

Wildlife Program

Week of March 14 – March 20, 2016

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Wolf Advisory Group Meeting: Supervisor McCanna and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Shepherd attended the Wolf Advisory Group meeting in Olympia where the lethal removal protocol was discussed.

Interested Local Legislators Conference Call: Supervisor McCanna, Wildlife Conflict Specialists Shepherd and Bennett participated in the wolf conference call with interested local legislators.

Domestic Dog Incident: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed an attack on a dog on the periphery of the Stranger pack territory with the owner and the Chewelah Independent.

Region One Contract Range Rider: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed fladry production with a contract range rider, as well as other miscellaneous issues.

Wolf Conflict Presentation at the Fish and Wildlife Commission Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett, Wolf Specialist Becker, and Wolf Policy Lead Martorello presented information about the recent 2015 Wolf Annual Report, wolf conflict, and wolf-ungulate interactions in Moses Lake to WDFW Fish and Wildlife Commissioners.

Carcass Disposal: Biologist Earl spoke with several cooperators about the WDFW's carcass disposal account at the Asotin County landfill.

Okanogan Wolves: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Heilhecker worked with two individuals regarding the range rider "request for quotation", which is due on Monday. She also talked with a rancher in regards to the need and availability of range riders for this grazing season.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Channeled Scablands Spring Waterfowl

Project: Biologist Atamian ran the Tyler-Ewan ground route, 3196 ducks and 438 geese were observed. The majority of animals were seen on Sprague Lake, with scaup being the predominant species, 1619.

Pair of lesser scaup on Sprague Lake





Male common goldeneye on the Palouse River



Part of a flock of ~700 scaup with scattered bufflehead and goldeneye



Female common goldeneye on the Palouse River

Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Project: Biologist Atamian checked on the locations of the two remaining GPS marked males; both are alive. Atamian worked with Grouse Technician Walker on radio tracking, triangulation, data entry, etc. Atamian ran GPS backpack units, charged them, and glued pads on the back in preparation for deployment in early April. Atamian participated in WebEx on the updates to the Wildlife Survey Data Management Grouse Database. Walker tracked radio marked hens, finding one that had been missing for over 3 months, ran a corvid & raptor survey, surveyed the sage grouse lek, getting a couple of band reads, and worked on the camera traps.



Male sage grouse dancing at the Windmil lek photo by TC Walker.

Elk: Biologists Wik and Vekasy spent 2 days completing the annual helicopter sightability surveys for elk in the Blue Mountains. The survey is now complete and data analysis will begin shortly. Wik has entered most data but additional formatting is needed prior to analysis. Highlights of the survey included 38 mountain goats observed in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness, one cougar, one moose, and the usual high quality of bull elk.



Bull elk seen in GMU 157 (Watershed).



Mountain Goats in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Tree Theft – Wildlife Forester Sara Ashiglar came to Sherman Creek Wildlife Area this week to collect data and provide a valuation of trees stolen for fire wood. Enforcement Officers will use her report in the case against the individuals responsible, who had illegally bypassed a gate, and outside of firewood collecting season, felled and hauled off 28 trees of various sizes and species. Firewood collecting is a permitted activity on Sherman Creek Wildlife Area between April 1 and December 31 annually. Firewood permits can be acquired at the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area headquarters, which provide for the cutting of firewood from down and dead trees on the wildlife area.



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

Walla Walla Access: Natural Resource Technician Wade spent two days in Walla Walla working with Biologist Thorne Hadley. On the first day, Wade and Thorne Hadley located guzzlers on a new access property in Walla Walla County. The 6,600 acre property has a total of 15 guzzlers, many of which will need maintenance in the upcoming weeks. Making repairs to the guzzlers has gained the public hunting access on the property. Wade will be coordinating with Thorne Hadley to help locate and make the needed repairs to the guzzlers. On the second day, Wade helped post part of the 6,600 acre property.



Locating guzzlers and identifying needed repairs

4-O Ranch WA –Signs: Biologist Woodall and Natural Resource Technician Steveson spent a couple days hanging department signs along the new Phase V boundary line, along public and internal roads, and taking Odom 4-O Ranch signs down. There is still much work to be done on this large project. While in the area they took some measurements of an old well, located on an old homestead that needs a cover fabricated and placed as a safety measure.



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

Moose Hazing: Biologist Shepherd, Officer Parkert, and National Ski Patrol personnel used radios, paintball guns, and cracker shells to haze a moose that was running at people on the slopes at the 49 Degrees North Ski Area. The effort met with success as the moose was run up a road off the area by a grooming machine after being hazed to the edge of the ski area.

Riparian Project: Biologist Lewis completed a site check with Natural Resource Conservation Service staff members on a large riparian project along the south fork of the Palouse River. The site is a mitigation project and has had extensive restoration work done.



Tree planting enclosures and irrigation system

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Sage Grouse: Biologists Gallie and Braaten provided ground support and technical assistance to the Sage Grouse Initiative’s aerial infrared survey project, which is attempting locate new sage grouse leks using this technology. In an effort to correct factors that contributed to poor detection rates in 2015, we suggested modifications to several aspects of the survey methodology. Weather conditions and breeding timing were perfect for the effort. Owyhee Air Research Inc. flew the surveys and conducted test flights to determine detection rates at a subsample of known leks (with staff onsite documenting occupancy) in order to adapt their methods. They had very poor detection rates with less than 10 birds at a lek. They further trialed five different methods to improve small lek detections, and the result is that the IR equipment cannot register a detectable image of a small number



Gallie monitoring a lek while survey crew flies overhead

of birds reliably while surveying at a feasible rate. They were able to detect them at a significant zoom but the decrease in the area of coverage at that level precluded it as an option. Due to these setbacks, they were only able to survey roughly 80 sq. miles for new leks (as opposed to 210 planned for). No large leks were found, but there were four detections that warrant ground visits to verify (two of which displaying males were obvious on the imagery). We will visit these sites early next week.

Biologists spent wee hours in morning's confirming the presence of sage grouse on leks at the time of flights. This help document and test Forward-looking Infrared (FLIR) detection success or failure. Mixed results from surveys. There was a possible detection which FLIR recorded in a new area of Douglas County. Private Lands Biologist Braaten secured permission from private landowner to survey this new site. No sage grouse have been observed at new location yet. Weather and securing permission have slowed efforts. Sight will be observed the next few weeks to confirm or deny FLIR finding.



Displaying Male Sage Grouse – Douglas County Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

Multi-Carnivore Survey: WDFW staff members and project partners completed the second check of the deployed camera sites and catalogued the data. This round we captured photos of two different wolverines at two different sites. Our old friend Special K (adult male) visited on of the Twisp River locations and a Stella, a recently identified but never captured female showed up at one of the Hwy 20 cameras. We continue to get entertaining photos of additional carnivores and other non-target species. Of note this period was a photo of a wolf (likely Lookout Pack member) at a Twisp River site that still has several feet of snow. This coming week will be the last check and rebait of the sites. After that we will wait until snowmelt allows us to retrieve the cameras by vehicle.



Adult male wolverine Special K at baited survey site – WDFW/USFS remote camera



Adult female wolverine, Stella at baited survey site – WDFW/USFS remote camera



Wolf and enthusiastic bobcat – remote cameras, WDFW/USFS



Juvenile red-tailed hawk – remote camera, WDFW/USFS

Pygmy Rabbit Husbandry Activities:

Biologist Gibbs along with volunteers Samuel Hutchinson, Donna LaCasse, Nancy and Bob Brewer cleaned the breeding enclosures and installed the new raised platform feeding stations. They were able to clean all three active enclosures and install feeding stations

Supplemental Feed Route – Assistant Manager Bechtold spent the majority of the week delineating revegetation plots and dragging a blanket harrow over the 25 acres of land in the South Flood Flat. The area harrowed will soon be treated for weeds, and either seeded or planted later in the year.



Before



After

Okanogan Valley Complex WLA Management Plan: Forester Jamie Bass began the draft for the Forest Management Plan, refined treatment and condition definitions, and began assigned general descriptions to management units. Highest priority currently is to identify broad habitat improvement goals for the over-arching management plan and then focus on specific treatment actions and goals in the final Forest Management Plan. Current projects and funding sources will be included.

Habitat plots: Biologist Dougherty has found some interesting ways to control cheat grass and the initial results are very promising. After seeding native cool season grasses in fall 2015 an application of Imazapic herbicide was applied shortly afterwards in an area with no prior weed control. This would normally translate into an insane amount of cheat grass and other undesirable weeds, but in the area where the preemergent herbicide was applied the cheat grass and other weeds were dead or dying and completely under control.

Only time will tell if these results will hold, but for now everything looks very promising.

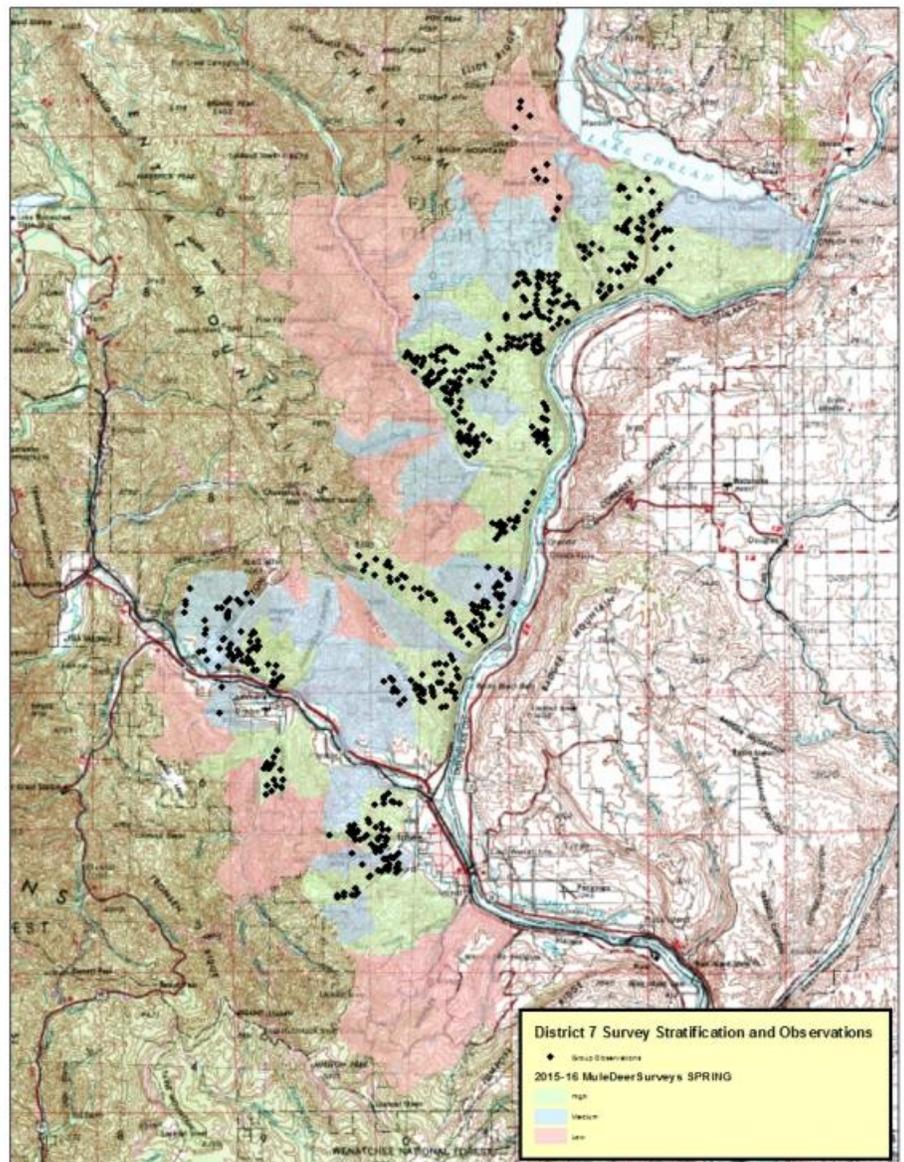


Close up of cheat grass (turning red and purple). If you look closely there are native grass seedlings that green and healthy.

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

Chelan County Mule Deer:

Biologist Volsen worked on the analysis of data collected during spring mule deer surveys in Chelan County (PMU 26). These data were input into WDFW's R-sight program. This was a preliminary analysis of the data; however, the results are very encouraging. The model returned an estimate of roughly 15,000 deer for the portion of Chelan County extending north from the Kittitas border to Lake Chelan. Stratification of subunits allowed for a productive survey that averaged 10 deer/group and 5,819 deer observed. Confidence intervals around the estimate indicated a successful survey effort, and when paired with estimates from earlier (winter) surveys, indicated a stable mule deer population in Chelan County. Further work will provide a final estimate for 2016, and then look at how we might increase precision in future surveys based on survey timing, vegetation conditions and characteristics of deer group locations.



Highlights– While working on the multi-carnivore survey project, U.S. Forest Service Biologist Rohrer opportunistically deployed a camera on a reported cougar deer-kill near one the snow park trailheads and captured a remarkable series of photos of what appears to be an adult female cougar and larger male cougar interacting at the carcass. About six hours elapses before the smaller female allows the larger male to feed on the kill, after which time they feed side by side without confrontation. The kinship and resident status of the two animals is unknown.



Cougars interacting on a deer kill – remote cameras, WDFW/USFS

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

Othello Sandhill Crane Festival – District Wildlife Biologist Finger and Private Lands Biologist Comstock scouted the Gloyd Unit prior to the Friday tour. Biologists were able to determine road conditions, wetland project status, and where concentrations of waterfowl were most easily observed. Unfortunately, no cranes were utilizing the wetland projects as hoped and bonus species like burrowing owls or long-billed curlew could not be found. This year’s festival is about 10 days earlier than last year. Two days later, Finger and Comstock (who graciously agreed to assist) provided a tour of the Gloyd Unit to 16 festival goers, including the Farm Unit Pond, Mansfield Pond, Spud Field, and Flood Flat project site. The tour presented the development of habitat projects starting from the initial memorandum of understanding with the Bureau of Reclamation, Ecology, and WDFW which resulted in some coordination on water releases and the feasibility and implementation of several habitat projects. In addition, biologists discussed the opportunity to leverage other funding sources such as Duck Stamp and Print, Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account, and funding from the Columbia Basin Pheasants Forever Chapter. After the Gloyd, Biologists traveled to Soap Lake and Lake Lenore to look for some missed species such as ruddy ducks and goldeneye. Highlights of the trip were Eurasian wigeon, snow geese, sandhill crane, tundra swans, bald eagle, dunlin, and northern shrike.



Sandhill Crane Festival tour at the Gloyd Farm Unit and Mansfield Pond- Photo by R. Finger



Various birders peering at a historic golden eagle nest and a variety of waterfowl at Lake Lenore for the Othello Sandhill Crane Festival © Devon Comstock



Mule Deer on spring range - J. Heinlen



Nesting bald eagle - J. Heinlen



A mountain bluebird at the Carter Mountain Unit of the Sinlahekin WLA- Photo by Justin Haug



A pair of yellow bells at the Carter Mountain Unit of the Sinlahekin WLA- Photo by Justin Haug



Fish Lake #1 residual application- photo by M DeHart

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Elk Exclosure Fencing: Wildlife Area Manager Winegeart and Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hunt visited the Taneum Elk Fence project site on the Heart K property with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biologist Monk and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Contractor Eaton. The group staked the fence lines and electrical cable lines where cultural resource surveys will need to be completed. The BOR planned to conduct the survey in-house, but they are now over-booked. Monk will try and find another work around to get the survey done by our project start date of May 15. Winegeart and Hunt compiled a materials list, which the Bureau of Reclamation will purchase.



Meadow to be protected by elk exclosure fencing

L.T Murray Wildlife Area Elk Feeding and Winter Conditions: The week started normally with 800 elk in Watt and 700 elk in Robinson, but by Friday there were 0 elk in Robinson and only 10 elk left in Watt. Trail cameras caught images of shed hunters illegally accessing Robinson and hauling out shed antlers in the night. Snow level is still low and elk are not ready to move off the feed sites, but shed hunters are keeping elk off the hay, so most remains uneaten on the ground.

Next week's high temperatures are expected in the upper 50's with lows in the lower 30's and rain possible.

Mellotte Feed Site Elk Numbers- 956 animals: Elk are in seasonally good condition. Feeding continues with new snow and slow green up bringing animals back to the feed site. Warmer weather predicted for the coming week should hasten green up and end feeding for the season.

Stack Yard Clean Up: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Taylor has been hauling old, damaged top bales and broken bales to the feed site to clean up the stack yard. He also retied hay tarps at Mt. Vale.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Elk Feeding: Feeding operations continued at the Headquarters and Cowiche Feed sites all week. Elk numbers have dropped off some, especially at Cowiche, but elk continue to come in. With the current weather forecast and drop in elk numbers the plan is to finish up feeding this coming week.

Oak Creek Winter Conditions: Weather this past week was very mild with some nights below freezing. Grasses continue to green up but growth is still really short. Elk are ranging off the feed site but continue to return at feeding time. Weather this coming week is expected to be nice with highs in the 50's and lows in the upper 30's. Elk continue to be in seasonally fair condition.

Peak Elk Counts for Week:

Headquarters~ 800 total
Junction- 0
Nile-0
Sheep-0
Cowiche~600 total

Aerial Elk Surveys: Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky assisted Biologist Moore with aerial elk surveys, flying units from Colockum Creek south to Quilomene Creek.

Biologist Moore and helicopter pilot flying down Quilomene Creek during annual elk surveys.



Ferruginous Hawk Survey: District Biologist Fidorra worked on landowner access and volunteer, partner, and staff coordination for the Ferruginous Hawk Survey. Surveys were started March 15 and 12 of ~140 surveys were completed in D4. Fidorra focused efforts on private ranches near Juniper Dunes.

Columbia Basin Mule Deer: District Biologist Fidorra participated in the Columbia Basin Mule Deer conference call with wildlife biologists from D2 and D5, and Deer Specialist Hansen to finalize the Phase 2 report and confirm future survey plans in the Basin.

Yakima County Sage Grouse: Biologist Stutzman surveyed the Yakima County Sage Grouse lek for the first time this spring. Lek attendance was sparse, with only three males displaying.

Mitigation Options for Department of Natural Resources Parcels: Biologist Stutzman spoke with a landowner and Habitat Biologist Ritter about mitigation options for some Department of Natural Resources parcels that may be converted from dryland wheat and shrub steppe to irrigated farmland.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz participated in the annual ground survey of bighorn sheep in the Yakima River Canyon with Section Lead Harris, Biologists Moore and Oyster, and two volunteers from Safari Club International. Lamb recruitment was more than double the previous two years with at least 33 lambs produced. Of the 33 lambs seen, 29 were in the far south end of the canyon. Two sub-herds further north had no lambs.



Bighorn sheep in the Yakima River Canyon

Colockum Elk Surveys: Biologists Bernatowicz flew one day of elk surveys with the great help of Natural Resource Technician Leuck. Biologist Moore and Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky flew the first day. Data are very raw and some large elk group estimates need to be calibrated from photos. However, it appears the total number of elk on winter range was less than



Elk seen during the aerial survey

5000. This is well below the 2015 estimate of 6100. The population was expected to be reduced due to high antlerless harvest, damage harvest, road-kills, and some winter mortality. It is possible some elk left the survey area prior to the survey. Human use in the area was obvious, with a fair number of hikers/antler hunters noticed. The good news is that record numbers of bulls were observed and the total bull population counted will exceed 500. It is likely that the bull to cow ratio on winter range will be above the objective of 12:100 for the first time. The bulls had started dropping antlers, but males were still obvious due to size and coloration. The antler pedicles could also be seen.

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

Eyes in the Woods: Wildlife Area Manager Huffman spent time coordinating with Eyes in the Woods (EITW) on their cameras. The website and auto emailing of pictures is up and running. EITW volunteers replaced batteries in a couple cameras and repositioned some that were catching tree

limbs. Huffman received an email of two people in camo running up Oak Creek road, which is open to walk in use. Huffman forwarded the picture to enforcement and checked for a vehicle parked at the gate. No vehicle was located, meaning they were dropped off by somebody else. EITW volunteers were actually driving on the road and did not locate anybody walking along the road. Officer Watts spent several hours watching the area and observed elk running in the closed area, but was not able to visually locate anybody. Rumors around Naches are that a lot of people are sneaking in to collect antlers. Due to the fact that it is almost impossible to catch somebody and that even if caught, there are few consequences.



Shed hunters on Oak Creek Road running up the road after being dropped off. It is assumed they hiked into the closed area to look for sheds.

Gate and Kiosks installed in French's Canyon: Natural Resource Technician Kass and Natural Resource Worker Farias helped Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Berry install a small person/horse gate in the bottom of French's canyon at the elk fence. The crew also installed two kiosks, one at the small gate and one to the north on the ridge road. Signs and kiosks are being installed in preparation for starting road closures approved last fall. Huffman will coordinate with an ORV club who has volunteered to help post signs on the closed roads. Once all signs, kiosks, and maps are in place, the gate in the bottom of French's Canyon will be locked to motorized vehicles.



New walk through gate and kiosk installed in the elk fence in French's Canyon. The adjacent vehicle gate will be locked soon and this area will be walk in only. Signs and maps will be installed on the kiosks showing which roads will be open to vehicles.

Illegal Trespass by Shed Hunters: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hunt spoke with Officer Scherzinger regarding this week's illegal trespass by shed hunters on both the Robinson Canyon side and the Joe Watt area. We still had large numbers of elk in to feed daily at both sites until our cameras caught after dark intruders, and both elk herds were scared off the sites for a good portion of the week. Harassing wildlife at this critical time of year is impactful, and this activity cheats our law-abiding users out of their share of the shed antlers after May 1. We've had record numbers of bulls in this year, and it has apparently made the obsessive cheaters bolder than ever. Technician Leuck checked on all trail cameras positioned at Watt and Robinson. He was able to see a pair of people coming out of Robinson with about 25 antler sheds. More work will be done to try and identify the individuals involved.

Winter Weather and Road Conditions: Thawing snow and warming temperatures are encouraging people to visit the lower elevations of the wildlife area. Elk are also just beginning to drop their antlers, and shed hunters are pushing the limits to gain access to antlers ahead of their competition. Unfortunately, this early vehicle traffic often results in deep ruts in snow that channels water and damages roads as it melts. Road drainage features such as water bars have little effect in this situation.



Vehicle stuck in deep snow, N. Fk. Tarpiscan Rd, Colockum Wildlife Area

Wet spring weather has caused a portion of the hillside in the South Fork Tarpiscan Creek to slide, undercutting the green dot road. The damage was spotted from the helicopter during this week's aerial elk survey.

(Top) Vehicle ruts channeling water down Colockum Pass Rd, Colockum Wildlife Area (Bottom) Undercut road in South Fork Tarpiscan Creek, Colockum Wildlife Area.



Wenas Wildlife Area Target Shooting Proposal: Manager Confer Morris met with Environmental Planner Posner to discuss next steps towards finalizing the Wenas target shooting proposal and agenda for internal Wenas Target Shooting group meeting. The Wenas Target Shooting group meeting met later in the week to discuss timeline for finalizing proposal and implementation. Confer Morris and Posner also met with Archaeologist Kelly to discuss status and next steps for completing cultural resource report and Section 106 compliance.

Ponds and Access Sites Serviced: Access Manager Garcia serviced Tim's Pond, Oak Creek, Mellis Rd, Fitzsimmons, Donald Road, Pond 1 & 2, Pond 3, Pond 4 & 5, Buena, Zillah Bridge, Hyde, Whitstran, Snively, Duportail, Ringold, Woodhouse, Lavender Lake, Teanaway junction, King horn Slough, Mattoon, and Fio Rito. He also serviced Masterson access site during the week of March 13.

Garcia did site visits at Mattoon and Fio Rito with the CWU Earth Week Volunteer Coordinator to go over projects for this year.

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

Othello Sandhill Crane Festival: District Biologist Fidorra worked a DFW booth at the Othello Sandhill Crane Festival on Saturday. Many bird enthusiasts from around the state and local families were in attendance.

Deer Damage at Vineyard: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and responded to a deer damage complaint from a large wine grape operation in the Paterson area along the Columbia River. Over 30 deer have been documented in the vineyard and heavy browsing has occurred on the new forming buds. Several non-lethal techniques have been utilized including LP gas cannons, pyrotechnics, and active hazing. These activities and lethal removal by permitted

Master Hunters and Damage Permit holders will be implemented in an effort to reduce the amount of damage that has been occurring.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand patrolled a wine grape vineyard in the Plymouth area to monitor deer damage activity and provide hazing. No deer were observed in the vineyard.

Winter Wheat Planting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand surveyed last year's winter wheat planting success on Rattlesnake Mt. and document what fields were replanted with spring wheat this spring. Spring wheat tends to be a preferred choice for deer and elk. The majority of the fields had poor planting conditions last fall, so several will need to be replanted with spring wheat while soil and seeding condition are vastly improved.

Access for Elk Removals: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel continued dialog with several landowners in Thorp and at Weaver Road this week to acquire access for elk removals. Access has been granted and two elk were removed. Heavy non-lethal hazing occurred every day this week and elk movements have been positive; hopefully fewer removals will be required if hazing and herding is consistent. Landowners in the non-lethal portion of the problem area have agreed to haze and herd elk daily to help dislodge reluctant elk from leaving the area.

New Gate for Herding Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel prepared a new gate location in the Caitlin Canyon area to use for herding elk.

Elk Hazing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel hazed a group of 35 elk from an area adjacent to a new seeding in the Reecer Creek area.

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

Stemilt Partnership Recreation Plan: Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky and Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hagan attended the Stemilt Partnership meeting this week. Topics included an overview of existing plans and ideas for the area (Stemilt Vision Document, Naneum Recreation Plan), plans for developing a Stemilt Partnership Recreation Plan, an update on forest management work and grants applied for by Chelan County and DFW, and an update by DFW on acquisition of DNR sections 16 and 22.

Upcoming Road Maintenance Abandonment Plan Work: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hunt contacted Erin Muldoon in CAMP about upcoming road maintenance abandonment plan work. Hunt will move forward with the Forest Practices Application for work on the L. T. Murray to get a head start on permitting needs. Muldoon was grateful for the help, and it will save some of the relatively small pot of money slated for Region 3 road maintenance abandonment plan needs this year.

Pesticide License Renewals: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hunt emailed Procurement and Supply Specialist Cohen in Purchasing to check on the status of Washington State Department of Agriculture Pesticide License renewals for the Murray and Wenas staff members. They have not

shown up in their database as renewed, and we are awaiting word as to whether or not it is just the backlog of 2016 renewals, or if the paperwork got stuck somewhere.

Department of Ecology Litter Grant Contracts: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hunt also responded to Project Specialist Sherlock to confirm our participation in new Department of Ecology Litter Grant Contracts to fund litter related efforts on the Wildlife Area.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Common Loons: Biologist Smith monitored local lakes for early loon activity. Loons were seen at two local lakes (one pair, one single). Loons are still moving from lake to lake and do not appear to have chosen residence. Placement of nesting platforms will occur in the coming weeks.

Orphaned Bear

Cub: Biologist Smith assisted Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil and Graduate Student Welfelt with transporting an orphaned bear cub from eastern Washington to PAWS Wildlife Center.

Sleeping bear cub.

Protected Wildlife

Management: Biologists Anderson and Thompson met with Port of Seattle SeaTac International Airport biologist staff members regarding state wildlife management needs; per their request.

Black Brant movement

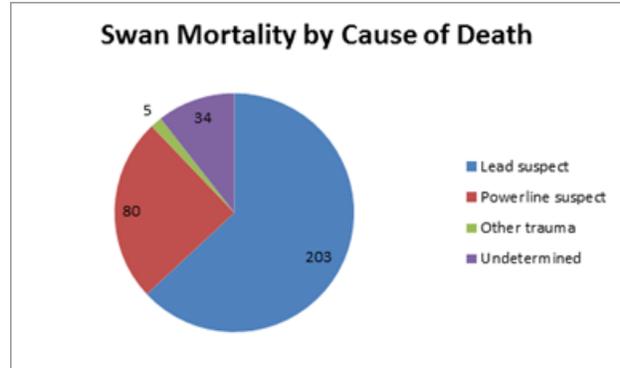
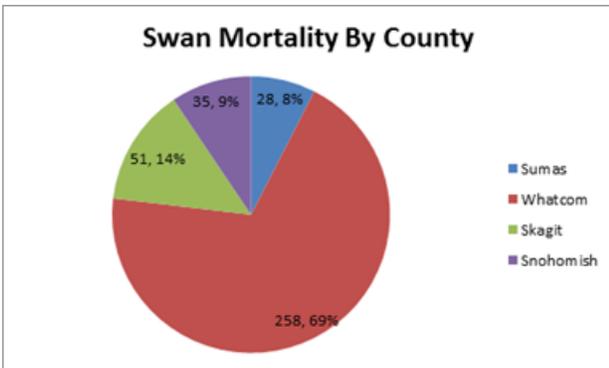
monitoring: District 13 staff members assisted the Marine Waterfowl Specialist with preparing and testing capture equipment for upcoming captures to transmitter birds to monitor movements on breeding and wintering grounds.



Swan Mortality and Morbidity Report: Two additional swan mortalities were recorded in Whatcom and Snohomish County this week. Total swan mortalities for north Puget Sound have now reached 343. Technician Trejo began preparing a final swan mortality report along with a presentation focused on avian conservation and management. The presentation will be given to third graders at Sultan Elementary on Thursday March 24th.

Weekly Swan Mortality Report (as of 18-Mar-16)

	Lead suspect	Powerline suspect	Other trauma	Undetermined	Feather Pile	Total
Sumas	11	2	1	4	10	28
Whatcom	166	36	2	22	32	258
Skagit	18	20	2	5	6	51
Snohomish	8	22	0	3	2	35
	203	80	5	34	50	372
Percents	54.57%	22%	1%	9%	13%	100.00%



Black Bear Management: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell provided edits and comments on draft Black Bear Depredation Permit regulations that will be applied across Washington State.

Management and Conflict Mitigation Information Materials for Lesser Snow Goose and other Waterfowl Species, within Northwest Washington: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell finalized a draft education and outreach document on Management and Conflict Mitigation Information Materials for Lesser Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens caerulescens*) and other Waterfowl Species, within Northwest Washington. This document will be reviewed by managers soon and then possibly converted into a tri-fold handout for public distribution.

Oregon Spotted Frog: Biologist DeBruyn investigated several areas in Skagit County that have potential occupancy by Oregon Spotted Frogs.

North Cascades Elk: Biologist Yarborough attended the North Cascades technical committee-working group to discuss upcoming aerial survey schedule, damage issues, and elk trapping efforts.

Bald Eagle and other Wildlife Questions: District 13 staff members provided guidance to two neighborhood groups that are fighting proposed developments in Snohomish County. Staff members explained the process for contacting U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding eagles and the County code for protecting listed species, of which none are known to occur near the either of the proposed sub-divisions.

Agricultural Leases: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm worked with the Sky Valley Tractor Club to finalize an agricultural lease for a portion of the Crescent Lake Unit. The lease package was forwarded for management review and signatures. The Stillwater and Cherry Valley agriculture leases were submitted to Lands Division Manager Clay Sprague for final signature.

Stillwater Unit:

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm reports that Sound Salmon Solutions conducted a volunteer planting event along Harris Creek. This is the second of three scheduled events that will complete the planting requirements for the Harris Creek Restoration Project.



Natural Resource Tech Deyo checked wood duck nest boxes on the Lake Terrell and Intalco units. He cleaned and prepped over 100 nest boxes. Of those boxes, almost half had been used last year.

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

Western High Arctic Brant Capture: Biologist DeBruyn worked with Technician Otto to prepare for an upcoming Brant capture.

Enforcement Work: Officer Valentine received a call from a shed antler hunter who found a dead bull elk with no obvious signs of cause of death. The antler hunter also stated that the antlers had been sawed off. Officer Valentine hiked in with the reporting party and his friends and found a dead elk with freshly shed antler bases (antlers had been naturally shed). Officer Valentine located one puncture wound at the base of the animal's sternum. The animal was also covered in ticks. No bullet was located despite the lack of an exit wound.



(Top) Dead bull elk found by shed antler hunter. (Bottom) Elk with freshly shed antler bases.



Urban Outreach Efforts – Amphibians:

Biologist Anderson provided a field practicum and lecture on area amphibians – identification, conservation concerns, how the public can help and educate others regarding this most rapidly declining vertebrate taxon. One in three species of amphibian is at risk of extinction worldwide. 3% + decline in all amphibians in US annually per federal government. 11% + decline in listed species annually.

Biologist Anderson showing some dead Long-toed salamander eggs to group – discussing low-impact, non-intrusive techniques to examine egg masses – tips and tools to use to not disturb. Discuss decontamination and showed techniques.

There was lots of interest from the group. They had great examples of egg masses and discussed lots of issues and ways they can help be a steward in their local community. The role of wetlands and uplands in completing all limiting needs for many amphibians of Washington and lack of focus in consideration of



upland areas regarding this was discussed; as well as the role in ecosystem as large vertebrate biomass as a predator and prey base. The group examined preserved eggs as well as fresh and discussed decontamination needs of outdoor recreationists (both aquatic and other environments.) An in-field demonstration of simple techniques one can do to help was provided and some nest boxes were given away.

<https://www.facebook.com/SHADOWLakeNaturePreserve>

<https://twitter.com/thescsuval>

<http://shadowhabitat.org/>

Spring Bear Hunt: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell coordinated with Olympia staff members to retrieve the North Skagit or Monroe Spring Bear Hunt Permittee Lists. Supervisory Biologist Caldwell also coordinated with Olympia staff members to confirm the North Skagit and Monroe Spring Bear Hunt permittees had been sent their pre-hunt coordination meeting letter. Biologist Wingard and Natural Resource Technician Otto toured the North Skagit spring bear unit recording issues with gates and logging activity. Wingard coordinated lock needs with Department of Natural Resources staff members, prepared and submitted contracts for the partner private timber companies participating in this year's spring bear hunt.

Migratory Waterfowl Forage: Biologist Wingard prepared and submitted a contract for migratory waterfowl forage.

Wingard and Natural Resource Technician Otto discussed opportunities for migratory waterfowl forage in Whatcom and Skagit County. Biologist Wingard toured the Boe Road Snow Goose Reserve to assess forage availability and use by snow geese. Several thousand geese were observed using the reserve.

Snow Geese foraging on the Boe Road Snow Goose Reserve



Snoqualmie Valley Tour: Biologist Wingard toured the Snoqualmie River Valley region scouting for potential waterfowl and wildlife viewing locations. Wingard spoke with a landowner in the region about historic hunting conditions and locations and potential partnership opportunities. The landowner was receptive and Wingard will follow up with the landowner shortly.

Lake Terrell and Intalco Units New Trash Cans:

Natural Resource Technician Deyo installed the three new 55 gallon trash cans on the Lake Terrell unit. One was placed at the Lake Terrell boat launch, and two were placed at the fishing pier. New “Pack Out Your Litter” signs were also installed.

Manager Kessler cleaned, repaired and repainted the large wood Intalco Unit Archery Course sign. A handicap accessible porta-potty was ordered and placed at the course. New safety signage was also made and installed.



Clinics: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey met with volunteers from the local chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation to enlist their help in putting on a turkey hunting clinic prior to opening of spring turkey. Dazey secured a venue and scheduled a turkey hunting clinic at the Black Diamond Gun Club on April 10th.

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

Judson Lake Lead Mitigation: Biologist DeBruyn participated in a conference call with cooperators to plan upcoming lead sampling in Judson Lake

Citizen Science: Biologist Yarborough discussed potential citizen science projects with members of the Whatcom Wildlife Advisory Council.

Elk Damage in Whatcom County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman received an elk damage complaint to agricultural property in the Acme area of Whatcom County. The landowner currently has 90-100 elk foraging on his property on a regular basis. The landowner would like to see increased hunting opportunity on his property. Witman met with Tribal Co-managers and reviewed three private properties to be considered for elk exclusionary fence projects. The technical group approved two of the projects. Additional discussions will take place with a third landowner to determine the best course of action to address elk damage from 65+ elk utilizing that private property.

Deer Damage in Whatcom County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with a berry producer in Whatcom County experiencing damage to raspberries from deer. Witman discussed preventative measures to be taken by the landowner and renewed a damage prevention contract.

Elk Exclusionary Fencing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman toured several areas in Skagit County with a land manager from Acme interested in installing elk exclusionary fencing. The land manager was shown several examples of previously constructed elk fence. The manager was already familiar with some of the construction designs and is going to construct his fence this coming spring.

Fence Repair: Biologist Smith continued to coordinate with volunteers and landowners involved in ongoing fence repair work. Smith also coordinated with South Sound Master Hunter permit holders.

Fir Island Farm: Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove moved large woody debris on the dike at Fir Island Farm to allow access to the dike for fish survey access and for the upcoming construction season.

Skagit Headquarters: Wildlife Area Manager Rotton continued to monitor the tide gate and pump station operations on Wiley Slough and coordinating with the Dike District #22 about operation and repairs following the storm last week. Natural Resource Technician Meis assessed storm tide/ flooding damage at Headquarters, Fir Island Farms and Leque Units. Meis assisted CAMP Personnel with surveying the outfall area of the new tidegate and surveyed dike elevations from the new tidegate structure to the boat launch parking lot area at the Headquarters Unit. Meis assisted contractor removing debris from the pump vault. The pump vault needed to be checked and cleaned to verify and remove large debris before operating pumps.

Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove continued clean-up and repair of dikes following last week's extreme high tide event. Cosgrove cleared logs and debris from the dikes at the Headquarters and graded washouts in the dike around the boat launch parking lot at the Headquarters Unit. Cosgrove and Meis salvaged an old double-plank footbridge that washed onto the side of the Headquarters dike. Salvaged materials will be used for footbridges on the Island Unit.

Leque Island: Natural Resource Technician Meis met with CAMP personnel at Leque about the two breaks in the dike on the Davis Slough side and leaking that was occurring on the some of the temporary dikes on the east side of the Unit. Wildlife Area Manager Rotton participated in the field trip question and answer session of the Salmon Recovery Funding Board review of the grant application for the Leque Island Restoration Design Study.

The CAMP program completed temporary repair of the dike at Leque Island. Site conditions are very wet at this time. Meis and Rotton have contacted the share crop farmer and agree evaluate site conditions once repair is complete for potential changes to the planting plan for this season.



Installation of super sacks on Leque Island Dike Repair following storm surge dike failure

DeBay's Slough Waterfowl Use: Natural Resource Technicians Meis and Cosgrove continued monitoring waterfowl use at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit and Nookachamps Creek area. No swans were observed in the area during the two surveys this week.

Water Levels of Samish Unit: Natural Resource Technicians Meis and Cosgrove monitored water levels in ponds, fields, and ditches at the Samish Unit. New control structures on the ponds are allowing for quicker drainage when desired.

Samish Unit Sharecrop: Wildlife Area Manager Rotton and Natural Resource Technician Meis also met with the Sharecrop lessee to discuss this year's agricultural lease for the Samish Unit.

Seasonal Signage: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm removed hunting-related signage and replaced it with seasonal appropriate informational signage at all of the hunting units.

Safety Issues: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm met with CAMP Engineering at the Cherry Valley Facility to develop an electrical upgrade project for the pheasant net pen. This is in response to safety-related concerns at the Cherry Valley facility. Plans are in the works to improve the stairway access to the loading room, electrical upgrades, and providing a safer access lane inside the net pen.

Illegal Dumping: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm coordinated with Snohomish County Solid Waste staff members to improve the small dump-related handling process. Large illegal dumps are cleaned up by the County's Environmental Cleanup Crew for a small fee. Small dumps are handled by Boehm. Common dumps include couches, furniture, and mattresses that don't fit in a dumpster. These are taken to the waste transfer station where a minimum dump fee is charged. After working with County staff members, now these items can be dropped off at the transfer stations and only pay the per-ton rate, which is considerably less than the minimum dump fee. Boehm encouraged Region 4 Access Supervisor Hacker to complete the required paperwork also.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Unit Breakdown: Natural Resource Technician Otto continued unit breakdowns throughout Skagit, Whatcom and Snohomish counties. Recent heavy rains and strong winds have made for some challenging conditions out in the field. Otto was able to get some units down and supplies stored away for the season.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program Analysis: Biologist Wingard completed analyzing data collected this waterfowl season at Waterfowl Quality Hunt Unit sites. This information was gathered by Region 4 Private Lands staff members, five volunteers, and waterfowl hunters who completed hunter satisfaction cards at the sites. The analysis of this data will allow Private Lands staff members to determine use and success at each of our sites. This information provides Private Lands staff members a clearer picture of which sites are productive, and how different management styles lead to differences in hunt quality

Hunter Education Instructor Support. Hunter Education Coordinator Steven Dazey continues to encourage instructors to return their Policy Agreement Forms and for those who have been certified five years to return their five year background authorization forms. Dazey activated two new hunter education classes for 2016, picked up supplies at the Tumwater warehouse and delivered them to several teaching teams. He also picked up supplies to replenish the small amount of stock kept at the Region 4 MC-1 warehouse for emergent teaching team needs. The newly certified instructors that had completed their pre-service training in the previous weeks were input into the Kalkomey data base. Dazey also answered questions from a MHPP applicant on the process to become a hunter education instructor. He assisted an instructor in complying with and after receiving appropriate approval based on records retention policy destroying old hunter education documents. After destruction the appropriate documentation was sent to Olympia.

Teaching Team Evaluations: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey evaluated the teaching team that offers classes to the Boy Scout camp north of Monroe. The teaching team conducts large classes and has over 22 instructors that assist the team. The team through two online evaluations and one traditional class this last weekend passed 137 new students.

Pre –Service Training: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey Conducted a first session pre-service trainings (PST) at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island starting seven potential new instructors from the base on the path to become hunter education instructors. The first sessions cover teaching tips and techniques, Department policy, and how to put together teaching teams with best practices. Dazey also held one second PST session where the applicants are actually

evaluated on their ability to teach an actual class. The second session was held at the Boy Scout Camp Pigott where five instructor applicants completed their certification by assisting and then teaching two on-line field skills evaluations that saw 95 students pass between the two classes.

Range Safety Officer Training: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey assisted National Rifle Association Range Safety Officer instructor Bob Palmer to conduct a certification class for 15 hunter education instructors. The instructor policy manual directs that when live fire is offered in a hunter education class that one instructor be assigned to supervise the activity. The Range Safety Officer training is designed to give the instructors the training to be better able to accomplish this. Hunter Education Instructor Bob Palmer and Dazey are certified by the National Rifle Association to provide their Range Safety Officer training. Volunteer Bob Palmer conducts these classes just for hunter education instructors at only the cost of training materials. Bob has offered this class two times previously and both times the class filled and there was a wait list. Coordinator Dazey and Bob Palmer were assisted in offering this class by three other hunter education instructors who are also certified by the National Rifle Association to teach the Range Safety Officer curriculum.

Volunteer Recognition Terry Hoffer Award: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey attended the final selection committees meeting to choose the Terry Hoffer Award recipient for the year 2015. Dazey was present to answer questions that might come up from the selection committee in regards to nominations for Region 4 instructors.

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

Wildlife Area Management Plan Update: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm continues to coordinate with the Wildlife Area Management Planning Team in preparation for the first stakeholder meeting scheduled for April 11. Updates to the planning process include finalizing the power point presentation, and posting the Wildlife Area Advisory Council meeting minutes, agenda and Charter to the website.

Training: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell attended and received a certificated of completion for Fundamentals in ArcGIS training in Seattle.

Wildlife Diversity: Biologists attended the Wildlife Diversity meeting in Mill Creek. Discussions were held on work plans, budgets, citizen science project ideas, wildlife viewing projects. This meeting was very important because it provided direction to Private Lands staff members on Wildlife Viewing efforts across King, Snohomish, Skagit, Island, San Juan, and Whatcom Counties.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mt. St. Helens Elk Herd Population Estimate: Biologists Stephens and Holman summarized data generated from the annual survey of the “core” Mt. St. Helens Elk herd area. The surveyed area includes portions of Game Management Units 520 (Winston), 522 (Loo-Wit), 524 (Margaret), 550 (Coweeman), and 556 (Toutle). Sightability corrected estimates of the elk population in the 5 surveyed GMUs combined to tally 2,943 elk. Similar estimates of 2,368 in 2014 and 2,856 in 2015 indicate stability in the St. Helens elk population. For more information on elk management in the St. Helens Herd, see the Game Status and Trend Report at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01769/> and the St. Helens Elk Herd Plan at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/00771/>

Columbian White-tailed Deer Management: Regional Wildlife Program Manager Jonker, Biologists Stephens, Bergh, and Holman, Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hand, participated in a meeting summarizing the efforts to manage the State and Federally listed Columbian White-tailed deer. Participants in management include WDFW, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington State Department of Transportation, and The Cowlitz Tribe. The most recent gathering summarized translocation efforts from the lower Columbia River to Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. During the three years spanning 2013-15, a total of 88 Columbian white-tails were moved onto Ridgefield Refuge. The effort is regarded as a success with the most recent population estimate for Ridgefield Refuge and associated areas totaling 140 white-tails. Columbian white-tails are currently proposed for downlisting from Endangered to Threatened at the federal level and are subject to a five year status review by WDFW’s Wildlife Diversity Division. To learn more about the Federal aspects of Columbian white-tail management visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife website at: <http://www.fws.gov/news/ShowNews.cfm?ref=u.s.-fish-and-wildlife-service-proposes-to-downlist-the--columbian-& ID=35257> Look for an opportunity to comment on WDFW’s Status Review later this year.

Mt St Helens Elk Herd

Evaluation: Biologist Anderson took the opportunity this week to observe a group of 110 elk in the Trout Lake area for the presence of hoof disease. None of the elk observed showed signs of limping, one of the primary visual signs for the presence of the disease. For the most part, this area of the south Cascades have had little to no reports of elk with signs of the hoof disease.

Elk in the Trout Lake Area



Oregon Spotted Frog: Biologist Butler assisted WDFW, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Department of Natural Resources staff members with Oregon Spotted Frog egg mass surveys near Trout Lake. This survey is used to monitor Oregon Spotted Frog population trends and this year marked the 20th consecutive year of the survey. Egg masses were detected in all the wetlands surveyed, but were found in lower numbers than previous years. Along with Spotted Frog egg masses, Pacific tree frog egg masses were also found in the wetlands.

Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area Tree Plantings: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald, Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Sample, and over 25 volunteers from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) planted over 9,500 trees and shrubs in the Mudflow Unit last week during a two day work party to enhance elk habitat in the area. The tree planting was funded in part from a RMEF grant to enhance elk forage on the Wildlife Area. Overall about 35 acres were planted to enhance forage and control scotch broom through shading, along with a half mile of riverbank to help with bank stabilization. This tree planting event capped off a rather large year of plantings in the Mudflow Unit as over 32,000 tree and shrubs were planted within the last month.

Deer Utilization of Fields 1 through 6 in Klickitat Wildlife Area: Some of these fields have haybit barley, a forage plant that is somewhat novel for use in attracting deer, to help with erosion control. The fields have been checked periodically during late winter to determine whether deer are present. This week Technician Davis observed seven deer on Field 2, which fled. Other deer have been on the fields as well, however; were spooked before they could be counted.

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

Polar Access: A contractor cut up and removed a large cottonwood that had fallen across a fence onto private property. The large log was cut into pieces and removed in four parts with an excavator and placed back on WDFW property. Staff members will be working with the landowner to repair the fence that's used to keep their cattle in. A load of gravel was needed to repair the damage to the road.

Polar Access tree removal



Site Cleanup: 5,000 gallons of sewage was pumped from vault toilets on four access sites: Puget Island, Beaver Creek, Massey Bar, Olequa Creek. In addition, over 150 pounds of litter, old clothing, and a washing machine were removed from several sites.



Puget Island pumping

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

Wolves: Biologist Meyer and Wildlife Conflict Specialists Conklin and Peterson attended the Wolf Advisory Group meeting in Tumwater.

Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Peterson has been working with a Trout Lake landowner and a local youth hunter to address elk damage. The landowner has been dealing with constant damage to his silage and bailed hay throughout the season. As part of a multi method approach, the landholder has been very supportive of our master hunter and youth hunter program. The landholder is currently working with the final youth hunter from Region 5 and we're hoping for another success for both the landholder and public hunters alike.

Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Peterson met with a small vineyard owner near Cook regarding ongoing deer damage. The vineyard owners are replacing a number of damaged plants and have been working with Peterson to build an electric fence. Peterson has loaned the vineyard the supplies necessary to construct an electrified deer fence around the vineyard for a trial this season. Peterson will help with construction and monitoring to determine effectiveness.

District 10 & Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions:

Past Weather: November temperatures and precipitation were both below normal, with several days of low temperatures in the 20's. December temperatures were slightly above normal and the month had record high precipitation causing some flooding throughout the District. January temperatures were average and precipitation for the month was above average. February temperatures were above normal and rainfall was average for the month.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will fluctuate between 3,500 to 5,500 feet during the upcoming week with temperatures in the valleys ranging into the 50's. The 6-10 and 8-14 day forecasts are for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The March 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, with the Wildlife Area being heavily utilized. Green up is slowly starting at the lower elevations on the Wildlife Area.

Snow Depths: Lower elevations are currently snow free below about 3,500 feet. Snowpack is slightly below average for the region (see spreadsheet below).

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The fourth winter elk survey was conducted on the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area on March 2nd, with 94 elk being observed.

Animal Condition: The majority of animals appear to be in good condition, but a couple observed have been in poor condition.

Mortality: Three mortalities have been observed while conducting other work on the Wildlife Area so far this winter.

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.

The Public is reminded the portion of the Mt. 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, 2015, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Temperatures were cooler this week with rain and snow (above 3,000 ft.) throughout the District. New snowpack brought the current snow water equivalent in the south Cascades back up to 103% (94 % last week) of normal. The Soda Springs Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area has no snow cover and green up providing abundant forage on south facing slopes.

Winter Severity: Winter conditions continue to be typical of March weather in the south Cascades and Klickitat River drainage. Snow coverage is primarily above 3,000ft elevation. There are no current concerns for big game populations in eastern Klickitat County as most animals came into this winter in favorable physical condition. Eastern Klickitat County has experienced heavier than normal precipitation and local ranchers report good spring conditions.

Habitat: 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 in the White Salmon River drainage. Deer are generally absent from open areas above 3,000ft as snow conditions have pushed deer into dense forested habitats.

Animal Concentrations: Deer are bunched in normal concentrations throughout the District, with deer in Klickitat County seen at higher elevations with the melting snowpacks. Large numbers of elk are being seen associated with the Trout Lake and Glenwood Valleys as agricultural and managed forest lands below 2,500 ft. open up with spring forage.

Animal Condition: Deer and elk appear to be in good condition and no winter stress/mortality has been reported.

Mortality: Mortalities this week were primarily associated with road kills. One landowner in the Carson area reported a couple limping yearling deer and District staff are following up on this report.

Public Contacts: No concerns raised by the public this week related to winter conditions.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Taylor's Checkerspot Recovery: Following the Taylor's checkerspot larval releases at Scatter Creek South and Glacial Heritage Preserve, Biologists Linders and Randolph identified forty-six (2x5-m) monitoring plots within release boundaries and along pre-determined transects. Plots in the field were surveyed to monitor larval survival and development. Ratios of 5th to 6th instar larvae are used to gauge time to pupation and onset of the adult flight period. At Scatter Creek the ratio of 5th to 6th instar was 47 to 110 between 17-18 March; and at Glacial Heritage the ratio of 5th to 6th instar was 33 to 32, between 16-18 March. Initial surveys at Scatter Creek on 3-5 March indicated about 40 percent of larvae were in 6th instar, whereas a small sample from Glacial Heritage on 11 March indicated about 20 percent of larvae were in 6th instar there. Larval development has slowed in the past 10 days as temperatures have returned to normal. Larvae at Glacial Heritage were released two sunny days later than at Scatter Creek, although site conditions there may also be cooler.

Checkerspot larvae were observed foraging primarily upon *Plantago lanceolata*, as well as recently planted *Collinsea parviflora* and *Plectritis congesta*.

Fifth instar Taylor's Checkerspot larvae feeding upon recently planted Plectritis congesta plug at Scatter Creek.



Biologists Linders, Randolph and Cook, with assistance from Joint Base Lewis McChord's (JBLM) Fish and Wildlife Biologist Phillips, began replacing pin flags for distance sampling survey routes at Glacial Heritage Preserve, and JBLM's Range 50 and R76. Portions of the JBLM survey routes are currently inaccessible due to the potential of unexploded ordnance. Coordination with JBLM's Explosive Ordnance Division will be required to access these areas. Only one 5th and one 6th instar larvae were observed at Range 76 on March 19. We are uncertain whether larvae there have pupated or were difficult to see due to weather. This is the time when larvae typically pupate in south Puget Sound.

Snowy Plover Nest Protection: Biologists Sundstrom and Novack met with Washington State Parks to identify sign locations to protect the plover nesting area at Midway Beach. The delineated area accommodates plover nesting as well as vehicle access to the beach. State Parks has committed to move the boundaries further west as needed as the nesting season progresses.

Biologist Novack submitted information for the Plover final report to Scott Pearson

Satsop/Mason Deer Project: In 2009, WDFW initiated a study of the effects of forest management practices on black-tailed deer reproduction. Two of eight study sites are represented in District 15: Mason and Satsop. An objective of this study involves determining sources of mortality among all radio-collared deer. The radio-collars in the Mason cluster have remote monitoring capabilities and text messages are sent when certain events occur; although periodic field checks are recommended. The Satsop collars require field monitoring to determine status. Biologist Murphie reports that no mortalities have occurred recently. Two does and four fawns are currently being monitored in the Satsop cluster, while the Mason cluster has seven does and three fawns.

Per the study design, the doe collars in the Mason unit are scheduled to drop off soon after a two-year deployment. Eight new collars will be deployed in March on different does. Murphie reports that three does were collared during net-gunning operations and one doe was collared via ground darting, so far. A second doe was collared this week during ground darting operations. Two bucks were inadvertently darted, secured, and then released on-site. Additional ground darting efforts continue.

Taylor's Checkerspot

Butterfly: Biologist McMillan reviewed Taylor's checkerspot butterfly (TCB) records to estimate the early flight potential at the sites west of the Elwha River. Biologist Ament observed a 6th instar larva on February 26th at one of the west sites and an attempt should be made at that site to document the earliest flight of TCBs.

*WDFW Fish Management
Science Technician Ryan and
Department of Natural
Resources Biologist Hanawalt
participating in the Taylor's
Checkerspot training session at
a TC site west of the Elwha on
St. Patrick's Day March 17th*



3264 x 2448 x 24 BPP / 2/2 / 30 % / 4.19 MB / 22.86 MB 3/17/2016 / 14:22:44

March 17th, on St. Patrick's Day, Biologist McMillan conducted a survey at one of the TCB sites west of the Elwha. She conducted the Jenny Route, with suitable weather conditions and few other Lepidoptera flying, at least one other butterfly observed flying. Zero TCBs were observed. No larvae were observed at the site.

McMillan invited Department of Natural Resources Biologist Hanawalt, and a WDFW Fisheries crew (Connie, Ryan and Brandon) to one of the TCB sites west of the Elwha to begin training on TCB surveying. No TCBs were flying, but there was a lot to learn at the site regarding the habitat features and how the microclimates vary so dramatically at this 2+ mile long site.

Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Survey- West of Port Angeles:

Biologist Ament attempted her first Taylor's checkerspot butterfly (TCB) survey of the season at a known TCB site west of Port Angeles on March 17, 2016. This was basically an effort to see if any butterflies were flying at the site. No TCB adults were observed during the visit to the site. A few small moths, lady bugs, bees, and one small unknown butterfly were observed during the visit. Although there was full sun and no shadows during the visit, the temperature did not get above 45.6 degrees. There was also a fairly chilly breeze with some gusts, but none > 10 mph. Ament made a very interesting observation while she was at the site. She observed several gray jay's that were very focused on eating items from the balds just below the transect survey route. At first she watched one jay and then later, when returning to the area, she watched two pairs of jays. They would fly from tree to tree and then intensely searched over the open bald areas to the north. If something caught their attention they would fly down and make an effort to secure their prey. Once they landed on the ground, they would often just hop parallel along the slope searching for food items. At one point, one of the jays landed in a low grassy area 4-5 meters below where Ament was sitting. The jay snagged a TCB larva, looked up briefly, and then flew up to a nearby Douglas fir limb and consumed the larvae. This was the only time that she was actually able to determine what the jays were eating. She did observe other caterpillars at the site so the birds were likely consuming various other larvae



Bald area where gray jays were observed feeding



Gray jays looking for larvae (in all the wrong places)



TCB larvae shown with compass to show length to help determine Instar phase

specimens. A dark-eyed junco was also seen landing in one bald area, but it was not observed feeding before it flew off. The literature conveys that TCB larvae are known to contain toxins that are thought to make birds noxious. Biologist Linders has documented observing bluebirds feeding on larvae and was very interested to learn more about this observation.

Goose with an Arrow: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Blankenship was contacted by Enforcement Officer Czebotar to assist with a goose that was reported to have an arrow stuck in its back. Blankenship and Officer Czebotar attempted to catch the goose but the goose was highly mobile and still able to fly despite having an arrow in its back. Homeowners in the area and wildlife rehabilitation groups have also attempted to catch the goose without success. Homeowners have been advised that WDFW staff members will attempt to catch the goose again if it returns to the area.

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

Trappers Rendezvous: Biologist Novack attended the trappers rendezvous in Elma. He sealed over 40 River otters and about 15 bobcats. Most of the hides were from Lewis, Thurston, and King Counties.

Dusky Goose Collar Survey: Biologists Michaelis and Sundstrom conducted a survey for collared dusky Canada geese. Michaelis observed 29 red collared geese and one goose with a green collar. Red collared geese were captured on the Copper River Delta in Alaska. Again new collars were observed in an area near the Naselle River.

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

Oregon Spotted Frog and Mazama Pocket Gopher field training: Biologist Tirhi and staff members trained approximately 25 Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Conservation District staff members on the ecology, biology, and field identification of spotted frogs and pocket gophers. This training was at the request of Natural Resource Conservation Manager Swotek, NRCS Puget Sound Resource Conservationist lead. Tirhi and staff members gave an in-house presentation on both species followed by a field trip to a local wildlife area to view spotted frog habitat and egg masses and pocket gopher habitat and mounds.

WDFW-NRCS Oregon Spotted Frog and Mazama Pocket Gopher field training, 2016.



Collared Canada Goose Sighting: Biologist Tirhi was contacted by NW Trek Curator Dave Meadows who reported a collared Canada goose and had questions on reporting. Tirhi sent him to the Bird Banding Lab website and requested he report. <https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/>



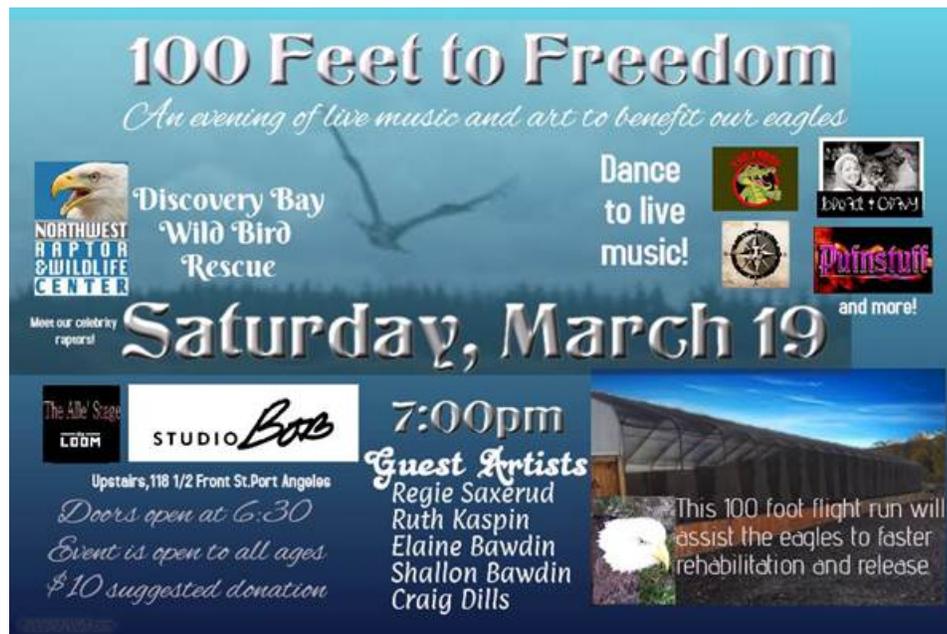
Collared Canada goose observed at NW Trek Wildlife Park, Enumclaw, WA.

Elk Harassed by Helicopter: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Blankenship was contacted by a disgruntled homeowner who described fence damage that occurred to his and his neighbor's property from elk that were being harassed by a helicopter. The homeowner was under the impression that WDFW was conducting elk surveys because of the low flying helicopter. The homeowner was advised that no elk surveys were being conducted by WDFW staff members in this area and that we would have notified homeowners of surveys being conducted in their vicinity. Blankenship sent the homeowner's contact information and a description of the helicopter to Enforcement personnel.

Goose Conflict on Black Lake: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Blankenship received a call from a homeowner along Black Lake in Olympia. The homeowner was concerned with the number of geese on the lake and the damage they were causing to him and his neighbors yards and docks. Blankenship provided the homeowner information on the legal status of geese and for preventing conflicts. Contact information for U.S. Department of Agriculture APHIS was provided to him if all non-lethal measures were ineffective at preventing further conflicts.

Benefit - 100 Feet to Freedom: Biologist Ament attended an event on March 19th to help the NW Raptor Center and Discovery Bay Wild Bird Rescue raise funds to help move a 100 foot eagle enclosure from Yakima to Port Townsend, where both centers will share it for faster rehabilitation of their eagles. Apparently, the goal is to raise \$15,000 to complete this project. Biologist Ament served as a WDFW representative at the event and conveyed her appreciation for all rehabilitation efforts from the two facilities. She invited many people and there were many people there who attend the benefit every year for the NW Raptor Center. There was excellent attendance from the community in support of the project and

significant funding was provided to assist with the goal to establish the enclosure in Port Townsend.



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

Promotion to District Biologist: Region 6 is pleased to report that Biologist Bryan Murphie has accepted the position of District Biologist in District 15. Murphie, who hails from the University of Montana, has worked in the district for almost 20 years and is widely praised for his dedication and ability to build partnerships especially among the many tribal partners we work with in the region. He is also second to none in his knowledge and grasp of the many practical skills expected of our field staff members. Congratulations Brian Murphie on your new appointment!

Diversity Work Planning: Regional Program Manager Calkins and all district biologists and their staff members met with Wildlife Diversity Division Managers to discuss new initiatives and begin planning field work for Fiscal Year 17. This annual event is a helpful communication tool to help make sure each biologist understands headquarters expectations and also provides them one avenue to provide feedback with regard to what is working and areas that need improvement. Region 6 appreciates the time that headquarters staff members devoted to travelling to each region to facilitate these sessions.

Hiring Action: Biologist Novack offered the Science Technician 2 position, for field monitoring of snowy plovers, to Katelyn Raby who accepted. Novack also assisted the Wildlife Conflict Section with interviews for a Scientific Technician 2 position.