

Crossing Paths



WITH WILDLIFE IN WASHINGTON TOWNS AND CITIES

Spring 2008

Environment, education, economy all connected

By Jeff Koenings, Ph.D., WDFW Director

Backyard wildlife sanctuary managers are among those likely to understand intuitively the connection between the environment, education, and the economy.

You are directly involved in caring for the environment, particularly that part of it that you control on your own property, with wildlife habitat landscaping, use of native plants, water conservation, and other efforts.

You've learned much about the natural world from your involvement and probably have had a hand in educating others, directly or indirectly, perhaps by sheer example.

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Crossing Paths is a quarterly newsletter for Washington residents enrolled in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Program and others interested in urban/suburban wildlife.



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Why did the deer cross the road?

*"Saw a deer
What a thrill
'Til it came
Through the grill"*

Many of us have been there.

You're driving along, minding your own business, maybe enjoying the scenery, when all of sudden there's a deer on the road, right in your path.

Your heart pounds. You swerve or hit the brakes. And there's a full body hit, or a thump as a hoof catches your fender, or a lucky miss.

Whatever the outcome, (other than a serious wreck), as your heart rate returns to normal you likely wonder "Why did that deer cross the road right there that minute?"

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Washington Department of Transportation (DOT) staff wonder,

too. With DOT crews picking up deer and elk carcasses off roadways across the state nearly every day, and recording those collections by mileposts, WDFW wildlife researchers recognized a ready-made data set to analyze and come up with some answers to that question.

With some 200 human deaths and insurance costs of nearly \$2 billion annually across the nation due to deer/elk-vehicle collisions, the answers are not just a curiosity. They might indicate ways to reduce the impact, at least on Washington's 7,046 miles of highways that receive 31.6 billion miles of travel each year.

For "Analysis of Ungulate-Vehicle Collision Sites Along State Highways in Washington State,"

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Just don't call me ugly

A coyote in Seattle's Discovery Park got a reprieve from plans to kill it. That doesn't mean the animal's fate is secure. So far, the human population has heard from spokespeople and the like. Now it's the coyote's turn.

By Coyote as told to Greg Palmer (and reprinted with his permission) from "Crosscut," News of the Great Nearby



Photo by Brad Manchias

because nobody wants them, because you're too stupid to give them the snip they deserve. There's a lot of blood to go around.)

The irony here is that we created you, if you believe a lot of the native peoples (who were also here a long time before you were.) They tell great stories about my ancestors, including a creation

The coyote responds:

First of all, what did you expect to find in your great big woods? It's a forest, you idiots, and forests have to have carnivores or there'd be nothing in them but fluffy little riffraff like squirrels, bunnies, voles, and rats, millions of chattering little pests and more every day because they have huge litters over and over again. (The wife and I have four pups twice a year, and they call us prolific. A brown rat has 12 little ratlets five times a year. Do the math.) Somebody has to — what do you call it? — thin the herd, or everybody starves. And that's carnivores like me who do that, carnivores who incidentally were in that forest a long time before you showed up, a long time before you built your city by cutting down all the other forests so we had nowhere else to go.

So now you say how you're turning this "park" into a "Wildlife Habitat." You mean like a place where wildlife live? Or is what you're really talking about a Habitat For Very Carefully Selected Pissant Little Wildlife Plus Clams, one that won't upset your useless pets and children, one where nothing's too wild and nothing's too attached to life? Because look at what happens the first time we have a co-existence problem. I'm willing to discuss it, work something out; my species

has always been adaptable. We're born negotiators. But what do you do? You immediately get your rifles and traps and Navy sharpshooters and say things like, "It will likely be euthanized."

Euthanized. Hmm. My human is a little rusty. What's that mean again? It means instead of shooting me outright, you clamp my leg in an incredibly painful way or shoot me in the butt with a syringe or drop a net over me, and when I'm completely terrified and frantic, then you kill me "humanely." Thanks a lot.

Yeah, I admit it, I popped one of your cats. I didn't do it because my Hickory Farms Meat of the Month didn't show up, I did it because that's what I do, that's how I survive out here in your "habitat." But I'm not the only one with blood on my paws. Did you ever wonder why all those cats come sauntering over from the Naval Habitat? They come to kill birds and torture mice, that's why. Your furry little pets are vicious, but you choose to ignore their villainy because they rub on your leg and don't try to eat your offspring. They kill for fun and then go home to fill their bellies with Friskies. I got no real home and no Friskies, and I don't kill for fun. So which of us deserves to live? (And let's not even talk about the thousands of your "pets" you kill — oops, euthanize — every year

story where human beings came from a coyote kicking a ball of dung around until it formed into the first man. That's right, a ball of dung. No surprise to me.

So you've decided not to kill me, at least not yet. If you expect me to thank you, you can forget that right now. Having lunch is not a capital crime, except maybe in Texas. You've finally realized that I eat what's easiest and safest. It's true, of me and every other carnivore on earth. I haven't the time or energy to do a lot of needless running around. You think if you lock up the easy eats I'll move on. You're telling people to keep their cats inside, leash their dogs, hide their garbage, and not leave their babies alone under trees in the forest. I'll admit it, it might work, and I will move on.

I'm thinking Laurelhurst.

Greg Palmer is a Seattle writer and television producer who has worked in media a long time. He's best known locally for his work as a features reporter, arts and entertainment critic, and humorist at KING-TV from 1977-1990. Since, Palmer has produced numerous public-television programs for PBS and KCTS-TV in Seattle, including "Vaudeville: An American Masters Special" and "Death: The Trip of a Lifetime." You can reach him in care of editor@crosscut.com.

Be careful pruning, cutting trees

Excerpted from PAWS Wildlife Center information

Many Washington wildlife species make their homes in our forests and individual trees, including those in our backyards.

Cavity-nesting owls, woodpeckers, native squirrels, bats and other species den in old or dead, hollowed trees. A multitude of bird species' amazing nests grace thick limbs and tiny branches alike.

Now through September are the most active nesting months for Washington wildlife, when trees will be teeming with life. Pruning or cutting down trees during these months can displace, harm, or even kill a variety of wildlife species.

The Progressive Animal Welfare Society (PAWS), a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) licensed wildlife rehabilitator in King County, receives hundreds of baby wild animals each year, many which are displaced when their nest tree is cut down or their nest site destroyed.

Before pruning or cutting down any tree, whether it's alive or dead, please consider the following:

- If possible, plan tree-cutting projects from November through January, well after nesting season.
- Thoroughly inspect the tree for active nests before beginning work.
- Consider cutting just the bare

minimum of branches, leaving the nest section alone.

- Standing dead trees (snags) make great habitat for wildlife, often housing several different species. If the tree does not present a hazard, please consider leaving it standing.
- Many wildlife species are federally protected and the law prohibits destroying and/or disturbing their nests.

If a nest-bearing tree absolutely must be cut down, first call PAWS Wildlife Center at 425-787-2500 Ext. 817 for tips on the best course of action to ensure wild animals are not harmed.

See <http://www.paws.org/wildlife/habitat/> for more information.

Why did the deer cross the road? (cont. from page 1)

WDFW research biologist Woody Myers led a study of 14,969 deer and 415 elk carcass collection records between 2000 and 2004.

The data confirmed some intuitive notions -- deer-vehicle collisions are greatest where deer populations are most dense and where traffic is greatest. Because of those factors and others, high collision sites are clustered, not random, and DOT posts deer crossing signs accordingly.

Although collision counts need to be measured at a finer or more precise scale than simply within mileposts to draw any definite conclusions, Myers also observed a number of other patterns, including:

- Highest number of deer removals occurred during the fall and highest number of elk removals occurred during the winter
- Majority of sites with unusually high deer-vehicle collisions were associated with posted speed limits of greater than 50 miles per hour

• Somewhat lower collision counts were recorded on roads with more curves and vice-versa (straighter roads were associated with higher collision counts)

• Lower collision counts were observed on eastern Washington rural interstate highways, eastern Washington urban principal arterials, and western Washington urban minor arterials –at least compared to other roadway classifications

Comparing the DOT data with established landscape databases revealed a few more patterns, including:

- Cover, forage, and water available near roads were generally associated with higher collision counts in eastern Washington mule and white-tailed deer models



Photo by Jeff Heinlen, WDFW

• Southern aspects (south-facing roadside slopes) were generally associated with higher collision counts in western Washington rural models

• Lower collision counts were associated more with steep roadside slopes (more than 35 degrees) than with moderate slopes (less than 35 degrees)

The source of the data – carcass collections – is limiting in a number of ways, Myers notes. Many deer or elk may be hit on roads but

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Why did the deer cross the road? (cont. from page 3)

don't die, or die from injuries far from the road, so those collisions are never counted. DOT collection records can't determine time of day of collisions and day-of-the-week records may only reflect worker schedules.

For example, more than twice as many carcasses are collected on Mondays than any other day of the week, and Saturdays and Sundays have the lowest counts; that may only indicate that staffing is minimal on weekends, so Monday collections include animals hit on Saturdays and Sundays.

Despite the limitations, the information is shedding some light on the basic question, and more.

The answer to why did the deer cross the road depends on local deer densities and seasonal movement patterns, near-road vegetation and whether it provides forage or cover, the level of development in the area, the terrain in general, and the time of year, Myers says.

"For example, deer generally move lower, near human development including roads, in the fall," he said. "That's also the rut or breeding season for deer, when bucks are less wary and all deer are moving around more."

The data probably says as much if not more, though, about why

the vehicle strikes the deer. Myers says increasing speed limit and traffic volume showed the greatest association with high numbers of collisions. Road sinuosity, or the number of curves or straight stretches, roadway type, and even the season of the year also influence the number of deer-vehicle collisions.

"For example, in the fall we shift to daylight savings time so suddenly more job-commuting drivers are out on the roads during dimly lit hours when deer on the road are harder to see," he said.

So what can be done to avoid crossing paths with deer in such a traumatic way?

For the driver, slowing down is the first step, especially from dusk to dawn and during the fall and winter. Paying attention to DOT's deer crossing signs, and particularly "high kill area" signs, can be critical. Speed limit reductions at night along stretches of highway with a high rate of collisions might be in order.

In general, new highway development in high deer or elk use areas should be avoided.

Deer or elk could be protected from collisions with construction



of fences along roadways with high collision rates, especially if combined with existing bridges or development of over or under passes to allow natural movement. Such efforts have proved effective in other parts of the country.

Washington DOT is already exploring wildlife crossing projects, such as the Snoqualmie Pass East section of Interstate 90 (for more information see www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/I90/SnoqualmiePassEast/HyaktoKeechelusDam/).

Myers' study concludes that while the analysis of the DOT data provided some insights and confirmed conventional wisdom about deer-elk/vehicle collisions, additional research would be helpful, including review of existing telemetry data of radio-collared deer and elk to assess movement near and across highways, field inspection and mapping of high collision sites to further document habitat associations, and driver surveys about deer/elk collisions.

Free wildlife posters at WDFW Montesano office, too

Those free wildlife posters advertised in the last edition of this newsletter are available for pick up at the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Coastal Region office at 48 Devonshire Road in Montesano, as well as the Mill Creek and Vancouver offices earlier noted.

Four posters, which measure approximately 24 by 36 inches, depict ecosystems of Washington entitled "Celebrate Urban Wildlife In Washington", "Washington's Sea Stack Shoreline", "Washington's Shrub-Steppe Heritage", and "Washington Watershed Restoration Partnerships."

Posters can also be mailed from the Mill Creek office at shipping cost. Send requests specifying poster type and quantity, with a check or money order payable to Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for \$5 for the first poster and \$1 for each additional poster, to

WDFW - ATTENTION
Wildlife Posters,
16018 Mill Creek Blvd.,
Mill Creek, WA 98012-1296.

Environment, education, economy all connected (cont. from page 1)

And through your participation you may be inclined to realize that a healthy environment is the foundation of a healthy economy. Business thrives where people have clean air and water, open space, robust flora and fauna, and fully-functioning, sustainable ecosystems in general.

Governor Chris Gregoire recognizes this interconnectedness, too, which is why she, along with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), champions “E-3,” a strategy to educate the environmental decision makers of the future.

E-3 (Environment, Education, Economy) was launched last year by the Environmental Education Association of Washington, with the governor co-chairing the effort with Billy Frank Jr., Chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, and William Ruckleshaus, former head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and currently chair of Washington’s Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

As a board member and past president of the Pacific Education Institute (PEI), I addressed Association members at a statewide E-3 summit to encourage their efforts to develop a comprehensive state environmental education plan. I believe such a plan is critical because currently environmental education tends to be piecemeal, by special individual interests for everything from air quality to wildlife habitat.

For example, WDFW’s own “Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy” needs to be linked to other statewide initiatives, like the governor’s Puget Sound Partnership, Biodiversity Council and Ocean Caucus.

The E-3 approach is akin to our own move from single species management to broader ecosystem or landscape management. I believe this kind of approach will result in state and local action not just on behalf of our wildlife and plant species, but on behalf of our children’s future and the future of Washington’s environment.

Our young people need first-hand and hands-on experiences that lead them to learn to ask critical questions, to explore a variety of values and options, to dig deep into issues, to get their hands dirty in real world applications. The E-3 approach can challenge young people to understand the complexity of issues, to make informed decisions, and to take action to solve problems.

WDFW Environmental Education Manager Margaret Tudor, who is also PEI co-executive director, is one of five state agency steering committee members leading an E-3 State Agency Roundtable. They are developing a state plan to assess the roles of state agencies in delivering E-3 messages and documenting needs and recommendations. Margaret is leading preparations for the launch of that E-3 plan in May with the governor’s staff.

Margaret and our other WDFW outreach and education staff have developed some powerful on-going projects in school districts across Washington.

For example, Project Bluebird in Tumwater, Fort Lewis and the Whidbey Island school districts, involves students in efforts to recover blue bird populations.

Project CAT, (Cougars And Teaching), is in its seventh year in the Cle Elum School District, where students measure changes in their environment and study

human population growth in and around their community and how that impacts cougars. In the Warden School District, children work with our biologists to protect at-risk burrowing owls on their schoolyards.

These and other projects change lives. Teachers and their students make communities stand up and take notice to what is happening in their changing landscape. I think they leave students with a clearer idea of both the individual and societal obligation to make intelligent decisions and take appropriate actions to protect the “green” in our Evergreen State.

A series of E-3 regional summits, or gatherings of diverse interests in environment, education, and economy, has been under way since the statewide launch to nurture networking, coordinate efforts, and identify ways to advance the concept. Some WDFW staff members have been involved, and some of you may have participated in these meetings already.

Later this year the Association plans to deliver a statewide plan that defines what’s needed at state and local levels to achieve “environmental literacy” in Washington.

An environmentally literate person is defined as one who has knowledge of the interrelatedness in natural systems, someone with an attitude of care or stewardship of natural resources, someone able to act in ways that are sustainable or can be maintained without adverse long-term effects.

I think that sounds like many of you in our Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program. I congratulate you on your “environmental literacy,” thank you for your efforts for wildlife and for showing others what can be done, and encourage you to learn more about the E-3 movement in Washington at www.e3washington.org.

Spring is full of wildlife events

April 19: Wings Over Water, Northwest Birding Festival, Blaine and Birch Bay. View



thousands of geese, sea ducks, and raptors that crowd the estuarine habitats ranging from the Canadian border at Blaine to the beaches of Birch Bay State Park. Exhibits of wildlife art, carvings, seminars, and field trips. For details <http://www.blainechamber.com/wow/>

April 19 – 27: National Wildlife Week, National Wildlife Federation. “Get outside and celebrate” ideas for families at <http://www.nwf.org/nationalwildlifeweek/>

April 22: 38th annual celebration of Earth Day with events in communities across Washington on and around the date. Most event listing updates can be found at www.earthday.org.

April 26: The Procession of the Species, Olympia. Artistic and environmental celebration of the



natural world using the media of art, music, dance, costumes and floats. Exhibits on “Nurturing Nature in your Neighborhood.” <http://www.procession.org>

May 2-4: Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival, Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge, Bowerman Basin near Hoquiam. Festival events range from shorebird viewing to extended field trips, lectures, food and exhibits. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge. For more info, 360-753-9467 or <http://www.shorebirdfestival.com/>

May 3: Prairie Appreciation Days, Glacial Heritage Preserve, Rochester. Self-guided nature trails through prairie, oak-woodland, and other habitats staffed by experts on butterflies, wildflowers, geology, history and prairie restoration. For more info, 360-458-5450 or <http://www.prairieappreciationday.org>

May 10: Backyard Wildlife Festival, Tukwila (Seattle Metro area). Learn how to certify your yard as a wildlife habitat sanctuary; workshops on gardening, landscaping for wildlife; tour certified wildlife gardens; learn about sustainable living and community-wide wildlife habitat efforts; kids’ activities; arts and crafts booths. (See story on page 7 about “Animal Planet” host keynote speaker) For more info, <http://www.backyardwildlifefair.org>.

May 10: International Migratory Bird Day. Celebrate the return of millions of migratory birds to their North American breeding grounds. For local events, see www.birdday.org.



May 16-18: Leavenworth Spring Bird Fest, Leavenworth. Birding, geology, wildflowers and conservation.

For registration, call the Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce, 509-



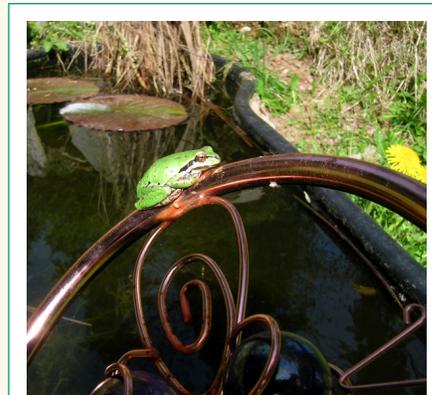
548-5807 <http://www.leavenworthspringbirdfest.com/>

Tell us about your wildlife statuary

Do you have a cement deer in your yard? A brass bird or bear? A wooden raccoon?

We’re curious about wildlife statuary in Washington’s Backyard Wildlife Sanctuaries. Why did you add these ornaments, how do they fit with your landscape, and how do real, live wildlife that visit your yard react to them, if at all?

Send a note and pictures, if you like, to WDFW wildlife biologist Russell Link at linkrel@dfw.wa.gov.

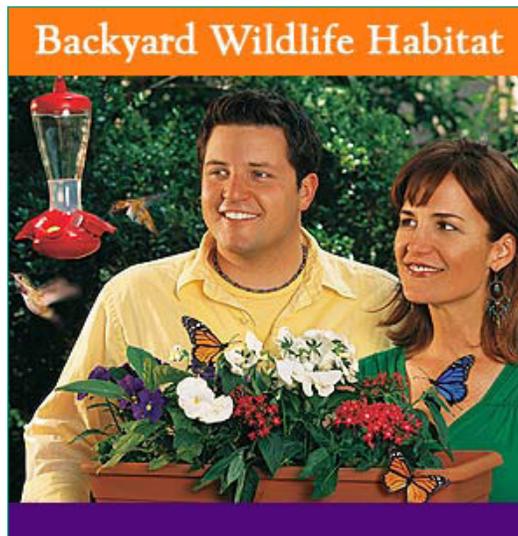


Tukwila's festival features Animal Planet backyard host

The keynote speaker at Tukwila's eighth annual, free Backyard Wildlife Festival on May 10 is the host and co-producer of the backyard habitat portion of the Discovery Channel television series "Animal Planet."

David Mizejewski transforms yards and gardens into thriving habitats for birds and other wildlife on the popular show that has been airing since 2005 (see <http://animal.discovery.com/fansites/backyard/backyard.html>.) He also manages the National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat program, which has teamed up with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program for dual enrollments.

Mizejewski spent his youth romping in suburban woods, fields and marshes, learning about the surprising diversity of wildlife that inhabit those areas, observing



the connection between native plant communities and wildlife populations, and developing a life-long passion for wildlife-friendly gardening.

He is the author of the award-winning book "Attracting Birds, Butterflies and Other Backyard Wildlife", published in 2004 by Creative Homeowner. He worked as a naturalist at the Chattahoochee

Nature Center in Georgia and Long Branch Nature Center in Virginia, and directed an urban forestry grant program for the National Tree Trust in Washington, D.C.

Tukwila, the first city in the state of Washington to be certified as an official Community Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation, is hosting the free, day-long festival.

Festival events like Mizejewski's talks at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., and WDFW wildlife biologist and author Russell Link's annual "Native Plants for Wildlife Gardens and Landscapes" workshop at 1 p.m., are at the Tukwila Community Center, 12424 42nd Ave. S., just south of Boeing Field. But other activities, like the backyard wildlife habitat garden tours and "Procession of Species" parade are off-site.

See www.backyardwildlifefair.org for a detailed schedule of events.

Crescent Valley unveils stewardship plan

The Crescent Valley Alliance of Pierce County introduces its new "Crescent Valley Biodiversity Management Area (BMA) Stewardship Plan" on Earth Day, April 22, at the Gig Harbor YMCA Community Room.

The evening event, co-sponsored by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), is dedicated to good stewardship for private landowners and neighbors in the Crescent Valley Watershed who value the native diversity of this unique watershed.

The plan's co-author Karen Dvornich, of the University of Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Unit, says it's a model



Crescent Valley Alliance

for county, state, and nation-wide landowner-based action.

The entire Stewardship Plan can be downloaded from the alliance website at www.crescentvalleyalliance.org.

The alliance will also dedicate its National Wildlife Federation

Habitat Demonstration Site at the Gig Harbor City Park at Crescent Creek on Saturday, April 26, 1-4 p.m.

Other alliance partners in this effort are the Key Peninsula/Gig Harbor/Islands Watershed Council, Tacoma Nature Center, and Pierce County Stream Team.

Why I Band Birds

By Christine Southwick, Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary program enrollee

I band birds to save habitats.

By finding out which birds use an area, and having the data to prove it, I can activate neighbors and go to council meetings, and say, “These birds need this urban forest, wetlands, or pond.”

Habitat loss is the greatest danger to wildlife, and especially migrating birds. When a swampy area is drained, a pond filled in, or a creek put into pipes, migrating birds lose a vital refueling and resting stop. They may not have the energy to fly to the next known landmark. Death is a real consequence, so too is nesting failure due to depleted fat reserves.

I band for the physical exercise.

Birds are caught in banding nets that are 10 feet high and usually 30 feet long. There’s a lot of reaching up and squatting down to carefully remove birds. Nets need to be checked every 20 minutes for the birds’ safety.

MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) stations usually have an array of ten nets up for six hours at a time. These nets are spread across as many different types of habitat features as possible to catch the greatest number of species.

If a net has several birds, I have to speed walk to the next net so that



the birds in that net don’t wait too long. Then I hurry to the banding station to band each bird, determine its age and sex, general health and whether it is breeding or not. 30 feet times 10 equals 300 feet times 3 times an hour for six hours equals eighteen football fields. And that’s not counting the travel distance between nets – easily a five-mile workout.

I band to keep my mind active.

I have to identify the species, know how to use the thick bander’s guide, identify age by observing molt patterns, and correctly enter the 34 units of data recorded for each bird. I have to know how

to safely hold the bird while I’m closing the band, and I have to recognize signs of stress and let the bird go even if I am not done. The safety of the bird is paramount.

I band for all those reasons. But really, I band for those awesome moments when I hold the birds safely in my hands, get the needed information, and then open my hands and let them fly free once again.

I like to think that each time I hold a bird I help make the world a safer place for them. I want the next generation to be able to hold a bird and soar with it as it takes wing from their hands.

This program receives Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is the policy of the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to adhere to the following: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The U.S. Department of the Interior and its bureaus prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and sex (in educational programs). If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, please contact the WDFW ADA Coordinator at 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, Washington 98501-1091 or write to:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Office of External Programs
4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 130
Arlington, VA 22203

