffalo road to where the public likes to target shoot and picked up garbage, targets, and pallets. This area is getting a lot of use this spring, with lots of garbage being left.

Access Manager Garcia also painted over the graffiti at Pond 4 and attended first aid refresher training.



Before and after graffiti on vault toilet at Pond 4

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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand assisted Wildlife Program staff in Region 1 with trapping problem turkeys in Dayton and subsequent release to an area open to hunting in the Blue Mountains. A total of thirteen turkeys (eight toms and five hens) were successfully relocated. Many positive comments were received from local residents regarding the operation.



Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand and Private Lands Biologist Thorne-Hadley with a captured Dayton turkey

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with a landowner in the Washtucna-Kahlotus area concerning deer damage. Several non-lethal techniques and strategies were discussed and will be implemented to reduce deer activity in the area.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand inspected a habitat enhancement project where a tree and shrub planting was established and a spring was revamped. Although the watering tank from the spring is near capacity, the flow from the spring is very weak for this time of year.

Water development near Hanford

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand assisted two DPP permit hunters with obtaining the necessary new damage tag to participate on a damage deer hunt. There still seems to be some confusion at the license vendors when hunters try to purchase the new tag.



Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored the 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 attended a CCAA meeting in Ellensburg with landowners and agency folks where the latest changes to the CCAA template were discussed. Stutzman also spoke with five cattle operators in the Rattlesnake Hills to inform them of the meeting. A few of the operators were aware of the CCAA but none could make the meeting, so individual follow-up discussions were planned. The next CCAA meeting is scheduled for this week.

Stutzman contacted three Benton County landowners about the upcoming pronghorn survey. Landowners were asked about recent sightings and informed about the survey dates and methodology.

Conflict Specialist Wetzel contacted two landowners in the Caribou Creek area about access to haze elk. Elk have started to appear in that area and coordinated efforts were discussed with the two landowners to begin hazing elk to the north and east.

A landowner in Robinson Canyon called to offer access to a large block of private land to haze elk. This will be an important area and will allow better access to several re-entry gates.

A landowner in the lower Colockum Creek area called to report a crippled deer in his yard. Conflict Specialist Wetzel visited the site and talked with several landowners in the area. The deer was located and did have an injured leg that appeared to be healed. It was moving

around well and was left as is. Two landowners in the area reported the deer has been crippled for several years but has fawns each year.

Wolf Activities

Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by a landowner in the Middle Fork of the Teanaway regarding four wolves he saw crossing his property. The landowner was advised about living with wolves and also the current ESA status of wolves and the law pertaining to harassment or lethal control of wolves.

A landowner in Upper Green Canyon was contacted about the potential of placing fladry around his calving area. The landowner did agree to the placement of Foxlights in key locations.



Foxlight placements around calving area in Green Canyon

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

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman, Forester Mackey, and Fuels Manager Leuschen met with US Forest Service Assistant Fire Management Officer for Fuels Brad Wagner, who works on the Naches Ranger District, to discuss coordination on prescribed burning in the Oak Creek Forest Restoration Project. The meeting focused on getting Wagner up to speed and discussing steps to make a burn happen. Wagner is definitely interested in working with us on a cross ownership prescribed burn and we have a follow up meeting scheduled in March to work out more logistics.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt fielded several calls from contractors interested in the upcoming Parke Creek Fence Project, answered questions regarding access and logistics, and met with some in the field to show them a portion of the surveyed line and area. Interest seems high, so we'll see what we get for final bids, which are due Monday.

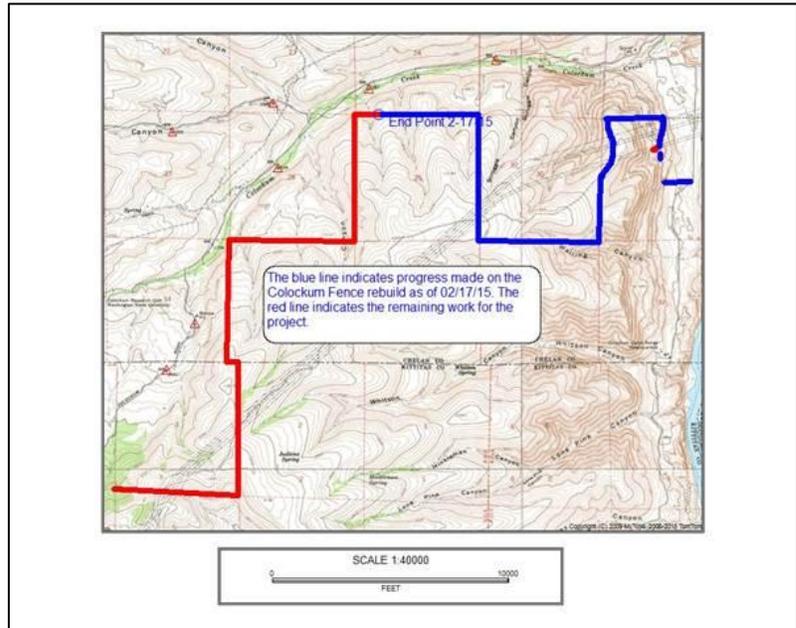
Assistant Manager Hunt contacted Fast Lane Signs to discuss signage for the Manastash Cabin, and Manager Winegeart worked on the write up for a sign.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom met with Archaeologist Kelly at the Sunnyside HQ Unit, then they traveled east to the Whitstran Unit to perform a cultural resource survey as per the Yakama Tribe's request. This should be the last hurdle for the Whitstran Access Site Relocation Project. Several test pits were dug and a pedestrian survey was completed at the site. No significant findings were observed.

Manager Bjornstrom followed up with Rusty Gigstead of CAMP on the Sunnyside Shop Project. It appears that after several changes as to how the process will go forth, the project once again is set to be put out for public bid.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Manager Lopushinsky and Assistant Hagan inspected the contractor's progress on the construction of the north boundary fence. The crew is moving right along and looks to be on track for completion this spring.

Progress made to date on rebuilding the northern boundary fence at Colockum Wildlife Area



Assistant Manager Hagan takes GPS waypoints along the northern boundary fence of the Colockum Wildlife Area. This fence line crosses numerous canyons, such as those seen in the photo.



REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Citizen Science – WDFW and Woodland Park Zoo Amphibian Egg Mass Monitoring:

Biologist Anderson continues to work with Woodland Park Zoo staff and volunteers, many of which include professional biologists, professors at University of Washington, ZooCorp teens, and many others with diverse backgrounds. Anderson also coordinated with D12 area municipalities and their staff regarding 2015 surveys for the above amphibian project.



Western Toad – Photo by Russ Link

Elk clover trapping: Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn continued elk trapping activities in cooperation with some of the Point Elliot Tribes and WSDOT. New bait sites were developed to target animals crossing SR 20.

Avian Influenza Surveillance: Biologist DeBruyn collected and submitted various hawks, owls, and eagles for testing.

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, twenty-three trumpeter swans & one tundra swan were collected in Skagit, Snohomish, King, and Whatcom Counties. A grand total of 208 swan carcasses have been collected this season (November 2014-present). Gizzard and liver samples were collected for

contaminant analysis. An unusually high number of swans (18) were collected in King County this week. 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 or contaminants.

	Lead	Power line Strike	Trauma	Unknown	Feather Pile	Total (per county)
King				20		20
Whatcom		23	4	39	12	78
Snohomish	4	6	5	8	1	24
Skagit		33	5	39	8	85
San Juan				1		1
						181(Grand Total)

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.

Anderson consulted with Seattle regarding long-term raptor management in city parks.

Anderson consulted with University of Washington undergraduates in Landscape Architecture working on a project with the Seattle Department of Transportation to provide urban wildlife habitat at a Ballard area pocket park. Anderson provided considerations given local existing wildlife occurrences and also suggestions to avoid conflicts with their project.

Anderson continues to provide for local municipal heron colony management consultation per their code and Growth Management Act mandate.

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/>

Annual Marine Waterfowl Aerial Survey: Assistant District Biologist Cyra worked with Marine Waterfowl Specialist Evenson to identify and correct errors in the transcription of the 17,000+ observations submitted for data processing from this winter’s survey.

This is the 23rd winter that these surveys have been conducted. 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. In addition, 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.

Worked with Marine Waterfowl Specialist Evenson and Assistant District 15 Biologist Murphie to schedule dates for upcoming USFWS detectability surveys, and completed required training for flying in USFWS aircraft. These flights, using double blind observers and photography, will be used to determine a correction factor for the aircraft (a Kodiak turbine) and observers that the USFWS uses in surveys that are similar to our winter flights. WDFW performed detectability surveys using our aircraft (a DeHavilland Beaver) and observers several years ago and we are lending.

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project Open House: The WDFW and DU project team had a conference call to prepare for an upcoming public Open House scheduled for Wednesday, February 25th from 6:30 – 8:30 pm at Stanwood Middle School. At the Open House, staff will present a summary of progress made with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee over the past year and will host stations where attendees can ask questions and provide input. To be added to the email list for announcements on this project, please contact Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov.

Nooksack Unit River Flooding: Manager Kessler coordinated with the Whatcom County River and Flood Department on the Nooksack Unit dike repair project. The riverfront dike was damaged by a flood event in January. The project has been approved by the County River and Flood Commission. This project will be a cost share between Whatcom County and WDFW and will be constructed in July–August.

Tennant Lake Swan Watch: Manager Kessler attended and helped set up the annual Tennant Lake Swan Watch public program. This program was hosted by the Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park. Wildlife Biologist Paul Debruyne gave a presentation on the local swan populations and status. Approximately 60 swans were seen on Tennant Lake at daylight.

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 to see the majestic birds – Photo by Alan Bauer



Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Sno-Valley Farms to discuss planting plans for the coming season on the existing agricultural lease. Manager Boehm prepared a draft agricultural lease for 100 acres of cropland on the Middle and West Lobe of the unit. Manager Boehm also conducted the first Ebey Team meeting for the year. The team meets periodically to discuss, plan, and resolve the many issues that impact the unit. Two new members joined the team, including Loren Brokaw and Kirk Lakey.

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

Wildlife Management

ALEA Grant Project Review: Biologist Milner reviewed and preliminarily scored six ALEA grant proposals. Final evaluations will take place in April, but each grant takes time to review and think about, so it's most efficient to review a few at a time rather than waiting until April to consider the applications.

Corson Property Potential Exchange: Biologist Milner toured property owned by Snohomish County Parks near Portage Creek to evaluate it as a potential trade for the Corson Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. Milner met with staff to discuss additional properties under consideration and to evaluate other options for the Corson property.

Wildlife Areas

Warm, sunny weather conditions have led to increase site use for viewing and outdoor activities on many of the popular Skagit Wildlife Area sites –

Photo by Kim Chandler



Skagit Wildlife Area Waterfowl

Program: Large numbers of waterfowl continue to use both the Island and Samish Units. Species noted this week include mallard, wigeon, pintail, gadwall, green-wing teal, Northern Shoveler, and Canada Geese. Cosgrove checked bird use of mowed and rolled corn areas on the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit. Good numbers of swans, Canada geese, and ducks (mostly mallards) were seen in both the Game Reserve field and hunt field.

Ebey Island Land Use Planning Funding: Projects Coordinator Brokaw prepared a draft grant application to a Migratory Bird Stamp funding opportunity. The proposal involves working with stakeholders to develop a master plan for Ebey Island that will improve freshwater wetland habitat, public access for recreation, and drainage infrastructure to improve WDFW's ability to manage the Ebey Island Unit. The WDFW Ebey Team reviewed the project summary of the proposal and provided feedback on the application.

Skagit Project Coordination/CAMP Meeting: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton met with staff from the Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) to coordinate upcoming construction projects planned for this summer. At the meeting, staff reviewed timelines, gave project updates, and coordinated the next steps to moving the projects toward construction. CAMP staff will visit two freshwater wetland enhancement project

sites in the Samish area to determine whether or not WDFW staff will construct the project, or CAMP will put the projects out to bid by contractors.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk Project: Email from John Hansen of CAMP: “Just wanted to update you on our Tennant Lake Boardwalk project. We are now complete. The Lacey Shop worked through some difficult times with high water, slippery boards, and even swarms of mosquitos. I’ve attached a short report with photos that’ll go to the Director’s Report. I hope you all agree that it looks fantastic. Whatcom County will continue maintenance of the trail and boardwalk. Thanks everyone for your help getting this project done.”



New boardwalk on Tennant Lake

Private Lands/Access Management

Washington Department of Ecology Coordination Meeting: Biologist Hans and Supervisory Biologist Caldwell met with Department of Ecology staff to discuss department ownership and coordinate public access. Parcels were identified that would be optimal for public access for hunting and wildlife viewing purposes. Further determination was needed by Department of Ecology Staff to confirm which parcels did not belong to them. Department of Ecology staff stated that they would follow up with WDFW after they had determined which lands could not be used by the public.

Negotiating Access on Private Timberlands Meeting: Private Lands Access Supervisor Caldwell met with WDFW agency staff to discuss public access, fee access, wildlife program goals, and Law Enforcement roles on private industrial timberlands. It was agreed that all regional staff would relay information to agency staff on areas that were at a high risk for fee access and areas that blocked access to public lands. It was further agreed that Law Enforcement would fulfill contractual obligations on all lands that signed contracts with WDFW.

Blind Removal: Otto and Deyo continued waterfowl unit breakdowns in Whatcom counties. Deyo and Otto were able to gain field access into some of drier fields to break down blinds and signage. All materials were cleaned and delivered to storage for the off-season.

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

Wildlife Management

Swan Walk: Biologist DeBruyn and Manager Kessler helped put on a show at the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center that included watching swans leaving their night roost and talks about swan biology and avian influenza.

Monroe High School Mentor: Biologist Milner met with a senior from Monroe High School who plans to study Natural Resources Conservation in college. For her senior culminating project, the senior will investigate potential careers in the field and develop a brochure that details her research. Milner has agreed to be her mentor for her project and will help guide her progress towards completing her project.

Wildlife Health – Sick Finches: Biologist Anderson and Region 4 Administrative Assistance staff worked together to address concerns regarding sick finches. The situation was typical of salmonella poisoning. Please clean your feeders and other man-made wildlife features every month or more often, if heavily used, with a 10% bleach solution (9 parts water, 1 part bleach) let sit 10 minutes, rinse well and dry...keep these features away from wildlife while conducting this cleaning. Large amounts of birds congregating at feeders often results in spread of bacteria or viruses – please clean responsibly or take them down. Wild birds do not need the extra bird feed – it is an additional attracting for our enjoyment. They are fine without it. Consider building wildlife-friendly habitat both to enhance your area and move away from the maintenance needs of feeder stations. See WDFW Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary for more information; in particular the winter bird feeding section: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/attracting/>

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Manager Rotton met with Washington Waterfowl Association representative Art Kendall and WDFW ADA Program Manager Dolores Noyes to discuss the specification for the ADA blind proposal. Manager Rotton participated in a conference call with CAMP and Restoration Projects Coordinator Loren Brokaw to discuss the various projects proposed to start construction this summer.

Island Unit: Manager Rotton received update fish exclusion requirements from Habitat Biologist Wendy Cole for the fish removal work required for the Island Unit Ditch Maintenance Project. Manager Rotton continues to work with Contracts Specialist Ted Nelson on the wording for the new barge and boat lease agreement. Rotton also met with stakeholders to discuss the wording of the agreement prior to meeting with the barge owner. Cosgrove installed a beaver deceiver in a dam on the Island Unit. Cosgrove continued to monitor drainage on the Island and Samish Units. Meis and Cosgrove removed eight downed trees blocking the dike on the Island Unit.

Skagit Access Sites: Cosgrove and Meis removed litter dumps from the Milltown and Big Ditch Units. Cosgrove checked for litter and other public-use issues at the North Fork, Jensen, and Fir Island Farms Reserve Units on Fir Island.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm attended Dike District 1's annual meeting. The District Commissioner presented the operating budget and provided a list of tasks the District will be working on this year. This list included tide gate repairs, ditch maintenance, dike repairs, vegetation management, and managing water levels to improve crop farming. All of these items would provide improvements for the District and also WDFW interests.

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman monitored elk damage to ornamentals on private land. Temporary fencing and an audio deterrent system seems to be working. WC Supervisor Caldwell met with a landowner in Arlington to follow up on a claim that was investigated by Biologist Smith. Caldwell photographed and applied non-lethal control options and discussed short and long-term solutions to the landowner's problem. The landowner agreed to take action towards long-term solutions and was granted an Agreement that will end March 31. WCS Witman received a call from a landowner on Fir Island looking for hazing assistance with swans. WCS Witman met with the landowner and provided information on how to acquire cracker shells for agricultural purposes. WCS Witman worked in the Acme area and contacted the property where recent elk activity has been reported. WCS Witman found the elk utilizing the nearby field as reported from the landowner. Elk were hazed off the property.

Elk being hazed off a Skagit Valley property



Wildlife Conflict Meetings: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with the President of the Skagit County Farm Bureau and provided an update on the damage complaints and what steps have been taken to mitigate damage in Skagit County. WCS Witman met with two landowners in the Birdsvie area of Skagit County with numerous elk utilizing their property. WCS Witman assigned a Master Hunter to the area that is proficient in archery due to the close proximity of houses. WCS Witman met with landowners in the Day Creek area to discuss damage issues and recent mitigation proposals from neighboring properties in the Day Creek area. Lastly, WCS Witman discussed a potential elk exclusion fencing project in the Day Creek area with Co-Managers.

Sierra Pacific Industries Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor and District Biologist Yarborough met with Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) staff to tour their lands and discuss wildlife conflict and game management issues. During this meeting, SPI staff showed WDFW staff elk and bear damage, identified damage areas, identified elevation strata that will be used to focus damage prevention efforts, identified supplemental feeding sites, and discussed strategies on how, when, and where to better focus management efforts in the future. Overall, SPI was pleased with WDFW involvement and wishes to continue the growing relationship it currently has with the agency.

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

Work Plans: Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn met with Regional Program Manager Link to populate game and diversity matrices for fiscal year 2016.

Administration: Assistant District Biologist Cyra completed required HR training modules.

Pesticide License Recertification: Staff attended Pesticide License Recertification training and received six credits towards license renewal.

Maintenance: Manager Kessler used the warm clear weather to complete several equipment repair projects, including replacing the rotted wood decking on the 7' x 10' Utility Trailer with new pressure treated wood.

Repaired Utility Trailer



REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Elk Hoof Disease Survival Study: Biologists Holman, Stephens, George, and Murphy assisted Elk Specialist Hoenes and State Veterinarian Mansfield during the first week of capturing elk in an effort to determine the survival of cow elk affected by hoof disease. Thirty seven cow elk were captured and fitted with GPS collars. Multiple samples were taken and will aid in continued diagnostic efforts. The elk will be monitored over the next four years for mortalities, movement, and reproduction. Additional captures will take place this coming week.



Hoof disease survival study captures

Oregon Spotted Frog Surveys: Biologist Anderson and McDonald conducted an early season Oregon Spotted Frog egg mass survey at Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve. Due to the unusual mild weather this winter, surveys are being conducted 2-3 weeks earlier than normal. Water temperatures currently are typical of mid – late March conditions, indicating that egg laying should be early this year. Surveys will be conducted weekly from this period on to monitor habitat conditions and document the early breeding period.

Oregon Spotted Frog Egg Mass Survey

Columbian White-tailed Deer

Relocation Project: In cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Biologist Stephens, Technician Johnson, and Emeritus Biologist Miller participated in this week's effort to translocate Columbian White-tailed deer to the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. Two does were captured by drop net this week from the Oregon mainland near Westport. The near-term goal is to establish an additional population of the



Federally Endangered deer on secure habitat and further the overarching challenge of delisting 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



CWTD capture

General Goose Surveys: Biologist Doorly and WDFW Volunteer Reeder began the General Goose Surveys for the month of February. These surveys are conducted once a month in various areas around Districts 9 and 10. This year the surveys focus more exclusively on accurate counts of the Dusky Canada Goose. Surveyors also record any collars of duskies and other species seen. The purpose of these surveys is to observe Dusky Canada Goose numbers, as well as any collared waterfowl, and

record the information necessary for population estimation of the dusky and analysis of survival and movements of all collared geese. Areas where geese congregate around Vancouver and the Shillapoo Wildlife Area were surveyed this week. In addition to several collared Cackling and Dusky Canada Geese, a Ross's Goose was spotted in a flock of Cackling Geese near Vancouver Lake. Ross's Geese, which breed in the tundra of central Canada, are uncommon visitors to the Pacific Northwest.



A mixed flock of Cackling Geese and Dusky Canada Geese on the Shillapoo Wildlife area, led by a red-collared Dusky – Photo by Stephanie Doorly

Wildlife Areas

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Band-tailed Pigeon Forage Enhancement: Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area staff planted 600 native fruit bearing trees this past week on the Cedar Creek Wildlife Area to enhance available forage for band-tailed pigeons. The area has a mineral spring which is used by the pigeons during the spring and summer months when they are nesting and rearing young. Due to urbanization and forest management practices in the region that limit and control native fruit trees, this planting should help contribute and enhance food sources that are critical to pigeons and other wildlife species for years to come. Funding for the planting was provided by the State Migratory Bird Stamp. Tree species planted included serviceberry, pacific crabapple, cascara, red and blue elderberry, and bitter cherry.

Wood Duck Box Installation and Maintenance: Manager Hauswald and Assistant Manager Hand organized and conducted a wood duck nest box work party with the help of Washington Waterfowl Association members this past weekend at Shillapoo and Vancouver Lake Wildlife Area Units. Wood ducks are a cavity nesting species that are dependent on having suitable snag trees, but by installing Wood duck boxes we are able to increase nest site availability, nest success, and increased brood production. The work party was able to clean out and refresh cedar shavings, and make any necessary repairs to a good portion of the 50+ boxes on the Wildlife Area. They also installed nine new boxes which were each bolted on a ten foot piece of tubing and placed out in an open canopy wetland habitat versus mounted on a tree. This approach is designed to decrease nest predation and eliminate the nest boxes from being taken over by non-target birds or mammals.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Fuels Reduction Project: The preparation for this project is being finalized and the contract for Phase I of this project has been awarded to a firm in Yakima. The work is expected to begin in early March.

RMAP: Cowlitz Wildlife Area staff met with Habitat biologist Brummer and DNR Forest Practices Forester Jacobson regarding final RMAP fish barrier issues. A total of eight stations will hopefully be repaired this year to finish all the required RMAP barriers on the unit. Three of the culverts needing to be replaced will need to have stream profiles completed for engineered plans.

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 continued this week. 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.

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 participating in these hunts must 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. 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 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>

Access



Leidle: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes removed a fallen tree and cleaned branches out of the road at the Liedle campground.

Leidle

Beginners Hole and Hand: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes hauled gravel and filled potholes with gravel at the two access sites on the Kalama.



Filling in potholes

Vancouver Lake: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes removed four large garbage bags that were dumped off in and around the restroom. The lower parking lot had a nearly complete V8 engine block dumped there. It didn't appear to be leaking oil and was apparently picked up and salvaged for scrap metal after two days. Staff also cleaned off the ADA walkway.

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

Wildlife Conflict

D-10 Elk Damage: Conflict Specialist Conklin received a call from a farmer in Randle stating she had another herd of 100 elk that joined with the 70 elk normally there. They all have been on her amended pasture grass. Conklin arranged for a Master Hunter to respond but the land owner called back and stated the elk had moved on. In addition, Conklin visited four dairies this week, all having extensive damage due to elk. Permits were issued and DPCA's were renewed.

D-10 Beaver Damage: Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to a call regarding beaver damage to large cotton wood trees near Modrow Bridge on the Kalama River. The reporting party is concerned the trees are going to eventually fall on the bridge and near the public fishing access area. He had tried to work with Cowlitz County on the issue but the County stated the trees are not on their property. Conklin is working with the R5 Access Manager to try and resolve the safety issue.

Beaver damage at Modrow Bridge

D-9 Wildlife Cougar Conflict:

Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald met with a Washougal landowner that had concerns that a cougar was visiting their property. A deer was killed near their front porch then dragged about 250 yards down a hill where it was consumed. After a couple of days a rabbit cage door was found bent open and one rabbit was missing. A trail camera was placed near the open-sided barn where the rabbits are



housed. McDonald provided copies of Living with Cougars for the families in the area and gave general cougar info and safety advice.

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. February temperatures have been above average.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will fluctuate between 3,500 to 9,000 feet during the upcoming week. The 6-10 and the 8-14 day forecast are for below normal temperatures and 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. Snow pack in the region is only 10-20% of normal.

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.

Animal Condition: Animals appear to be in good to fair condition.

Mortality: No mortalities reported 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 continued in District 9 with warming temperatures and no rainfall 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 4,500 feet in most of the South Cascades. The current snow pack in the South Cascades is extremely low and below 30% of normal. Noticeable green up is being seen at all elevations below snowline. Eastern Klickitat County ranchers report green up occurring on open range.

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 other than several road kill deer and one road kill elk on Highway 141 near Trout Lake.

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

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Oregon Spotted Frog: Biologist Tirhi and citizen scientist Bonnie Blessing trained three staff members from Joint Base Lewis McChord, one consultant, and one staff member from Thurston County on conducting Oregon spotted frog surveys at an oviposition (egg laying) site in Thurston County on Salmon Creek. Following training, Tirhi used the participants to do a

complete survey sweep of the extensive wetland in order to document egg deposition. Tirhi also reviewed with the JBLM staff their spotted frog data collection forms and coverage plans for surveys they are conducting at the frog reintroduction site on the base. JBLM staff will be doing surveys several times per week and Tirhi is confident that they have the necessary staff and plans in place to thoroughly cover this year's surveys. Tirhi remains very concerned about statements from JBLM staff that they are not seeing oviposition habitat at JBLM at this time of year (e.g. habitat similar to what they saw during their training day). This will be a point of discussion with a reintroduction technical committee that is forming following the recent annual Oregon spotted frog working group.

Staff from Joint Base Lewis McChord, Thurston County, and a private consulting firm preparing for training for Oregon spotted frog egg mass surveys

Biologist Tirhi spent time searching for new oviposition sites in the Darlin Creek and Fish Pond Creek watersheds.



Biologist Tirhi and staff collected Oregon spotted frog eggs from Beaver Creek, Salmon Creek, and Allen Creek and delivered eggs to Woodland Park Zoo, NW Trek, and Cedar Creek Correctional Center for head-starting. Egg collection and delivery was as follows:

Allen Creek: Collect 20 eggs from 19 egg masses = 380 eggs

Beaver Creek: Collect 20 eggs from 36 egg masses = 720 eggs

Salmon Creek: Collect 20 eggs from 10 egg masses= 200 eggs

Total = 1,300 eggs collected and delivered as follows: WPZ=800 eggs, NW Trek=300 eggs, and Cedar Creek=200 eggs.



*Oregon Spotted Frog egg masses,
Salmon Creek, Thurston County*



*Oregon spotted frog habitat
enhancement treatment plots showing
mowed (green) to un-mowed (yellow)
Reed canary grass infested
wetlands. All oviposition sites in 2015
thus far have been deposited in
treated (mowed) plots.*

Western Pond Turtle: Biologist Tirhi and staff represented District 11 at the annual Western Pond Turtle Working Group meeting. Tirhi presented on the Pierce County reintroduction site productivity for 2014. Included was data staff had collected and analyzed on high soil moisture trends last year that likely resulted in reduced egg hatch rates for 2014 (approximately 33%). Tirhi appreciated the ability to work with partners to focus part of the day on decision making for 2015 and future and part of the day to review results from each of the reintroduction sites and our head-starting facilities.

St. Helen's Elk Collaring: Biologist Murphie assisted Region 5 and HQ staff in collaring cow elk from the St. Helen's herd as part of a study to assess the potential effects of *Treponema* associated hoof disease on elk population dynamics. Biologist Murphie provided aerial darter training to Elk Specialist Hoenes and assisted in the initial handling of immobilized cow elk. Murphie reports a total of 28 cows were processed while he was assisting. Collaring continues...



This photo was taken as staff rolled in to dart a cow elk during the Mount St. Helen's elk capture



With Mount St. Helens in the background, a cow elk lays immobilized prior to processing

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

Wildlife Management

General Goose Surveys: Biologist Sundstrom completed her portion of Pacific County and all of Grays Harbor County locations for February's general/Dusky goose surveys. Twenty-six major areas were found to have geese.

Date: 2/17/15	Species													Totals		
	Cackler	# Banded	Alentian	# Banded	Tav/Lesser	# Banded	Dusky	# Banded	Western	# Banded	Vancouver	# Banded	GWF		Snow	Unknown/Other
Grays Harbor County	59	0	0	0	882	0	508	5	699	0	0	0	43	2	943	3,136
North Pacific County	746	0	0	0	736	0	2,370	18	43	0	8	0	0	0	1,280	5,183
Totals:	805	0	0	0	1,618	0	2,878	23	742	0	8	0	43	2	2,223	8,319

The number of Dusky geese was up significantly since the January survey (1,739) and the number of collared Dusky geese increased from seven observations in January to twenty-three in February.

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



Private Lands /Conflict

Potential Bear Damage: Biologist Harris received a call from a small forest landowner this week who found what he believed was recent bear damage on his property. Biologist Harris requested a picture. The picture was sent and the damage appears to be from a porcupine. The landholder was advised on how to resolve the problem.

Porcupine damage