

Wildlife Program

Week of Nov. 19 – Nov. 25, 2018

GAME DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Region 2 and Region 4 - East-West Black Bear Project: Carnivore section personnel have been monitoring GPS collar data from research bears to determine den entry dates and locations of over 70 winter dens. They have also coordinated with hunters to retrieve collars from hunter-harvested bears. Staff members will visit dens in December to collect information on reproduction rates and survival of sub-adult and female bears, and will remove collars from adult males as sufficient data is obtained. Den entry began the first week of October starting with pregnant females, and almost all other bears are now settling in.

Statewide Bear & Cougar Education & Outreach: Biologist Beausoleil, Officer Kirsch, and Karelian bear dogs (KBDs) Indy and Jax were invited to present at the North American Association for Environmental Education in Spokane. The symposium was attended by 500 people and the presentation on bear, cougar, and the KBD Program was well received. They also conducted a meet and greet in the evening with other presenters and the KBDs attracted quite a bit of attention.

Carnivore section staff members gave presentations about agency response to bear- and cougar-human conflict and the use of bear spray at the annual Wolf Haven Chemical Immobilization Course. The class was attended by a diverse group of biologists including those from several Pacific Northwest tribes, federal and state agencies, and students.

Carnivore section staff members also received the 2018 cougar brochures from the printer and distributed them to WDFW offices statewide. In cooperation with Western Wildlife Outreach, the brochure was updated to replace the older version with outdated information and expanded the section recommending outdoor recreationist carry bear spray.

Cougar population size, harvest numbers, and recommendations for reducing cougar-human conflicts were prepared and disseminated to Regional staff members for public education and outreach activities.

Beaver relocation: Biologist Kindschuh continued development of a statewide beaver relocation protocol. This included a follow-up Beaver Working Group meeting as well as hosting a webinar for WDFW staff members to review. She has been compiling feedback from staff members and preparing the protocol for SEPA review.



Cougar information brochure developed in 2018 in cooperation with Western Wildlife Outreach.

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

Upland game and furbearers: Biologist Kindschuh supported Pheasant Release Program Manager White and other staff members in hosting a pheasant hunting clinic at Davis Creek Wildlife Area. Biologist Kindschuh finalized revisions to the upland game bird sections for the 2018 status and trend reports, issued new permits to authorized CITES pelt sealers, distributed seals, and reviewed a tactical marketing plan from WDFW marketing personnel. The objectives of the marketing plan are to recruit, retain, and reactivate turkey hunters. She also reviewed WACs and drafted revisions to clarify language and intent, and worked with Hunter Education Specialist Thorson to change the waiting period for retaking the trapper education exam from 30 days to seven days.

REGION 1

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

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Camera Traps: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer deployed motion-activated cameras in the yard at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area headquarters, as he has done each fall, to record rut activity. As usual, it is a popular place with many deer coming and going. Many does and fawns and at least eight different white-tailed bucks have been caught on camera. Below is a picture of two of the larger bucks.



A new definition of “head-butt.” It is all about perspective!

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

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Facilities Maintenance: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer completed a project to improve drainage around the shop building at the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area headquarters. Every spring, water infiltrates the shop floor due to improper ground elevation and drainage along the west side of the shop. Palmer installed a curtain drain to remedy the problem.



Caribou Recovery Public Meeting: Regional Wildlife Program Manager Robinette and District Wildlife Biologist Prince represented WDFW at the public meeting for the rollout of the management plan for the South Selkirk Mountain caribou. The plan is the culmination of three years of work by a technical committee funded by the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. Robinette, Prince, and retired biologist Dana Base, participated in the plan development. An overview of the public draft of the document is available on the tribe's website at http://www.kootenai.org/kvri_docs.html

REGION 2

No report submitted this week.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

2019 Hunting Seasons: Biologist Bernatowicz finished updating WACs for the 2019 season. New sheep units in the Yakima River Canyon were proposed along with ewe permits.

Yakima Canyon Bighorn Sheep Project: Biologists Bernatowicz continued to correspond with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) regarding bait sites in the southern portion of the canyon. All four bait/potential trap sites are on BLM land. All are on gravel roads or rocky sites, but there are still concerns over sensitive plants. Bernatowicz also responded from a request for more information from IT regarding an order for cellular cameras. The cameras will save significant time if purchased.

Grouse Wing Sampling: Two samples were collected from the stations in Kittitas County.

Bighorn Sheep Bait Stations: A single bait station was set up at the top of Mt. Baldy in the Yakima Canyon. The bait consisted of apples, fermented apples, and salt along with a trail camera to document use. Two other locations were checked, but access issues prevented Biologist Moore from setting up these stations. Moore will continue to work with the Eatons to find a location on their ownership in the northern end of the Selah Butte Unit. A third station will be set in the northern portion of the Umtanum Unit next week.

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

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area - Manager Melissa Babik

Natural Resource Technician Daling hung signage on the new kiosk at Green Gate.

Natural Resource Technician Nass transferred signs from the old reader board at Joe Watt to the newly constructed kiosk built with supplies and assistance from the Field and Stream Club. The interpretive panel is being designed and expected mid-January.



Kiosk at Joe Watt taking shape

Sunnyside Wildlife Area - Manager Phillip Buser

Assistant Manager Ferguson and Assistant Manager Kaelber collected user registration cards and restocked registration boxes at the parking lots prior to the holiday weekend.

Region 3 Private Lands Biologist - Seth Hulett

Private Lands Biologist Hulett assisted nine hunters interested in gaining hunting access on areas enrolled in the Hunt by Reservation program.

Private Lands Biologist Hulett attempted to contact landowners to obtain signatures on their new Hunting Access agreement. Unfortunately, the last few landowners are not easy to get in touch with.

Private Lands Biologist Hulett mailed out three contracts for signature to landowners in north Franklin County. One contract was a renewal, while two new contracts helped meet the requirements of a Damage Prevention Cooperation Agreement the landowners have with WDFW.

Private Lands Biologist Hulett set up three Hunt by Reservation hunting opportunities on the Snake River DNR land south of Pasco. Signs and registration boxes were placed next to corresponding fields while additional signs were set up to direct hunters to the correct fields from a main entry road. These hunting opportunities will only be open during goose days.

Region 3 Private Lands Technician - Ashley Rodgers

Private Lands Technician Rodgers visited private lands access sites in Franklin County that were recently renewed. These sites were updated with new signs and phone numbers.

Private Lands Technician Rodgers assisted Private Lands Biologist Hulett in setting up Hunt by Registration sites on DNR land.

Private Lands Technician Rodgers checked and maintained all registration boxes on Army Corp property where pheasants were released.

District 8 Wildlife Biologist - Jeff Bernatowicz

Biologist Bernatowicz responded to 15 requests for information, mostly regarding late season archery and upland bird opportunity. One continuing issue for archery hunters has been DNR's closure of the South Fork Ahtanum road. DNR has apparently had vandalism/timber damage, so gated the road. DNR's Ahtanum State Forest Plan indicates a desire to develop opportunity for non-motorized users in the area. Some hunters believe it is WDFW's responsibility to keep DNR's roads open. There is still plenty of access to the area and the closure will most likely make hunting better for those willing to work a little harder to access the area.

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

Sunnyside Wildlife Area - Manager Phillip Buser

Manager Buser met with a Boy Scout and his family to go over the particulars of his Eagle Scout project. The young man is going to coordinate help with replacing the safety signs around the shooting range on the Rattlesnake Slope Unit. Many of the signs burned up in the Labor Day weekend fire.

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist - Don Hand

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with several landowners in the Rattlesnake Mountain area to discuss elk activity and potential damage permit opportunities since the general season has ended.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand attempted to recover images from a trail camera deployed along Hanford's southern border adjacent to seeded wheat fields. Unfortunately, the camera and its mounting hardware and post have been stolen.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand prepared and delivered a completed and approved Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement and damage permits to a wheat grower near Kahlotus to address deer damage impacts.

District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist - Steven Wetzel

Conflict Specialist Wetzel hazed a large herd of elk off the edge of I-90 this week. The elk were trying to cross both lanes and go south. Washington Department of Transportation (DOT) assisted in keeping the elk from entering the freeway lanes in the dark. The next day most of the elk were not visible and may have left the area, crossed to the south, or went north into the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area.

A landowner in Thorp reported elk in the area this week. A check of the location found several elk at two locations. The elk were hazed out of the area and the locations will be monitored each week.



Elk group hazed out of the Thorp area

Conflict Specialist Wetzel checked the integrity of the Taneum electric crossing this week. The solar unit has fallen off its base in a windstorm and needs repairs. Elk and deer exclusion appears to be complete at that location due to the additional wire on the electric drape.



Elk and deer have not been able to get through the fortified electric drape

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

Sunnyside Wildlife Area - Manager Phillip Buser

Manager Buser participated in a conference call with Regional Lands Supervisor Huffman and Lands Division Planner Jatczak. They discussed the progress on the 10-year management plan and the next steps to keep moving forward.

Assistant Manager Kaelber cleared more debris from a culvert supplying water to the lower Pigeon Pond at the Mesa Unit. He also cleared debris from the inflow of the phase 1 wetland at the Windmill Ranch Unit.

REGION 4

No report submitted this week.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Puget Island Columbian White-tailed Deer Survey: Biologists Stephens and Holman assisted Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge with annual Columbian white-tailed deer surveys. Surveys are conducted on and off the refuge throughout the deer's range. Surveys are done by driving routes and counting and classifying deer observed. Ninety-two deer were observed on two routes covering most of Puget Island.



Hoof Disease Prevalence/Diagnostics: Biologist Stephens, Holman, and Garrison took turns gathering hunter-harvested elk hooves from designated collection points. This is the fourth year that hunters are being asked to collect and submit hooves of harvested elk to WDFW and determine if they observed any abnormalities in the hooves of the elk they harvested. The collection will provide more information on the apparent prevalence of the disease in southwest Washington and further insight into the microbial profiles of hoof disease at different stages of the disease. Collection barrels were placed at seven locations throughout southwest Washington. So far, 25 samples have been submitted at Region 5 collection sites. A big thanks to the hunters for taking the time to submit these important samples and to the various retailers, hatchery managers, and other individuals for allowing WDFW to place the collection barrels in several convenient locations.

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

2019 Big Game Season Development: Regional wildlife biologists and conflict specialists have submitted proposals for the 2019 big game hunting seasons to Olympia Game Division staff members. 2019 represents the second year in the 2018-20 three-year season setting cycle, so changes to the structure of big game hunting will be minimal.

Checks of Hunter-killed Game Species: With the continuation of various hunting seasons, members of the regional wildlife and customer service teams have checked a variety of species at the regional headquarters in Ridgefield. Wildlife checked have included mountain goats, cougars, bears, and bobcats. Thanks to the successful hunters for bringing their animals to WDFW for sample collection.



Region 5 Cougar harvest checks

Dusky Canada Geese: The goose hunting season re-opened in Goose Management Area (GMA) 2-Inland on Nov. 24. Biologist Burlingame contacted several groups of hunters in Clark County to identify their geese and ensure duskies were not harvested. Many groups were successful and no duskies were harvested among the groups checked. Large flocks of cackling Canada geese and snow geese were observed in the area, with cackling geese making up all of the harvested geese that were checked. Hunters are encouraged to continue their vigilant goose identification as duskies have been observed in the area.

The goose season in GMA 2-Inland is open Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday, now through Jan. 13, 2019.



Goose harvest

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

Cougar Public Meeting in Ridgefield: Biologists Bergh, Conflict Specialist Jacobsen, and Enforcement Sergeant Anderson spoke at a public meeting about cougars at the regional office in Ridgefield this week. Bergh gave the audience an overview of cougar biology, Jacobsen outlined several recommendations for preventing negative cougar interactions with livestock, pets, and humans, and Sergeant Anderson discussed the best ways to report cougar sightings and cougar-related incidents. Approximately 30 members of the public attended, along with at least two media outlets. For more information on cougars in Washington, please visit our website: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/living/cougars.html>.

Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement Renewals: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with several landowners to renew their Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for elk damage. Fencing options, public hunting opportunities, and damage permits were discussed.

Bobcat Advice: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen provided advice to a landowner who recently lost chickens and turkeys to a bobcat. Recommendations included fencing options, light deterrents, trail cameras, and trapping options. The landowner was extremely appreciative of the advice.

Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin met with land owners in the Cowlitz Valley. Due to low elk numbers, it was decided that youth and disabled hunts will be postponed until larger numbers of elk are observed on the agricultural lands.

Canids: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to a call regarding unknown canids chasing a deer across the Cowlitz River.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Elk Capture: Biologist Murphie assisted the Skokomish Tribe's Department of Natural Resources team led by Bethany Ackerman in the deployment of radio collars on cow elk in GMUs 636 and 651 last week. This is part of a cooperative long-term monitoring strategy for elk in the area. He reports deploying five collars on adult cow elk from four herds.



Photo of the elk capture team lining up for darting an adult cow elk

Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Habitat Enhancement: Biologist Ament met with Biologist Hays and DNR Planning Coordinator Graywolf Nattinger at one of the known Taylor's checkerspot butterfly (TCB) sites located west of the Elwha River on Nov. 21. The focus of the first half of the day was to review habitat improvements that have been completed by Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crews. The crews had conducted tree and brush removal at the site the past two fall seasons to open up areas to more sun exposure. Recently the crew conducted some prep-work in order to initiate burning piles of trees and brush that were previously created. Burning of piles was conducted Nov. 10-13. The crew also seeded all burn pile sites with a mix of TCB host and nectar plants. Biologist Hays provided some good direction for selecting future habitat areas to improve. He also provided suggestions on how crews could minimize vegetation damage when installing fire breaks around burn piles. The second half of the day was spent at another known TCB site west of the Elwha River. DNR Forester Brian Turner hiked in and joined the group for this field review. Time was spent reviewing road access and discussing a proposal by DNR to conduct a timber harvest at the location. Another field meeting will be conducted next month with other WDFW personnel. Biologist Hays provided

instructions on how to properly seed the areas that were recently burned. All burn pile areas were then seeded.



Dave Hays reviews piles recently burned



Dave discusses proper seeding technique

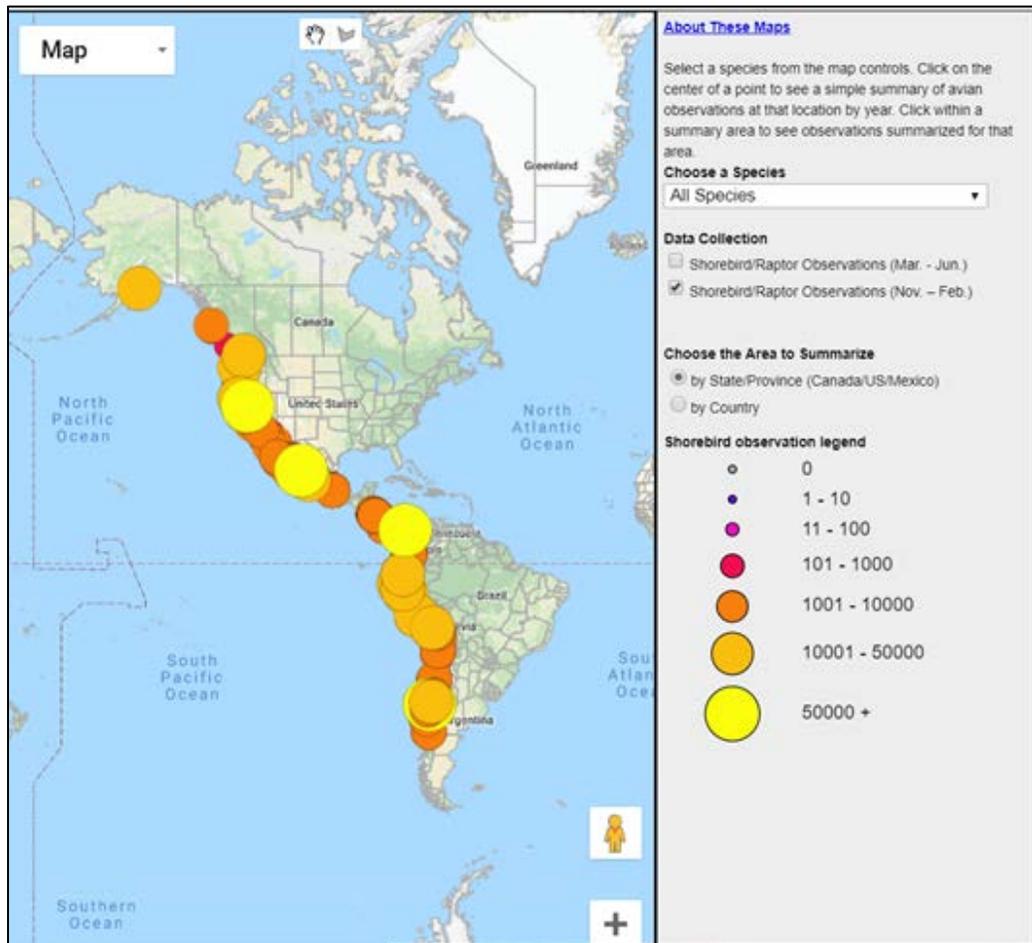


Graywolf seeding burn pile site



View up the Elwha Valley was exceptionally nice

Shorebird Survey: Biologist Tirhi assisted with the 2018 Grays Harbor Shorebird Survey, a subset of the trans-America Migratory Shorebird Project <http://www.migratoryshorebirdproject.org/en/home>. The USFWS Division of Migratory Birds, Portland, OR, coordinated this year's survey. Tirhi was assigned Bowerman Basin North in the Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge. Although survey conditions were ideal and large numbers of waterfowl were counted, only two flocks of shorebirds were counted over the two-hour survey period (dunlins and semipalmated plovers). Regardless, according to USFWS, "this data is significant when grouped with all the sites collecting data in the flyway and essential for keying in on long-term trends".



Depiction of shorebird concentration areas by size along the Pacific flyway removal