

# Wildlife Program

Week of August 15 – August 21, 2016

## **WOLF ACTIVITIES**

### **Region 3 Wolf Activities**

**Ragbox:** Range Rider McBride checked the ragbox on the Swauk permit range operation. The operator designed a carrier for the ragbox, which greatly improves the mobility of the unit.

*Mobile ragbox carrier designed by producer to help keep ragbox near bedded sheep*



### **Region 5 Wolf Activities**

**Wolves:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin worked in Region 2 last week to learn more about wolves. She worked with range riders on horseback and worked with Conflict Specialist Heilhecker to attempt to find signs of the Lookout wolf pack.

*Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin and her mode of transportation on the range in Region 2*



## **REGION 1**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Pre-Season Deer Surveys:** Biologists Atamian and Lowe conducted road-based deer surveys in GMUs 124, 136, and 139 to classify does, fawns, and bucks pre-hunt, focusing on buck to doe ratios. Surveys will continue through August and will be repeated again in September to obtain fawn to doe ratios.



*Mule deer buck spotted during early morning herd composition survey*



*Group of mule deer does and fawns on an evening composition survey*

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

**Summer Deer Surveys:** District Biologist Annemarie Prince teamed with Department staff members from other sections this week in continuing summer deer counts on both traditional and standardized survey transects within District 1. As of this week’s end, 17 of 20 routes to be covered this month have been surveyed. Both white-tailed and mule deer were observed, with classifications made for doe, fawn, and buck deer, including antler point category and age class on bucks.

**RGWA Recreational Users:** While painting leave trees for the Phase 2 forest improvement thinning at Rustlers Gulch Wildlife Area, Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer had the opportunity to visit with two horseback riders. Recreational users are usually inquisitive about the project, wanting to know why we are thinning portions of the wildlife area. Palmer has heard mixed opinions at the beginning of such conversations, but once folks have heard the reasoning and goals for managing this particular forest for the benefit of the forest’s health and wildlife habitat it provides, they tend to be supportive. The two ladies pictured were very supportive of the thinning, looking forward to the increased visibility that opening up the overstocked portions of the forest will provide. The lady on the right has been riding in this area since the late 70s, having had permission from the previous owner group. She now rides on the wildlife area weekly and expressed her gratitude to Palmer for WDFW’s management of the land and providing for public access.



## **REGION 2**

No report submitted this week.

## **REGION 3**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Wenas Wildlife Area:** Natural Resource Technician Kass sent photos to WSU Extension's bio-control specialist, Jennifer Andreas, of what appears to be use by Russian knapweed gall midge (*jaapiella ivannikovi*). There haven't been any releases of the midge on the wildlife area until this summer, so if it is the gall midge, it had to come from a weed board release that occurred several miles away.



#### ***Russian knapweed gall midge?***

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman attended a contractor site visit with Yakama Nation to look at wood removal sites in Oak Creek. The project for flood plain restoration on SF Cowiche Creek was re-advertised this time with the contractor supplying the wood and Oak Creek as a potential source. More contractors attended the site visit this time and seemed interested in the project.

**Emerick Grazing Lease:** Manager Huffman completed the post-growing season range monitoring for the Emerick grazing lease. Grass regrowth after grazing was very good, with grasses showing little sign of use. Russian thistle has appeared in the area. A plan for control will be developed for next season.

*Good bunchgrass regrowth following grazing on the Worrell Ranch this spring. This site burned in 2010 and is showing good recovery of grasses and shrubs. However, Russian thistle has moved into some areas and will need to be controlled.*



**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Hunt checked out the Tuesday, August 16 fire to the south of the Whiskey Dick Unit. It began with a mid-afternoon I-90 car fire that quickly spread into shrub steppe between I-90 and Vantage Highway, primarily on the Vantage Wind Power Project owned by Invenergy and adjacent rangeland. The fire headed toward WDFW and Parks land, but never really got close. County fire districts and DNR stopped it at about 400 acres.

**Weed Spraying:** Natural Resource Technician Hill sprayed a few trouble spots along Green Gate roads and at select springs. He was fighting Russian thistle, spiny cocklebur, common cocklebur, musk thistle, and prickly lettuce.



*Musk thistle in Green Gate*



*Spiny cocklebur at Double Trough Spring in Green Gate*



**Canada Thistle:** Natural Resource Technician Hill sprayed Canada thistle up Watt Canyon Road. The thistle has diminished from previous years so it seems like the herbicide is doing a good job.

*Canada thistle just off of Watt Canyon Road*

## **Wildlife Management**

**Bat Survey:** District Biologist Fidorra continued the WDFW bat survey. He placed acoustic bat detectors at sites in Districts 4 and 5 and coordinated with District 5 Assistant Biologist Rowan to relocate detectors near the Ephrata office. Fidorra is placing detectors at eight sites and will repeat recording protocols at each site monthly through the end of August.

**Duck Banding:** District Biologist Fidorra set and baited duck traps and worked with Private Lands Biologist Stutzman and a volunteer to band mallards on the Bailie and Mesa units of the Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area. The team had a great day, with 121 mallards captured in



four traps. Most were hatch-year birds, meaning this season has seen good production. One mallard was a hatch-year recapture that had been banded near Gloyd, WA in Region 2 earlier in August. This brings the District 4 total to 152 new mallard bands and five teal bands placed.

*One of the five green-winged teal banded at the Bailie Youth Ranch this week*

**Monarch and Milkweed Surveys:** District Biologist Fidorra conducted monarch and milkweed surveys in Franklin County. He was able to locate several larger patches of showy milkweed and observed monarch butterflies at patches on the Mesa Unit of the Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area.

**Conservation Biology Guest Lecture:** District Biologist Fidorra coordinated with faculty at WSU Tri-Cities to be a guest lecturer for the Conservation Biology course in September.

**Duck Traps:** Private Lands Biologist Stutzman baited the four duck traps on Thursday and Friday in preparation for trapping this week.

**SAFE:** Private Lands Biologist Stutzman met with a Benton County landowner to go over his SAFE conservation plan and have him sign it.

**Milkweed/Monarch Butterfly Survey:** Biologist Bernatowicz spent a day documenting milkweed patches and looking for monarch butterflies on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area. Only a portion of the numerous milkweed patches could be documented in one day. A few monarch butterflies were seen. While milkweed was still flowering in some locations, the pollinators were attracted to the various non-natives.



*Monarch butterfly feeding in a patch of non-native Aster*

**Western Gray Squirrel Survey:** Biologist Bernatowicz ran five tube survey transects. There was no sign of western gray squirrels. This would have been the last check for all transects this year, but one area was burned in a USFS prescribed fire. All five tubes were eventually burned. The burned-out transect has been re-set and will be run one more time.

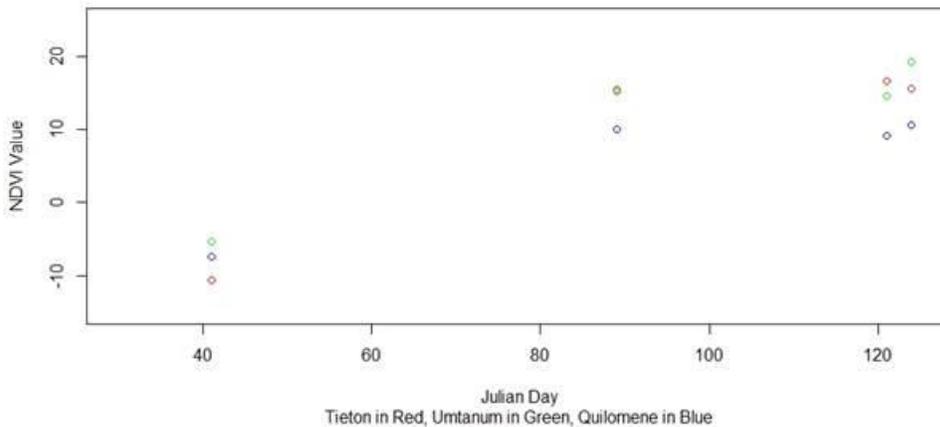
***Remains of tube burned in prescribed fire***

**Waterfowl Banding:** Biologist Bernatowicz banded one day with the help Washington Waterfowl Association volunteers. About 30 new bands were deployed.

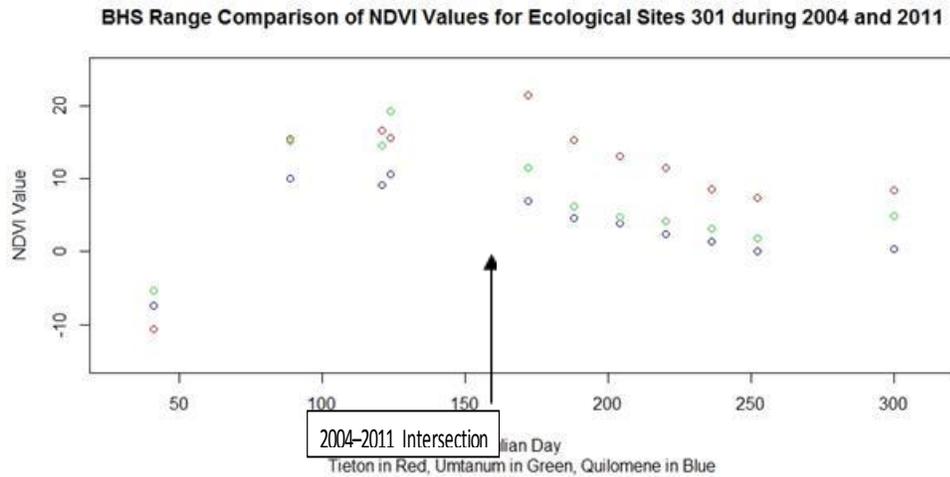
**Bighorn Sheep Home Range Analysis:** The first round of Landsat 5 data collection was lacking any cloud free information for District 8 bighorn sheep ranges during the winter and early spring of 2011. This data gap made it difficult to understand the timing and magnitude of green-up across each herd’s range. After searching back through the Landsat Archive, three scenes during 2004 were found. These data presented a similar result to 2011, suggesting that ecological site R008XY301WA (301) had higher NDVI values in the Teton and Umtanum as compared to the Quilomene during late winter and early spring of 2004. Continued analysis is needed to determine if these differences are significant.



**BHS Range Comparison of NDVI Values for Ecological Sites 301 during 2004**



Biologist Moore also attempted to find an intersection between 2004 and 2011 in hopes to discern how similar the vegetation's chronology was during these two years. The second graph below combines data from 2004 and 2011 and has scenes collected on April 30, 2004 (Julian Day 121) and May 4, 2011 (Julian Day 124). Overall, these two years appear similar.



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

**Wenas Wildlife Area**

**Fio Rito Access:** Access Manager Garcia reopened Fio Rito to public access on August 16, 2016. It had been closed since July 27, when the Department of Health found unhealthy levels of blue green algae in the pond.

**Trash Pickup:** Natural Resource Worker Barbosa worked with the Yakima County Juvenile Court to meet up with eight kids and pick up 600 pounds of trash in the lower valley on Thursday.



*Garbage removed from Lower Valley sites by juvenile court volunteers*

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman worked on ordering Discover Pass day use envelopes for use at Oak Creek. Assistant Manager Berry and Natural Resource Worker Farias removed an unused and damaged kiosk on the Cowiche Unit that had been installed by an Eagle Scout several years ago. The kiosk was repaired and will be installed in the HQ parking lot as the Discover Pass Pay Station.

**Discover Pass:** Manager Huffman met with Sergeant Grant to discuss options for Discover Pass education and enforcement at Oak Creek this winter. Many good ideas were discussed but further discussion is needed to make things as simple as possible for both personnel and the public.

**Access:** Assistant Manager Berry and Natural Resource Worker Farias cleaned multiple Tieton River access sites. Weekend camping left major trash piles, and with no bathroom facilities there is an ever growing sanitation issue at these areas. Nasty!



*Tires dumped at an access site along the Tieton River*

***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:** Manager Huffman and Forester Mackey prepared for a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) work party on Friday. Huffman printed off sign in and safety materials and Mackey gathered up tools and equipment. The 25 volunteers spent the day thinning and piling trees on the Oak Creek Unit. The crew wrapped up work at 1:00, when chainsaw work needed to be completed, and had lunch. Volunteers then hiked to the aspen exclosure fence constructed two years ago in the area. The fence was in good shape and there were several aspen shoots growing in the exclosure. The RMEF volunteers are a great group year after year.

***Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) volunteers thinning trees and piling brush on Oak Creek***





*Before and after pictures of ladder fuels removed from around a large ponderosa pine tree on Oak Creek*



*Aspen regeneration in a decadent aspen stand. Conifers were removed and a buck and rail fence were constructed two years ago by RMEF volunteers*

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:** Manager Buser responded to a request from a neighboring landowner to the Esquatzel Coulee Unit. The landowner is having a dispute with the railroad regarding access to his property and would like temporary access through the Esquatzel Unit. His request has been referred to the Bureau of Reclamation.

### Wildlife Management

**Rattlesnake Mountain Elk Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand conducted elk damage assessments in wheat crops on Rattlesnake Mountain with landowners and crop adjusters. Wheat harvest should be wrapped up this next week barring equipment breakdowns or weather delays. Heavy damage has occurred in a few fields, primarily from elk leaving the burned areas of Hanford to forage in wheat.



***Elk damage in wheat***

**Elk Fencing:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand assisted with the design and construction of an elk exclusionary fence at an orchard and row crop farm near Rattlesnake Mountain.



***Exclusionary fence construction***



***Electrified fladry in a high value orchard***

**Elk Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand followed up with an elk damage complaint of bull elk (<10) in a corn circle in the Horn Rapids area. Hazing with pyrotechnics has been effective and damage was reportedly minimized.

**Landowner Hunt Permits:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to coordinate with landowner hunting permit managers at Blackrock and Silver Dollar on scheduling hunting opportunity. No elk have been observed in the Blackrock area since the area burned in the Range 12 Fire.

**Elk Hazing:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel hazed and herded a large group of elk from a cut alfalfa field. The elk were herded on three separate days, but each time avoided the elk fence return gates and open herding gates, proving once again that you can chase an elk anywhere it wants to go.

***Elk actively avoiding herding efforts to move them back onto the wildlife area***



Volunteers helped construct a set of new elk herding gates in a strategic section of L.T. Murray elk fence near Catlin Canyon. More fence work is needed, but the gates are ready for use.



*New elk flushing gates at Catlin Canyon*



*Elk drift fence partially completed in Catlin Canyon*

**Elk Fighting:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel was called by a hay grower in Cle Elum that had several bulls coming into his new planting at night. Several bulls could be heard and observed fighting during the night, and one bull was killed while fighting. The landowner called Conflict Specialist Wetzel to remove the carcass. A necropsy showed several minor wounds and one fatal puncture to the high right lung area. There was internal hemorrhaging with no other injuries or bullet wounds.

*Bull elk killed while sparring in a hay field near Big Creek*



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

### Wildlife Areas

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Sak and Natural Resource Technician Medina worked on the pivot in “Billy’s Field”. The pivot had a drive line and a flat tire that had to be replaced. Assistant Manager Sak also worked on the electrical motor that drives one of the pivot towers, as it was not working properly. Sak took it apart and got it working again.

**LT Murray Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Hunt visited the site of the planned solar powered creek fence/crossing structure, which is part of the ongoing cooperative Heart K project on USBR land at the mouth of Taneum Canyon. The USBR crew did an extremely professional job on the supports for the cable and chain on either side of Taneum Creek. Hunt is also working with Lisa Nelson and other Olympia staff members to set up tracking and billing for our RMEF grant, which pays for the WCC time on the elk exclosures associated with the project. He and Manager Babik will confer with RMEF Missoula next week and meet in the field with Jeanne Demorest, USBR Project Manager.



*North bank Taneum Creek structure*



*South bank Taneum Creek structure*

## **REGION 4**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Cascades Frog and Prohibited American Bullfrog Survey Effort with USFS:** District 12 and USFS North Bend Ranger District Biologist Paz made an overnight backcountry effort in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness area to collect Cascades frog genetic samples for WDFW. While they were out, they followed up on USFS wilderness ranger reports of supposed bucket dumped bullfrogs in a lake. No bullfrogs were located, but advantageous documentation of western toadlet emergence and numerous adult western toads were witnessed.

This species is called out as sensitive to climate change, UV radiation, population isolation, pathogens, and other factors. There is ongoing interest, research, and concern over this regarding their management. Further genetic investigations of potential distinct population segments in this species are ongoing, as their populations in initial investigations show some subpopulation isolation throughout their range. This is important to their status in Washington and throughout their known range in regards to management implications (e.g. should taxonomic changes be in order?). All of this plays into management assessment and conservation of this species, which is under pressure due to pathogens and climate change susceptibility.

Climate change is the number one management concern for wildlife populations and habitat called out in the WDFW State Wildlife Action Plan.

This Federal Candidate Species is currently under review for federal Endangered or Threatened listing due to petitioned efforts, and it has been found appropriate to continue a thorough review of the species to assess if listing is appropriate. More information can be found online at <http://ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/profile/speciesProfile?spscode=D02E>.



*A Cascades frog* – Photo by Monty Larson, USFS



*District 12 staff processing Cascades frog samples for genetic work* – Photo by S. Paz, USFS

### **Wildlife Management**

**White-Nose Syndrome in Bats:** District 12 continued acoustic efforts throughout the Snoqualmie Valley (Cherry Valley WMU). District 12 participated in orientation and planning meetings in Olympia HQ in order to devise plans for bat efforts/white-nose syndrome surveillance from fall 2016 to spring 2017 and meet/greet our new White-nose Syndrome Coordinator, Abby Tobin. Welcome, Abby! District 12 passed off specimens of bats and guano/environmental substrate from King County to Fish and Wildlife Veterinarian Haman. District 12 retained sampling materials for Region 4 staff members (as well as avian influenza materials for District 14). All have been dispersed appropriately.

District 12 participated in internal conferences and a review of a proposal for environmental work this fall/spring. Staff members participated in conferences regarding ongoing planning and immediate priorities for fall and spring 2016-17. District 12 continues to communicate with landowners and media regarding ongoing efforts, bats on their lands (e.g. newly reported maternity colonies and results of analyses to confirm species), and more.

District 12 collaborated with Bats Northwest for their August Bat Walk at Green Lake. They passed out over 50 WDFW white-nose syndrome flyers and provided outreach on Washington bats in general, white-nose syndrome concerns, and management needs to attendees. The audience included about 60 adults and 20 children of various ages, plus some bats with a great performance for all. One more walk will be held here in September for those interested. For more information, go online at <http://www.batsnorthwest.org/events.html>.



*Dr. John Bassett of Bats Northwest promoting bat conservation to the beginnings of an evening group ready to see some bats – Photo by Anderson*

WDFW and collaborators are asking the public to report dead or dying/sick bats via our hotline. Decontamination is essential to assist in management of this pathogen, particularly in the research, management, and recreationist

communities, including caving, climbing, and canyoneering. Report dead or dying/sick bats at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/wns/>.

More information can be found at <https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/>

**Common Loon:** Biologist Smith surveyed District 12 for loon activity. One chick was noted at an area lake. All other known nesting attempts in the district this season are believed to have failed.



*Adult loon with a two month old chick on a lake in District 12*

**Scoter Surveys:** Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn surveyed for moulting scoters in Bellingham and Chuckanut bays as part of an ongoing effort led by Waterfowl Specialist Evenson. They were joined briefly by a pod of common dolphins, a rare sight in the Salish Sea.



*Common dolphins in Bellingham Bay*

**Waterfowl Trapping:** Biologist DeBruyn began trapping waterfowl for avian influenza sampling and banding. Hot, dry conditions resulted in few captures.

**Mountain Goat Survey Analysis:**

District 13 corrected problems getting the software to run and began entering data for analyzing the results of July's mountain goat surveys.

**Avian Response to Estuary Restoration Research Proposal:** District 13 worked with partners on the development of a grant proposal to study birds relative to estuary restorations occurring in the Skagit and Stillaguamish systems.

**Marine Waterfowl Molt Survey:** District 13 completed one segment of the molting marine waterfowl survey. Areas with molting concentrations located during last summer’s survey of all marine waters or from earlier telemetry studies are being revisited to photo survey flocks for species, sex, and age determinations. Additional areas will be surveyed in coming weeks.

*Molting flock of surf scoters in northern Puget Sound*

**Wildlife Areas**

**Stillwater Unit:** Mowing continued at the Stillwater Unit in preparation for hunting season.



**Estuary Restoration:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm joined other WDFW staff members and restoration partners to discuss future estuary restoration options and issues. Manager Boehm’s interests include potential restoration opportunities at the Spencer and Ebey Island units.

**Leque Island Preliminary Design Meeting:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw and the Leque Island Project Team met with the City of Stanwood, Stillaguamish Flood Control District, and Stillaguamish Tribe consultants to review the preliminary design for Leque Island and to evaluate modeling results that were recently generated by Pacific Northwest National Laboratories. At the close of the meeting, the group decided to modify the preliminary design by removing the training dike feature because the model did not show that it provided additional protection to surrounding infrastructure. Further modeling in the next design phase will further evaluate how the area is expected to change following the project.

**Estuary Restoration Stewardship Proposal:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw and other Wildlife Program staff members met with The Nature Conservancy, Stillaguamish Tribe, and Snohomish County to develop and coordinate a grant application that proposes to develop a stewardship account for estuary projects that can be shared among project sponsors to manage restoration sites. The group also discussed developing a “risk contingency account” to be used to repair damage if a restoration project does not perform as expected and has consequences on neighboring land. WDFW will use feedback from this meeting to apply for a grant due on August 31.

**Snohomish Estuary Communications Meeting:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw attended a meeting with WDFW Habitat staff members and other groups working on restoration projects in the Snohomish delta to develop a communications plan.

**Fir Island Farms Data Logger Check:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw checked on data loggers at the Fir Island Farm estuary restoration site to confirm they are functioning properly.



***Restoration area of the Fir Island Farm site 18 days after the dike breach***

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Hunting Questions:** Numerous questions were answered as hunting season approaches. One gentleman was shifted among several government offices before landing on the La Conner field office doorstep to get his questions answered. New to Washington, he was unsure about where to get maps and information as he begins to plan his hunts. District 13 helped him navigate through our regional office structure, GoHunt, and the Hunting Prospects, and answered most of his immediate questions.

**Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Travel Management Plan:** District 14 worked with successfully drawn goat hunters to explore access options for the upcoming hunting season. There are numerous questions regarding road closures in the area.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Crescent Lake Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with volunteers to continue internal access road and trail improvements at this unit. Truckloads of wood chips are being donated and delivered by a local land clearing business. The chips will form a base on the roads to allow vehicle traffic during the fall and winter season.

**Lake Terrell Bass Fishing Tournament Reschedule:** Manager Kessler worked with the representative from the Borderline Bassin Contenders bass fishing club to reschedule the last tournament of the year at Lake Terrell. The tournament had been scheduled for the same day as the Youth Waterfowl season opener. It has now been rescheduled for September 3, the Saturday of the Labor Day weekend. It is expected that there will be a very large turnout for the tournament.

**Lake Terrell Pheasant Delivery:** Manager Kessler received the first batch of pheasants from the Bob Oke Game Farm in Centralia. There were 315 birds were released into the pheasant pens, where they will be fed and watered until the start of the youth hunting season on September 17. He purchased a pallet of scratch grains, which Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo unloaded and filled all the feeders with.

**Lake Terrell Unit Reed Canary Grass Control:** Manager Kessler mowed reed canary grass on the Lake Terrell Unit. Repeated mowing of reed canary grass helps to weaken it and minimize its spread on the wildlife area unit.

**Skagit Wildlife Area:** Meis and Cosgrove prepared pheasant feeders and waters for the early delivery of pheasants that arrived on Tuesday. Meis and Cosgrove assisted with the unloading of pheasants.

**Game Reserve Signs:** Cosgrove picked up litter and posted a missing Game Reserve sign at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit. Meis and Cosgrove finished building a temporary duck blind in the #2 field corn on the Island Unit.

### **Private Lands/Access Management**

**Migratory Bird Enhancement Forage Enhancement Projects:** Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo checked the growth of migratory bird forage enhancement plots in Whatcom and Skagit counties. The plantings looked positive, and there is plenty of growth in the barley, with excellent coverage in a variety of fields on or surrounding current quality hunt fields.

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo prepared materials for permanent blinds in Whatcom County using cut and bundled canary grass. They also constructed one new replacement permanent blind in Whatcom. Otto and Deyo met with a new landowner to discuss a property being enrolled in the waterfowl hunting program. Further discussions will take place, but there is a possibility to have two new Snohomish County quality properties available this year. Otto and Deyo built a footbridge across a field ditch at a Whatcom County hunt unit. This bridge will help with better access to the unit.



*Permanent Blind Frame*



*Finished permanent blind frame with natural grass camouflage added*

*Newly constructed footbridge for waterfowl quality hunt site access*

**Wildlife Viewing and Diversity Management:** Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell coordinated with three separate landowners about wildlife viewing access in Region 4. Biologist Caldwell conducted site evaluations at each site. One of the three sites will be enrolled starting February 1, 2017. This site offers extremely high quality wildlife viewing opportunities, and it is sought after for its premier location and accessibility to observe migratory birds. In addition, this site may also double as a waterfowl hunting site in the future and possibly offer access for persons with disabilities. For more information, contact Cole Caldwell or Rob Wingard at WDFW.



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

**Wildlife Management**

**Mountain Goats:** District 14 worked with Special Section Lead Harris to respond to numerous media requests regarding the large group of mountain goats photographed by WDFW personnel on the Mt. Baker goat survey.

**Wildlife Conflict:** Biologist Smith completed a field visit to Vashon Island in response to complaints of deer circumventing a seven and a half foot net fence to get at cider apples. Evidence of deer damage was documented, but repairs to the fence had been completed (as well as pruning of trees). General season hunting regulations were discussed and the landowner will be allowing access to specified hunters during those times. Smith also responded to a call of deer damaging ornamentals and elk trampling new plantings in the Green Valley area. The rules pertaining to elk damage prevention permits were explained and a general season deer opportunity will be made available to a local hunter(s). In addition, volunteers were coordinated to assist a landowner in the Auburn area with converting a seven and a half foot wood and wire fence to electric to exclude elk from entering vegetable crops. Smith also toured the Enumclaw area with Region 6 conflict staff members to determine locations that may be suitable for deployment of Master Hunters to assist with elk damage reduction in the area. Maintenance and repairs were also made to electrified fladry elk exclusion fences in the area.

**Ungulate Conflict:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman responded to Whatcom County to remove a deceased deer from a private residence. The deer had been struck by a vehicle and wandered onto the property where it died. Natural Resource Technician Cogdal and Witman performed maintenance on several fladry fences in the Day Creek area of Skagit County. While

conducting maintenance, high elk activity in the area was observed. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell coordinated with regional and Olympia staff members on elk management documents. These documents will proactively support current and future management objectives.



*Natural Resource Technician Cogdal and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman completed an additional section of an elk exclusionary fence in the Birdsvie area of Skagit County. The remainder of the fencing project should be completed by next week.*



*Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman responded to the Rockport area of Skagit County for a report of elk damage to agricultural crops and a garden area. The landowner was consulted on what preventative measures he can take to address the problem.*

## **Wildlife Areas**

**Wildlife Area Planning Process:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm participated in core team conference calls to discuss and plan next steps for the planning process. Manager Boehm also traveled to attend meetings related to dog use at wildlife areas and how this is linked to the greater Wildlife Area Management Plan update process currently under way. Manager Boehm also toured the Scatter Creek dog training area and learned of the process they use for scheduling dog training events.

**Public Outreach:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm and the Olympia planning team facilitated in a sub-group public meeting that focuses on dog training.

**Volunteer Opportunities:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with a volunteer to clear blackberry and overgrown shrubs along a service road at the Cherry Valley Unit. The road was graded to allow for gravel to be added to the surface to keep the road

passable during the hunting season. Manager Boehm also coordinated with eagle scouts and volunteers to improve trails and infrastructure at the Corson Wildlife Preserve this past weekend.

**Fir Island Farm:** Manager Rotton attended the Fir Island Farm weekly construction meeting. The project contractor is continuing to work on the dike demolition and tide gate repair. Work items are on schedule and they will begin the final construction aspects before leaving the site late in October.

**Skagit Headquarters:** Manager Rotton is coordinating with representatives from Skagit Audubon who have requested a presentation on the Fir Island Farm Project for their September meeting.

**Site Preparation:** Wildlife area staff members assisted with site preparation (installation of silt fencing, turbidity curtain, and monitoring project for the annual Headquarters boat launch dredging project). Cosgrove assisted the contractor by using the John Deere 5300 front end loader and box scraper to clean upper areas of the ramp and around the spoil pile. Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove mowed dike top trails at the Headquarters Unit and the entrance road shoulders and parking area at the Jensen Access. The entry road and dike top trail shoulders were mowed by a local vendor to keep vegetation back and improve visibility. Manager Rotton and Habitat Biologist Jenna Friebel met with the Dike District #17 permitting and project coordinator to discuss the Big Ditch Tidegate Repair Project. The district has begun work on the project and the site will be closed to public access until the work is completed.

**Samish Unit:** Meis continued to mow ponds and field edges to control noxious weeds within the unit. Manager Rotton attended a tour with Ducks Unlimited and a local contractor to provide an estimate on retrofits for the Samish Wetland Enhancement project.

**Island Unit:** Cosgrove coordinated with volunteers for a planned ferry operation next Monday to take dike and field mowers to the Island Unit. Cosgrove prepared barge and push boats and John Deere 5300 with brush-hog.

### **Private Lands/Access Management**

**418/4941 Special Elk Permit Hunts:** Private Lands Biologists and Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell met with a state raffle tag winner to discuss elk hunting access in GMU 418. Access materials were provided to the individual.

**Private Land Access Program Enrollment and Contracts:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard and Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell coordinated, prepared, and finalized contracts for the Westside Pheasant Release Program, Elk quality hunt access in GMU 407, and waterfowl quality hunt program access within the region.

### **Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator**

**Hunter Education Instructor Support:** Hunter Education Coordinator Steven Dazey activated four new hunter education classes in Region 4.

## Master Hunter Volunteer Support

**Overview:** Volunteer Coordinator Dazey and Region 3 Volunteer Coordinator Garcia met with eastern Washington wildlife area managers and conflict specialists to develop volunteer projects for Master Hunters and Master Hunter applicants. A comprehensive list of wants and needs was developed. While many of the needs from wildlife area to wildlife area were the same, there were also many area-specific wants identified.



**Day 1:** Dazey and Garcia met with Kari Dingman at the Wooten Wildlife Area and then traveled to Spokane to meet with Candice Bennett and super volunteer Mike Britain.

**Day 2:** The day started with a meeting with Juli Anderson, Daniel Dziekan, Mike Finch, and Daro Palmer, all of whom represented Region 1 wildlife areas. After that, it was off to Scotch Creek Wildlife Area. Day 2 ended with a trip to the Methow Wildlife Area and a meeting with Brandon Troyer.



*Note charring on the wildlife area sign from wildland fire*



*Volunteer Coordinator Garcia and Wildlife Area Acting Manager Brandon Troyer discussing projects at the Methow shooting range*



**Day 3:** Day three started at the Omak fish hatchery with Conflict Specialist Ellen Heilhecker and Wildlife Area Managers Dan Peterson and Ron Fox. Again, many good projects were discussed.

**Day 4:** Day four started at the Wenatchee district office and ended in Ellensburg, with a stop at the Region 2 headquarters in Ephrata to meet with Nick Bechtold, Chad Eidson, Ryan Stutzman, and Sean Dougherty.

*Volunteer Coordinator Garcia at the Region 2 office*

**Day 5:** Day five was spent in Ellensburg with a hunter education staff meeting prior to the Instructor Advisory Meeting.



**Day 6:** Day six was spent in Ellensburg, where the new IAC members were welcomed and a presentation of plaques of appreciation to the outgoing IAC members was conducted.

## **REGION 5**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Sandhill Crane Survey:** Wildlife Biologist Anderson completed the final survey for sandhill crane nesting at the DNR Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve. Both adult cranes were observed with a fledged colt. This is the second time in four years that cranes have fledged young from this site.



#### ***Adult sandhill crane on Trout Lake***

**Mourning Dove Banding:** Biologists Hand and Stephens continued to trap and band mourning doves this week on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. A total of 127 doves have been banded over the past few weeks, most of which have been hatch year birds.



#### ***Mourning dove banding***

#### **Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area**

**Hoffstadt Field Mowing:** Assistant Manager Sample completed mowing four fields in the Hoffstadt Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area to promote new grass growth for elk and deer forage. The four fields total about five acres. A cow elk was seen while mowing, as well as a possible cascades frog and numerous black and yellow garden spiders, some of which were close to two inches long!



*Hoffstadt Unit, Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area  
field mowing*



*Black and yellow garden spider  
in tractor bucket*

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

### **Private Lands**

**Damage Contracts:** Biologist Meyer spoke with three different landowners about DPCA contracts for the coming year, and with another landowner about scheduling a visit for next week to check out her deer damage.

### **Access**

**Langsdorf Landing:** The vehicle counter at Langsdorf Landing showed an average of 6,331 vehicles per month in 2016, with an average of 211 vehicles per day driving into the site. This count doesn't include vehicles parked in the overflow lot across the street.

**High Use:** Access sites across Region 5 continue to be heavily used. Access staff members Spangler and Rhodes are hauling away very large amounts of trash and trying to keep up with the high use.

**Oneida Boat Ramp:** Use is high at this site, and Access staff members Spangler and Rhodes posted a warning sign about a drop off at the end of the ramp when launching at low tides. There is a mud flat beyond the end of the boat ramp that trailers can sink into if boaters back down too far.

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

### **Wildlife Conflict**

**Osprey:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin received a report of an injured osprey on the Kalama River. Fisheries Technician Stalter stayed by the bird until Conklin could arrive. Together the two were able to apprehend the osprey. It had fishing line tangled in its

talons and legs and appeared to be very lethargic. Conklin transferred the osprey to Ocean Beach Veterinary Clinic, where it was assessed for other injuries. The osprey was transferred to Audubon for further rehabilitation. The Clinic reported the bird was very weak and had an infestation of mites, but believed it had a good prognosis. Special thanks to WDFW Fisheries Technician Stalter for reporting the injured bird and assisting Conklin in the capture.



*Injured osprey on the shore of the Kalama River and fishing line and debris taken off talons and legs of osprey*

**Bobcat:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to a call about a bobcat that was living inside a wood shed in the Kalama area. This is in the same area where several depredations had taken place a month earlier. Conklin removed pieces of plywood from the trusses of the wood shed, so there was no place for an animal to perch. Conklin found remnants of birds up in the rafters of the shed. She installed a trail camera and a fox light to see if the light would scare away the cat. If the cat continues to use the shed, the large openings on the building will be fenced off so the cat can no longer get inside.

### **District 9 Wildlife Conflict**

**Elk Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to a tree farm in Amboy reporting elk damage to trees. Conklin will do a site visit on the farm next week to see how best to address the damage.

**Deer Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to an owner of a tree farm in the Lyle area who is experiencing heavy deer damage on his seedling trees in the winter months. Conklin and the landowner will work together when he begins getting damage. The landowner offers public hunting access, and Conklin will also deploy damage pool hunters to the area this winter to assist him.

## **District 10 Wildlife Conflict**

**Elk Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin deployed a master hunter to hunt a farm in Randle experiencing elk damage. The hunter harvested the first day and the elk have not returned since.

**Tree Farm:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin met with a landowner experiencing damage from elk to his tree farm and plant nursery.

**Crop Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin met with a farmer in the Boistfort Valley experiencing damage from elk to hay and other crops. Damage permits were issued to the farm.

### ***Baling hay from a harvested pea crop in Boistfort Valley***

**Elk Conflict:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin met with a landowner in Mineral who has had his bee hives, apple trees, and garden damaged from elk. Fencing options were discussed, as well as using a scented repellent on his vegetation.



**Cougar:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin met with a landowner in Morton concerned with a possible cougar attacking his horses. Conklin could not find any evidence of cougar on the property and the injuries to the horses were very minor.

## **REGION 6**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Western Pond Turtle Trapping:** Biologists Tirhi and Butler conducted western pond turtle trapping at the Pierce County pond turtle recovery site this week. This trapping effort focused on trapping turtles with shell disease for possible treatment at PAWS. A total of 23 turtles with shell disease ranging from severe to mild were transported to PAWS. Veterinary staff members will examine each turtle and CT scans will be conducted to determine the best candidates for treatment. Twelve turtles will be selected to undergo treatment and the remaining 11 will be brought back to the Pierce County pond turtle recovery site and released.

**Recognizing 25 Years of Recovery Efforts:** District 11 hosted the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary event of the Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project. The event included personnel from Woodland Park Zoo, WDFW, Representative Joe Fitzgibbon, and My-Le Tang from Representative Jake Fey's office (member of the House Environment Committee). Approximately 50 participants toured the

recovery ponds, watched a slide presentation overview of the recovery program, viewed basking turtles, and assisted with the release of the 2016 one-year old head started turtles (N=47).

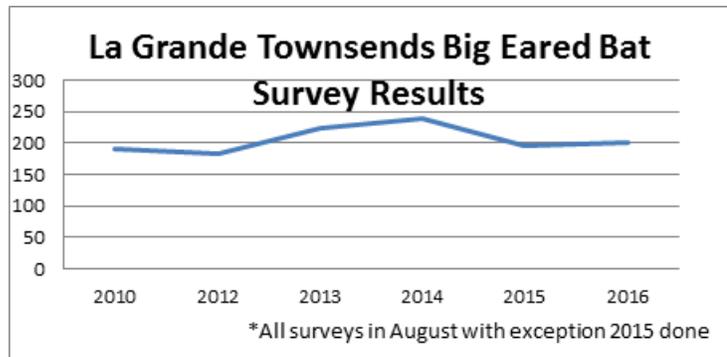
The press release can be seen at the below links:

- <http://www.seattletimes.com/photo-video/zoo-effort-helping-turtles-back-from-brink/>
- <http://www.king5.com/news/local/seattle/endangered-washington-turtles-released-into-the-wild/296100291>
- <http://seattlerefined.com/lifestyle/photos-woodland-park-zoo-releases-endangered-turtles-to-the-wild>

In celebration of 25 years of collaborative efforts to restore the population in Washington State, Governor Jay Inslee has proclaimed August 7–13, 2016 as the “*Western Pond Turtle Recovery Project 25-Year Anniversary.*”

Biologist Tirhi also hosted the Woodland Park Zoo’s Advanced Inquiry Master’s Program students to the Pierce County recovery site. The students were given a presentation on the program, toured the recovery ponds, and assisted with deploying equipment for trapping turtles for ulcerative shell disease monitoring and treatment.

**Townsend’s Big Eared Bat:** Biologist Tirhi conducted the annual Townsend’s bat exit survey at the La Grande maternity colony. The survey was done with the assistance of Tacoma Power, who own the structure used by the bats. A total of 200 bats were counted over the 1.11 hour survey. Monitoring bat colonies is an important indicator of bat stability in Washington, particularly in regards to the recent discovery of white-nose syndrome in western Washington.





*La Grande Townsends Big Eared Bat maternity colony entrance*

**Potential Property for Wildlife:** Biologist Michaelis and Wildlife Area Manager Gerchak looked at property in Pacific County. The parcels are located on North River and Cedar River off North Willapa Bay. The parcels are owned and managed by Green Diamond Timber. The parcels that share a shoreline with Cedar River and WDFW's ownership are of particular interest. The lowlands have some old agriculture fields (about 35 acres) and wetlands. The area

could support a forage project for both elk and waterfowl.



At the mouth of North River adjacent to WDFW'S ownerships on the west side of the river are some lands that were once diked and grazed. Access is limited to an old logging road up river that drops down from the ridge to the bottom lands or by boat. On the east shore, at the mouth, there is an old cattle ranch that adjoins WDFW'S lowland properties. We looked at it earlier this year; the area could support a joint elk and waterfowl forage project. There is potential with some water control structure in the drainage ditches to flood crops and provide sheet water areas in the winter for foraging waterfowl. Some good hunting opportunities could also be available. The area has good access from the main highway.





**Ribbon Seal Sighting:** An unusual set of tracks in the sand were noted by biologists one foggy morning. Two beach visitors had asked about the identification of an unusual creature they had photographed just minutes before the tracks were observed. Below is one of the photos taken by the folks before it lumbered off into the surf.

*Photo of a ribbon seal heading for the surf. The ribbon seal is native to the Arctic and Subarctic regions of the North Pacific Ocean and therefore an unusual visitor to Washington beaches.*

**Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network:** Biologist Novack submitted information to Diversity Biologist Buchanan regarding waterfowl survey results in Willapa Bay. The area is being nominated to the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network for its hemisphere wide importance to shorebirds. The area's importance to other species, besides shorebirds, will factor into the approval process.

**Clearwater Road Closure:** Biologist Harris, Eyes in the Woods (EITW) project leads, and DNR met to discuss the road closure. DNR has decided to take back management of the road closure. EITW will continue to assist. Details are still being worked out.

**Fisher Monitoring:** Biologists McMillan and Ament were joined by a wildlife technician from Port Gamble, Charin Godbolt, on August 17, 2016, to set up stations at another fisher hex. A total of three hexes will be monitored by the District 16 team this season. The stations at the other two hexes were set up the previous week. The hex last week was monitored by the team in 2014. No fishers were detected at the hex that season, but the team is hopeful for this season.

*Fisher camera trap set up with labeled tag, chicken leg bait, and moss covered "cubby" containing hair snares, with Biologist Technician Godbolt assisting*



**Report of Fisher:** Biologist Ament was left a phone message on August 18, 2016 by some landowners who reported observing a fisher on their property near Sequim. A fisher monitoring station had been set up on the property in 2013 and 2015, but no fishers were detected. The fisher was apparently observed on a wood pile on the property. Biologist Ament will be following up to get more information.

**Seed Collection for Taylor’s Checkerspot (Habitat Improvements):** Biologist McMillan went to one of the extant sites west of the Elwha River (southern of two historic sites) and gathered seed of various flowering forbs (*Castilleja*, *Sedum*, *Clarkia amoena*, *Fritillaria*, *Collinsia*) and fescue grasses that will be propagated through efforts managed by Biologist Dave Hays.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Mourning Dove Banding:** Trapping mourning doves has been completed. From two trapping locations, Biologist Michaelis captured and banded a total of 212 birds (167 hatch year, 44 adults, and one unknown age/sex). Special thanks to Sabra Noyes and Officer Cilk for allowing our trapping operations to take place. Just before dark, two non-target California quail were captured and released unharmed.

***Landowner Sabra Noyes holds a male and female California quail***



**Rendezvous for Raptors Benefit for the Northwest Raptor and Wildlife Center:**

Biologist Ament held the 21<sup>st</sup> annual Rendezvous for Raptors party for the Northwest Raptor and Wildlife Center at her property on August 20. The attendance was slightly lower this year (due to conflict with the county fair), but close to 200 people dropped by for the event. There was great music, food, beer/cider, and fine weather for the event. The benefit was a wonderful success. All proceeds from the benefit go to the center. A total of \$4600 was raised during the event. Biologist Ament appreciated the knit socks from Celia Roberts (Region 6 Office) donated for the raffle, but was even more pleased that Celia and her sister from Port Angeles attended the event. Larry Bennett from the Fish Program was very generous and donated a beautiful pine needle basket and handmade paper weight item he had made for the raffle. District Biologist McMillan and her husband Mike set up their ever popular espresso bar. Unfortunately, Biologist Murphie was unable to attend, but his wife, Shannon, her mother, and adorable son Noah attended the event.

***Director of the Northwest Raptor and Wildlife Center with “Baby” the Swainson’s hawk***





*Noah Murphie gets a ticket from his mom, Shannon, to try and win a kids box from raffle*

**Private Lands /Conflict**

**Forks Elk:** Biologist Harris did a site visit to a producer in Forks who has decided they have way too many elk. Upon arrival, he met the group of elk in question as they were crossing the road into their hay fields. This is a group that is habituated to hazing and is basically becoming residential/city elk that really need to be busted up and/or down sized. The producer has a soft spot for the elk. This makes it difficult for the producer when lethal options are discussed. Biologist Harris will be having discussions with the city and local Indian Tribe in the future regarding the behavioral modification of this group.



*Driveway is to the right*



*Got elk!*



*Yes, they may have an elk problem*

**Wishkah Valley Elk:** The local group is starting to cause some problems. Two Master Hunters with designated permits have been assigned to the property.

**Satsop Valley Elk:** The elk are starting to make themselves unwelcome again. Biologist Harris

has not had time to work on this problem lately, but luckily he got a call from a Master Hunter applicant who lives in the valley and was looking for some volunteer work. The applicant is now monitoring and hazing the elk, as well as making sure they do not get into some corn crops down river.

**Wynoochee Valley Elk:** Someone told the elk Biologist Harris issued permits. They have not been seen much lately. Most of the producers have given the first permits to youths. Biologist Harris is expecting some pictures of happy youth hunters.

**Cougars:** Biologist Harris spoke to a producer who has reported a cougar sighting on his property. The cougar has been sighted walking by the calf holding area. So far, there have been no depredations. Likely there will not be any. While the elk have not been around much, there is no shortage of deer.

**Hunting Access:** Biologist Harris spent considerable time working on renewing access agreements on waterfowl hunting properties. He also reached out to a couple of large timberland managers to ask about any changes to access levels. There are some possible transactions happening this fall so access is still unknown. He has advised hunters who have called to pay close attention to the signs on the gates.