

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

Nov. 16 to Nov. 30, 2019

DIVERSITY DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

White-nose Syndrome Surveillance Training: WDFW biologists Tobin, Haman, and Thompson hosted a training for bat rehabilitators on white-nose syndrome surveillance, which included guidance and procedures on sampling and screening bats for white-nose syndrome (WNS), biosecurity and decontamination after transporting and handling bats. There were 14 rehabilitators present from 10 wildlife rehabilitator facilities. Bat rehabilitators provide important information to WDFW about the status of WNS and on the health of bats.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this installment.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this installment.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this installment.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this installment.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Ungulate Specialist Garrison, Deer and Elk Section Manager Hoenes, and regional Wildlife Program staff members continued to develop a program to incentivize hunters to target hoof diseased elk. Based on anecdotal feedback from hunters and preliminary results from WDFW elk survival research, hunters avoid harvesting hoof diseased elk. Unfortunately, avoidance of harvesting diseased animals is contrary to best wildlife disease management practices because fewer diseased animals would theoretically result in reduced disease transmission. A strong incentive program will hopefully encourage hunters to harvest more diseased animals and thereby assisting WDFW in managing this challenging disease.

Deer and Elk Section Manager Hoenes, Game Division Manager Aoude, Ungulate Specialist Garrison, Wildlife Program regional managers, and Science Division personnel worked with Washington State University (WSU) researchers to facilitate multiple research projects related to Treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD). WSU is in the final stages of preparing their captive facility where they will conduct experiments to better understand TAHD. WSU researchers require both TAHD infected and uninfected animals, and WDFW and WSU will work collaboratively to capture and transport live elk from the wild to the WSU's captive facility this winter. WSU is also initiating a social science inquiry into the human dimensions of TAHD. The above WDFW staff members provided input and suggestions on the WSU survey, which should be sent to participants in February 2020. Ungulate specialist Garrison worked on data sharing agreements to facilitate multiple data requests from WSU.

Ungulate Specialist Garrison began working on back-logged ungulate tooth data entry and processing. WDFW routinely collects ungulate teeth during research projects and from hunters. Teeth are used to age animals and age information is used to inform management. This year, WDFW contacted black-tail deer hunters to request they submit an incisor tooth from their harvest, resulting in a larger than usual number of teeth received. WDFW will use harvest data, including age and antler points, to explore the use of population reconstruction methods to estimate black-tail population abundance and WDFW has received a large number of black-tailed deer teeth from 2019 hunting seasons.

White-tailed Deer Population Surveys: Deer Specialist Hansen completed exploratory analyses and identified next steps required to ensure appropriate completion of the Aerial Mark-Recapture Distance Sampling Project begun in 2014 to investigate the efficacy of the method as a means for estimating detection probabilities for and population abundance of white-tailed deer in northeast Washington. Initial results based on exploratory analyses are positive but will take some additional work before results are available for internal review.

Integrated Population Modeling Workshop: Deer Specialist Hansen and Elk Specialist Garrison participated in a five day workshop in Missoula, MT attended by biometricians and quantitative population ecologists from state and federal agencies and universities throughout the country, and internationally, that was taught by industry experts Marc Kéry and Michael Schaub. The workshop focused on the conceptual framework of Bayesian analyses and Integrated Population Models (IPMs), development and practice of analytical skills needed to apply the models to existing data sets, and discussion of appropriate application of the models to accommodate data-limitations common to wildlife management situations for various taxa. IPMs are an efficient and powerful way incorporate parameter estimates from multiple independent, periodic data streams like harvest, abundance, demographic ratios, and survival and produce a robust model of a given population from year to year even when all data streams are not always available each year. IPMs have been implemented in many western states already and are highly applicable to deer population monitoring in Washington as well. Ongoing research projects and efforts to refine and improve current deer monitoring practices were begun in 2015 with the intent to develop robust parameter estimates for mule deer and white-tailed deer that will support appropriate application of IPMs for those species in Washington over time.

Post-hunt Aerial Mule Deer Surveys: Deer Specialist Hansen worked with over a dozen staff across six districts to provide spatial products and finalize sampling designs and survey protocols in support of annual monitoring population monitoring efforts of mule deer herds in three different Mule Deer Management Zones. The results of these surveys will provide the Department with information about the status of various mule deer herds and help inform management of the state's mule deer populations.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Ungulate Specialist Garrison worked with regional Wildlife Program staff members to complete Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) grant proposals. Every year, these generous RMEF grants fund research and habitat projects that benefit elk and other wildlife throughout Washington. WDFW will submit seven proposals for projects in 2020. These projects include forest restoration, weed control, improved signage, and forage enhancement.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Ungulate Specialist Garrison spoke with several hunters about hunting prospects, the status of elk populations, Treponeme-associated hoof disease, and traded stories of successes and, especially in Specialist Garrison's case, failures during this fall's hunting seasons.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Game Division Planning Meeting: Deer Specialist Hansen attended a three-day meeting of Game Division personnel to discuss issues pertinent to game management, staffing, and communication needs within the division.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nothing for this installment.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this installment.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this installment.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this installment.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey activated 14 hunter education classes for the region. Dazey secured the Region 4 conference room for a Monday morning hunter education class. Dazey assisted and answered questions from a bow hunter who was traveling out of state to hunt.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia and volunteer Rich Mann met with a group of people that are registered for an upcoming mentored turkey hunt. The meeting was at the Cascade Field and Stream gun range. Garcia and Mann gave a clinic on fall turkey hunting and then assisted the participants with patterning and sighting in their shotguns.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia and volunteer Rich Mann travelled to Mead, Washington and spent four days mentoring 12 new turkey hunters. They were successful in teaching the new hunters how to identify turkey sign, plan for a hunt, and call for fall birds. The 12 hunters harvested 16 turkeys.





6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey was able to add two new instructors into our Kalkomey database. The new instructors had completed all their pre-service training requirements, passed their background checks, and were ready to join a teaching team and start to train the next generation of safe legal and ethical hunters.

Coordinator Dazey while conducting teaching team evaluations assisted the capital asset manager by also conducting the bi-annual inventory check for two chief instructors.

Coordinator Dazey worked on securing dates and venues to conduct firearm training for wildlife staff members issued firearms pursuant to Policy 7011. Dazey also secured venues and dates for Range Safety Officer (RSO) training for hunter education instructors whose team uses live fire in their classes. A total of seven RSO classes are now scheduled and the registration forms have been distributed to the states volunteer hunter education instructors.

Region 5 Coordinator Elliott worked through instructor records to add newly certified persons to the Kalkomey program, as well as inactivate people who haven't taught and will no longer be certified.

Coordinator Elliott completed a class evaluation of a local team as well as helped a new team with their completed class records.

Region coordinators Garcia, Dazey, Elliott, and Montgomery, along with Hunter Education Division personnel, attended a staff meeting in Ellensburg. The next day three of the regional coordinators attended the Instructor Advisory Committee (IAC) meeting at the Ellensburg office. The IAC works as the information conduit between the Hunter Education Division and our over 1000 instructors. The IAC is composed of representatives from each region in the state as well as Washington State Hunter Education Instructor's Association and Hunter Education Resource Organization.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

LANDS DIVISION

No report this period.

SCIENCE DIVISION

No report this period.

REGION 1

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Bighorn Sheep Survey: District 2 biologists Atamian and Lowe flew the annual aerial survey of the Lincoln Cliffs bighorn sheep herd on the south side of Lake Roosevelt in GMU 133. Ninety-five sheep were counted, including 45 ewes, 26 rams, 23 lambs, and one unclassified. Most of the Whitestone sub-herd was found traveling in one large group in Tamarack Canyon near Whitestone Rock. The smaller Lincoln sub-herd was seen in the road and in cliffs around the town of Lincoln.



Group of bighorn sheep in the cliffs near Whitestone Rock on Lake Roosevelt

Update on Beaver Release: Wildlife Conflict Specialist West followed up on the beaver release from October and surveyed for activity using the WDFW Post-release Monitoring Form to accompany the ongoing Beaver Relocation Permit process. The new resident seems to be taking to their new home well!



A beaver released on WDFW property settles into their new home. Beavers are preparing for winter by maintaining/improving dams, foraging, and collecting food to cache over winter.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Water Access Sites: Access Manager Daniel Dziekan opened the gates for designated winter fishing access areas, in the north half of Region 1.

Pheasant Hunting: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer completed the last pheasant release at Sherman Creek Wildlife area in 2020, for the post-Thanksgiving Day weekend.

Hunting Clinic: Private Lands Biologist Gaston continued preparations for the upcoming Upland Hunting Clinic in St. John on Dec. 7. Landowners were contacted and hunt plans were created for each parcel of property.

Late Season Hunter Check Station: District 1 biologists Prince and Turnock, along with multiple volunteers and Washington State University (WSU) wildlife students, conducted a hunter check station on the last Sunday of the modern firearm white-tailed deer season. The check station was slightly slower than in years past, but there were a few days left of the season and hunters may have still been in the woods. Below is the summary of the hunter numbers, deer harvested, and hunter success.

2019 Late Season

99 hunters with 26 white-tail bucks – 26.3 percent success

2018 Late Season

96 hunters with 16 white-tail bucks – 16.6 percent success

2017 Late Season

124 hunters with 43 deer – 34.7 percent success

2016 Late Season

79 hunters with 17 deer – 22 percent success

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Moose on the Palouse: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman along with other department personnel darted and harassed a cow moose that was hanging around a residence for several days. They also harassed a cow calf pair that was thought to be the same ones that were at a residence the week previous that Supervisor McCanna harassed. As it turned out, it was a different cow calf pair. They were harassed and hopefully will not return.

Clarkston Cougar Depredation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade responded to a report of two goats being killed on the outskirts of Clarkston. Wade went to the area and located one goat with bite wounds to the head and neck the second goat carcass was not able to be located. Wade conducted a partial necropsy and found heavy hemorrhaging to the head and neck consistent with a cougar depredation. Wade turned his findings over to WDFW Enforcement Program staff members for further action.



Goat carcass near homes

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Habitat Planning: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley contacted a landowner who is interested in enhancing existing habitat on his property that is enrolled in a WDFW access program. Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley revised the initial habitat plan to coincide with landowner goals. Pheasants Forever is interested in partnering in the project and paying for seed.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Outreach: Conflict Specialist Samsill discussed the possibility of setting up programs to donate game meat to local food pantries/banks with a WSU extension employee tasked with establishing the local Hunger Coalition. At the Conservation District meeting, the WSU extension employee explained that many of the local food banks have a need for a protein source in the meals they provide to families in need. Therefore, Conflict Specialist Samsill saw an opportunity to discuss the possibility of donating game meat from seized wildlife, road kills, dispatched conflict-related animals, etc. The WSU extension employee seemed interested in the idea would like to initiate a pilot-study to determine if such a program is feasible and practical.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Incinerator Coordination: While developing approaches suitable for the Sanitation Project, Wildlife Conflict Specialist West was informed by Statewide Human-Wildlife Conflict Specialist Caldwell that WDFW possessed a mobile incinerator that generated great interest by the District 1 personnel. Specialist West coordinated with Wildlife Conflict Specialists Heilhecker and Samsill to organize transport so that the incinerator may be used in northeastern Washington.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 2

No report this period.

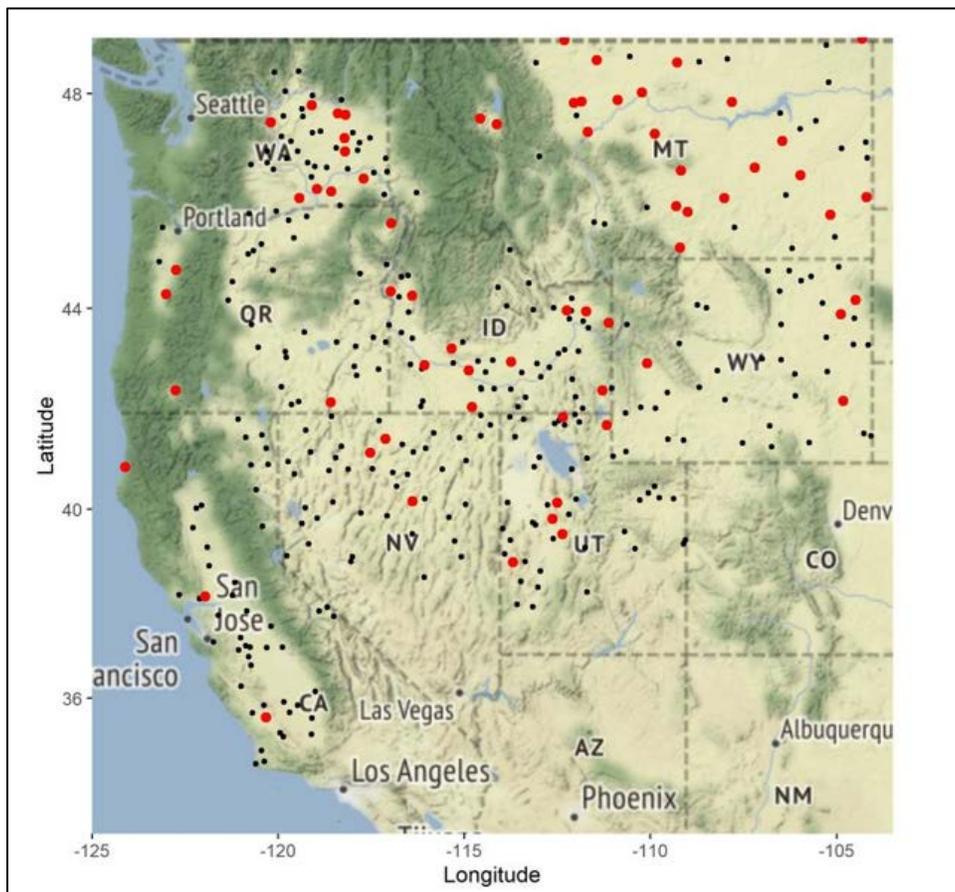
REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Western States and Volunteers Prepare for Final Year of Short-Eared Owl Surveys:

District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra presented results of the 2017-2018 surveys to a local Audubon chapter and solicited volunteers for the final season of data collection. This major citizen science project is mapping habitat and occupancy of short-eared owls across eight western states! Over 800 volunteers have participated thus far to cover survey grids and more will assist in the final coming year.

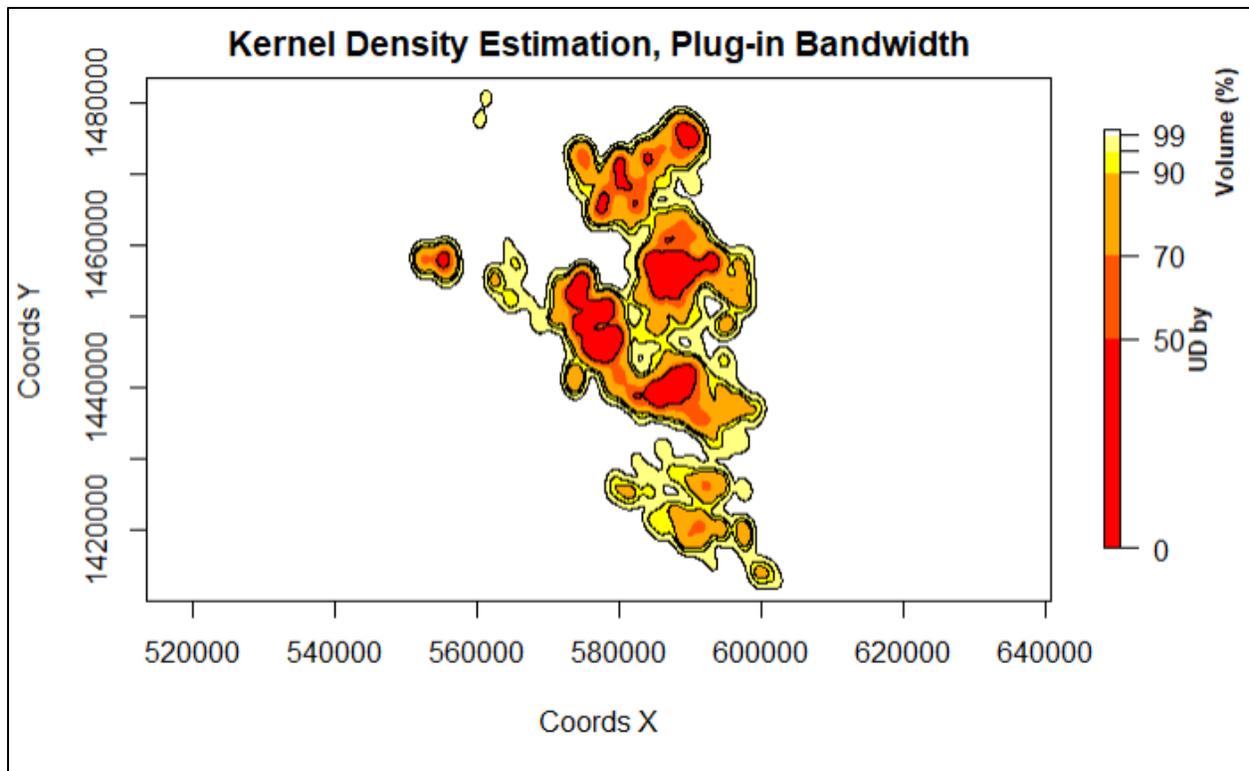


Results of the 2018 surveys for short-eared owls showing occupied (red) and non-occupied (black) survey sites

Chronic Wasting Disease: District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz sealing a cougar for a local hunter who had a deer and elk head in the back of the pick-up. The heads contained brain and upper spinal tissue and were from Montana. The Enforcement Program cut off the horns for the hunter to keep and took the heads, which Bernatowicz took to the local landfill to have buried. There have been a few local cases recently with similar results. Last year WDFW was contacted by Alberta informing that the hunter had harvested a deer that was confirmed with Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). The hunter had brought the deer back to Washington, butchered, and gave the bones to his dog. It has become clear that not all hunters have received the message of the seriousness of CWD and rules for bringing back trophies/meat.

Ground Squirrels: District 8 biologists Moore and Bernatowicz participated in a conference call to review a proposed ground squirrel (Piute, Townsend, and Washington) survey for spring 2023. Bernatowicz had a follow-up call with Section Manager Taylor to discuss potential challenges. For 2020, the surveys have a very narrow focus: Public land with mapped Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs) from the connectivity work. In District 8, ground squirrels mostly exist on deep soil private land or in non-HCA areas. The modeled HCAs have not been validated and local information (including from Yakima Training Center (YTC) personnel) indicate the model likely has limitations for predicting ground squirrel habitat. YTC has developed a different model for ground squirrels that may be worth evaluating in this effort.

Elk Migration: Biologist Moore completed work on elk migration timing. This information, along with a few other items, will help inform the beginning and end of winter. The average day for elk arriving on the winter range was Nov. 12 for cows and Nov. 17 for bulls. The mean spring migration day was March 27 and May 4 for bulls and cows respectively. The spring dates typically do not represent a hard migration where elk leave the winter range. Instead, they are representative of elk breaking their consistent winter pattern and begin moving throughout the winter range before moving to summer range. Moore also worked on defining winter home range use for bulls and cow. The first run for bull elk using all winter locations for all years was completed. Continued work will be necessary to run the analysis for individual years for both cows and bulls.



Bull elk winter home range analysis using Kernel Density Estimation, and the Plug-In Bandwidth for bull elk during the winters of 2013-2018

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett posted signs around the Snake River Department of Natural Resources hunting opportunities leading to the parking areas with registration boxes and maps of the available fields.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resources Technician Wascisin have conducted four rounds of pheasant releases on the Sunnyside Unit. Many of the pheasants have not been harvested yet and can be seen on roadways and other places around the unit.



Natural Resource Technician Wascisin releasing pheasants

Providing Recreation Opportunities: District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz proposed updates via Washington Administrative Codes (WACs) for the 2020 hunting season. Most proposals currently were minor changes in permit numbers. The exception was for GMU 371. The proposal is to shorten the master hunter season (ending Oct. 15) and adding youth permits. Most elk in GMU 371 are probably associated with the Colockum herd, which is below objectives. Harvesting cow elk after Oct. 15 when fields are dormant is not likely to reduce issues the following year. GMU 371 was added at the request of Yakima Training Center (YTC) personnel as a way for enlisted personnel to hunt big game on YTC. Few military members have ever gone through the Master Hunter Program, and a new option was recently developed. Master hunters are typically used to push elk off private land. GMU 371 is 100 percent public military land. A large population of elk is not desired in GMU 371, but other general hunters could be used to keep the resident population from growing.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Wenas Wildlife Area staff members used the wire roller to roll three miles of old barbed wire fence in just three days along Wenas-Umpitanum road.



Natural Resources Technician Kass running wire roller



Assistant Manager Taylor with old barbed wire rolled up by wire roller



Wire rolling equipment and truck loaded with old barbed wire removed from Wenas Wildlife Area

Groundwork on Fire Protection Begins: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett worked with two landowners, a custom farmer, and an herbicide applicator to get the site preparation completed for the upcoming green strip fuel breaks. Approximately 70 acres were mowed and sprayed with a post-emergent herbicide.



A green strip fuel break along Highway 241 after the mowing was finished. This strip runs for approximately 2.25 continuous miles and is 120 feet wide.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Wenas Wildlife Area personnel picked up seven and a half cubic yards of glass from an illegal dump along Wenas-Umpatum road. Staff members notified enforcement and worked with Yakima County to block the area off with barrier rock and then the county installed a ditch line in front of the rock.



Windows and door dumped along Ellensburg Pass Road

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Island Marble Butterfly: Work continues in District 13 to conserve the island marble butterfly. Postcards explaining the opportunity to enroll in a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCA) on Lopez and San Juan islands were sent to landowners within the conservation emphasis area for the butterfly. This agreement asks landowners to plant butterfly habitat in exchange for relief from “take” if the butterfly is listed as federally endangered.

Biologist Milner responded to multiple inquiries from landowners who wanted to know more about enrolling. To date we have 10 landowners who have submitted applications for inclusion in the CCAA. CCAA participants will plant gardens that contain field mustard, the butterfly's food, on their property to help boost the amount of habitat on the landscape.



An island marble butterfly larva feeding on mustard - Photo courtesy of Susan Vernon

Elk Capture: District 14 biologists Waddell and Moore have begun working with biologists from the Swinomish Tribe to capture and fit Swinomish-owned GPS collars to elk within the North Cascades elk herd. From now through March 2020, the biologists will use a combination of ground darting and a helicopter capture to place approximately 30 collars on elk throughout their core area. The gathered data will allow managers to better understand home and core range sizes, seasonal movements, survival rates, and other information.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Region 4 Private Lands Access Program Big Game Hunting Site: Natural Resource Technician Otto toured sites big game hunting sites in Acme to monitor for issues and site use by hunters. While at one Hunt by Reservation site Otto observed a large herd of elk grazing on the property. Later the next week, Private Lands Biologist Wingard received a call from a happy hunter who had been hunting the property unsuccessfully for several years and finally harvested a cow elk. The hunter expressed his gratitude to the landowner and the Private Lands Access Program for coordinating the access.



Region 4 Private Lands Access Program Waterfowl Hunting Sites: Site are open and being used by the public for waterfowl hunting. The nice weather through most of this fall has made hunting conditions difficult, but there are lots of birds in the area. Private Lands Access Program staff members have improved parking conditions at several sites that are particularly muddy.



Freshly laid woodchips to improve parking at several waterfowl hunting sites in Region 4



Freshly laid woodchips to improve parking at several waterfowl hunting sites in Region 4

Hunting Opportunity: The Swinomish Tribe, WDFW, and private landowners in Skagit and Acme valleys partnered with Youth Outdoors Unlimited to provide hunting opportunities for two young men who have recently battled cancer. The two young hunters wanted to participate in a hunt with their family as part of their Make A Wish. Unfortunately, only one hunter was successful, however the time spent with families and the young men was rewarding for everyone involved.



Young hunters sponsored by Youth Outdoors Unlimited who have recently battled cancer

WDFW assisted a family with an end of life hunt for a hunter who had been an avid hunter but had never harvested a bull elk. The hunter was currently in a nursing home in Lynden and only has a short time left. His was able to get his father equipped to leave the nursing home each day for their last hunt together. After two weeks of hunting, the Mr. Byeman was successful taking bull elk.



Garrett Byeman and his son Mike on an end of life elk hunt

Wildlife Viewing at Fir Island Farm: While downloading water level data near the restoration area, staff members observed many wildlife viewers and photographers watching murmurations of dunlin and raptors putting on a show.



Bird watchers at the Fir Island Farm Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area



A murmuration of dunlin flying overhead at the Fir Island Farm Unit

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this installment.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Fir Island Farm Monitoring: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Habitat Planner Jenny Baker downloaded water data from wells and sloughs near the restoration area. This information allows WDFW to monitor salinity, water level, and temperature changes throughout the year.



Projects Coordinator Brokaw downloads water data from a logger in the beautiful Skagit Valley

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this installment.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 5

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Columbian White-tailed Deer Surveys: Biologists Stephens and Holman, joined by Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey, conducted a survey for Columbian white-tailed deer. The survey takes place on two driving routes on Puget Island. Deer are located, counted, and classified into age and sex classes. The effort is a cooperative project organized by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the data generated helps inform management decisions related to this federally threatened and state endangered species. For more information on Columbian white-tails see the WDFW website at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/odocoileus-virginianus-leucurus>.



Columbian white-tailed deer

Lower Columbia River Shorebird Survey: Biologists Holman and Stephens, joined by Regional Wildlife Program Manager Jonker, surveyed for shorebirds in the lower Columbia River. Areas with suitable habitat were accessed by boat and included Miller Sands, Pillar Rock

Sands, and Rice Islands. Seventy birds were located comprised of yellowlegs, sandpipers, and dowitchers. The survey is highly weather dependent and the same effort during 2018 produced 2,843 shorebirds. This survey effort was part of the Pacific Flyway Shorebird Survey, a monitoring program designed to guide the management and conservation of wintering shorebirds in the Pacific Flyway. Data from this survey will contribute to the Migratory Shorebird Project, which is the largest coordinated survey of wintering shorebirds on the Pacific Coast of the Americas and spans from Canada to Peru. The survey is coordinated by Point Blue Conservation Science, a non-profit conservation organization <https://www.pointblue.org/>.



Dunlin sandpiper on a navigational structure in the Lower Columbia River

Dusky Canada Goose Surveys: Biologists Wickhem and Bergh each spent a day surveying for dusky Canada geese in Clark County this month. Duskie is a protected migratory subspecies of Canada goose that breed in Alaska and overwinter in southwestern Washington and western Oregon. On one survey, thirty duskies were observed on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area in a flock of nearly one thousand cackler geese. On another survey two neck-collared cackling Canada geese and two neck-collared dusky geese were observed around Shillapoo. Biologists Wickhem and Stephens also observed a flock of 16 duskies on private land adjacent to Shillapoo Wildlife Area later in the month. Dusky geese are closed to hunting year-round, and all goose hunters planning to hunt in Goose Management Area 2 must pass a goose identification test. Visit WDFW's website, [here](#), for more information. Other species observed on surveys include: sandhill cranes, snow geese, swans, American kestrels, bald eagles, peregrine falcons, great blue herons, and several species of ducks.



Dusky Canada geese forage in a cornfield within a flock of cackler geese

Checks of Hunter Killed Wildlife: Regional wildlife biologists and customer service staff members continued with checks of various species of hunter killed wildlife. Species recently checked have mostly included mountain goats and black-tailed deer. Various data and biological samples are collected from the different species to aid in management. Thanks to the successful hunters for bringing their animals into WDFW for the various checking requirements and for sharing their photos.



Mountain goat from the south Chelan hunt area



Black-tail buck taken in GMU 550



Black-tail buck taken in GMU 564



Black-tail buck taken in GMU 568

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Klickitat County Pheasant Release: Pheasant Release: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Steveson and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen distributed pheasants to the three Klickitat County pheasant release sites this week. Forty pheasants were released at the Hatchery Unit, 32 birds were released at the Gun Club property, and 16 pheasants went to the Finn Ridge Road site. The weather was crisp, cold, and beautiful for the release.



Pheasants at a Feel Free to Hunt release site, with Mount Adams in the background

Goose Hunter Checks: Biologists Stephens and Wickhem teamed up with Enforcement Officer VanVladriken to check hunters for the first goose hunt days since the September season. Hunters enjoyed good success with multiple hunt parties contacted, most of which had geese. Parts of Region 5 and 6 are in Goose Management Area 2 which is closed to the harvest of dusky Canada geese and hunters are required to take an identification test in order to be given authorization to hunt in this area. Several dusky Canada geese were taken at the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge during the Saturday hunt.



Two cackling geese harvested during Saturdays hunt

Vancouver Lake Access Site: With the help of the Department of Corrections crew, Water Access staff members Rhodes and McKinaly were able to finish painting the Vancouver Lake parking area, and the entire restroom again after another round of graffiti was found.



Painting at Vancouver Lake access site

Beginner's Hole Access: A new volunteer signed up to help with taking care of both the Beginner's Hole and Modrow access sites. This week, the volunteer was able to put a new roof on the sign kiosk at Beginner's Hole. A big thank you for all his help!



Beginner's Hole kiosk

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Injured Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to a report of an injured deer on the side of the highway. Unfortunately, the injuries were severe, and the deer was euthanized.

Cooperative Fencing Projects: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen worked on paperwork and material acquisition for several cooperative fencing projects around Klickitat, Skamania, and Clark counties where agricultural crops are being damaged by deer and elk.

Bear Sighting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey followed up on a bear sighting report from WDFW Enforcement. A bear had been seen multiple times in a neighborhood but had not caused any issues for the reporting party (RP). Advice was given on living in bear country, and the RP was directed to information on WDFW website. Aubrey drove through the area of the sighting looking for any possible issues, such as attractants, that needed to be addressed, but did not find anything obvious that would be keeping the bear in the area.

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with a landowner in Lewis County experiencing elk damage. The landowner has a current Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) with WDFW. The landowner was issued one permit for the elk damage and will be coordinating with Aubrey to have damage hunts to address damage issues.

Sandhill Crane Problem: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey talked with an individual about sandhill crane damage to a recently planted field. The individual wanted the birds to be relocated but was informed this was not something that WDFW was able to do. He was unhappy with any other suggestions on ways to haze and potentially prevent the birds from eating his seeds in the future.

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area Soda Springs Unit Patrol: Assistant Manager Steveson checked some of the more popular camping spots on the Soda Springs Unit to make sure the sites are clean, and signs are still in place. Steveson found a unique hut built of oak limbs and small trees at a spot along the Sheep Canyon Road.



Stick hut

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Deer with Wire Around Abdomen: Biologist Murphie searched the McCormick Woods area near Port Orchard for a doe with wire around her abdomen. We've been receiving calls since September with multiple staff members responding since then, but unable to locate this deer. Biologist Murphie was finally able to locate and immobilize the doe on Nov. 21. The wire was removed and did not appear to have caused any injury. The doe was released on site. A second doe, also with wire around her, in Mason County was looked for but not found.



Wire on ground after being removed from around waist

Goose Hunter Checks: Biologist Michaelis continued field checking and collecting goose hunter information and making contacts in Pacific County during the first half of November. Hunters phoned in their reports and were quite successful in southwest Pacific County.

Date	Location /County	# of Hunters	✓ or phoned in	November 13-24 Goose Hunter Checks Goose Species Reported or Recorded								
				Cackler	Aleutian	Taverner	Lesser	Dusky	Western	GWF	Snow	UK/Other
11-13	SWPA	2	PI	2		5						
11-16	SWPA	1	PI			1						
11-17	SWPA	5	✓	6					8			3*
11-20	SWPA	2	✓			3			3			
11-20	SWPA	2	PI	4		4						
11-23	SWPA	2	PI	2		6						
11-23	SWPA	1	✓	1		2						1
11-23	SWPA	1	PI				4					
11-24	SWPA	2	✓									6**
Totals				18	15	21	4		11			10

SWPA = Riekkola Willapa NWR, Sandridge Rd., and near the town of Chinook. CPA = Areas south of South Bend to HWY 4 ✓ = field checked, PI = Birds phoned in and classed as to what the hunter(s) believed them to be.

*Two of these birds were Vancouver geese

** Harvest was 3 wusky, 2 Vancouver, and 1 unknown

Four resident dark geese (wusky) were harvested Sunday Nov. 24. Many hunters hunting southwest Pacific County reported and were field checked with good numbers of harvested geese. No dusky Canada geese were reported as being taken.



Pacific County resident Steve Gray, holding two harvested collared resident dark geese

Dusky Goose Survey: Biologists Michaelis and Sundstrom conducted a dusky goose survey in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. The number of dusky Canada geese have increased.

11/19/19	Cackler	Aleutian	Tav/Lesser	Dusky	# Banded	Western	Vancouver	GWF	Snow	Unknown	Totals
Location											
Grays Harbor County	2,332	0	899	100		40	0	0	7	0	3,378
North Pacific County	118	0	318	392	1	12	0	26	0	50	916
South Pacific County	1,408	0	51	219	2	126	0	78	0	340	2,222
Totals:	3,858	0	1,268	711	3	178	0	104	7	390	6,516

In addition to the two collared duskies reported above, 25 collared duskies were observed on Nov. 23, outside the formal survey period. Nearly all those 25 collars were new codes for fall 2019 in Pacific and Grays Harbor counties. These re-sights become valuable for establishing annual survival rates and areas of use during the winter months of marked dusky Canada geese. We opportunistically get additional observations while out in the field conducting goose hunter checks. Additional resident dark geese collars were also observed.

2020-21 Season Setting: Biologists Tirhi and Butler completed District 11 hunting season recommendations for the 2020-21 season. In preparation, WDFW Enforcement Program staff members and tribal co-managers were contacted for input but had few or no requests. Tirhi recommended only minor updates to seasons in the district and primarily date changes. The one major change is that Hancock Timber Resources will not allow a spring bear hunting season on the Kapowsin Tree Farm in 2020. Biologist Murphie provided recommendations for District 15 deer and elk hunting.

Wolf Camera Monitoring: Biologist Tirhi and volunteer Terry re-deployed two trail cameras in the White River area as part of the ongoing wolf trail camera monitoring project. Unfortunately, one of the four cameras deployed in the White River was stolen despite a locking cable. While the three cameras in the White River and the four in the Carbon River have documented significant prey (deer, elk) and other predators (coyotes, bobcats), no wolves have been documented on these trail cameras to date in either drainage.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Launch Ramps and Parking Lot Maintenance: With extremely low lake levels the water access team added rock to four ramps in Mason County, filling the voids between planks and edges to prevent undermining and ramp damage. Potholes in the parking lots and one large washout were also addressed.



Spencer Lake



Phillips Lake

Pleasant Harbor Tree Removal: The water access team cut down and removed three dead and dangerous trees leaning over the launch staging area. The work zone was temporarily closed and coned off for safety while the work was being performed. The crew used Bull Tape and blocks attached to two trucks forcing the trees to fall where planned. After the final cleanup of limbs and blowing of the parking lot, the site is once again beautiful and free of hazards.



Other Access Work Performed: Working with the Department of Ecology WCC staff, 27 sites with monofilament-recycling bins were serviced, emptied, and recorded for contents in three counties.

Working with Enforcement in Kitsap County, an abandoned motorhome was removed from the Misery Point Access Site.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Wildlife Area Management Planning—Scatter Creek Complex: Biologists Tirhi attended the third planning meeting at which the planning team discussed climate change needs, considered WDFW outlier/water access properties that could be incorporated into the complex, restoration

planning needs, and formulated next planning steps. To learn more about this wildlife area and get involved go to <https://wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/wildlife-areas/scatter-creek-wildlife-area>.

Wildlife Area Maintenance: The Olympic Wildlife Area crew is back to three, welcome back Manager Gerchak! The crew has been focusing on access sites, picking up litter and signage issues. On the biggest dumping sites, they have been working with Grays Harbor County litter control, who has helped tremendously.

Pacific County seems to be an issue lately; temporary repairs have been made at Potter's Slough where the cable gates have been torn down. The crew is working on a more permanent fix for this style of gates.



They also had an opportunity to check on the Chinook Unit. Garbage dumping is down but the center tide gate on the Highway 101 bridge is an issue, it is gone. Habitat Program is working on repairs. While there, they checked the area to see if any private lands neighboring the property had any flooding due to the high tide. They did not observe any flooding.





5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this installment.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.