

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

Nov. 1 to Nov. 15, 2020

DIVERSITY DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Coordinator Elliott received a phone call and email about a deer hoof issue. The person was wondering if this was something related to the hoof disease in elk. Elliott forwarded it to the local biologist who identified it as a common ailment for deer which is not hoof disease. The information was relayed back to the person inquiring.

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey along with a representative of the Stillaguamish Tribe and two volunteers assisted the National Park Service in the release of three fishers into the North Cascades.



Fisher release in the North Cascades

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey assisted a senior hunter going to Montana to hunt for the first time. The hunter had not taken hunter education in Washington as he was born before January 1, 1972 but was uncertain of the requirements for Montana. A quick check on the internet and download

of the Montana regulations and the hunter's questions were answered. Dazey also advised the hunter that it might be a good idea to contact the Montana Game office to verify that our reading of the regulations was correct.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia travelled to St. John to meet with Private Lands Biologist Gaston to work out details on the upcoming pheasant clinic and hunt. Garcia then traveled to Cheney to meet with the First Hunt Foundation Chapter President Gerald Hickman to discuss mentoring and other outreach events.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Mentored Pheasant Hunt: Region 4 Coordinator Dazey activated a number of end-of-year classes to help meet the demand occasioned by students waiting till the last minute to take hunter education. Annual class registration is about 75 percent of capacity, however, in November and December the demand goes up and since most instructors are hunters the available classes decrease. This creates long wait lists for the classes that are held. Included in the classes activated was one class taught in Spanish. Dazey completed the pre-service training for two new instructors in Whatcom County. Whatcom County has been under served so it is hoped that with the addition of these new instructors we will better be able to provide hunter education classes in that area.

Region 4 conducted their third class oriented to female hunters this season. These classes have been very popular as they feature an all-female teaching team and a female enforcement officer. The students taking the class often comment on how less intimidating the class is and that they also feel more comfortable asking questions of female instructors in this environment. An added benefit of these classes is that by having a female enforcement officer present the students see that WDFW is a diverse workforce. A big thank you to Sargent Maurstad for her help at these classes.

Region 6 Coordinator Montgomery partnered with Farmer Chris White, Wildlife Area Manager Darric Lowery, Alex Biswas, Tom Ryle, and Kelly Riordan of the Marketing Team, as well as Pheasants Forever to hold a clinic/mentored hunt at the Davis Creek Wildlife Area. Pheasants Forever reimbursed all juvenile hunters \$40.50 cost for licenses. Originally scheduled for 10 youth and 10 new adult hunters we had a smaller number in attendance. Everyone harvested at least one bird and were thankful for the opportunity to participate.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Region 5 Coordinator Elliott and Instructor Advisory Committee Member Mills met with a brand-new team in Winlock to deliver supplies, assist in setting up classes in Kalkomey, answer questions, and look over the space where classes/field course will be held. Aside from the meeting, Elliott and Mills also spoke with the chief instructor on several occasions to provide additional support. Both attended one night of the traditional class to observe and assist if needed.

Coordinator Elliott has spoken with a number of instructors following the inactive instructor notification that went out via postcard a couple weeks ago.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia worked with a father/son hunter education instructor team to setup a new venue and begin offering classes in Benton City.

Coordinator Dazey met with Fiscal office staff members to finalize arrangements for the upcoming Hunter Education Division, Range Safety Officer Training being offered to hunter education instructors in Washington State. The instructor policy manual requires that when live fire is conducted as part of a hunter education course one certified instructor shall serve as range officer and assume responsibility for supervision of overall range activities and the roles of certified instructors, instructor volunteers, and volunteers. By offering this training, the Hunter Education Division is providing the tools for the instructors to safely assume that responsibility.

Coordinator Montgomery held a pre-service training in Puyallup certifying four male and two female new instructors.

Coordinator Montgomery also attended classes in Sequim and Belfair for evaluation.

7) Other

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey met with a contact at Pacific Lutheran University (PLU) to discuss the upcoming visit of a group of international business students to WDFW. The students will learn about the department and the financial return to Washington State from hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation activities. Dazey also spoke with the contact on the possibility of partnering with PLU on citizen science opportunities.

LANDS DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

SCIENCE DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 1

1. Managing Wildlife Populations

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Wik and Nez Perce Tribal Wildlife Manager Thagard spent one day trying to add collars to ewes in the Black Butte herd. One adult ewe was captured and collared while the remaining target animals stayed away from capturable habitat. Gavin Cotterill helped Idaho Department of Fish and Game collaborators capture bighorn sheep along the lower portion of the Salmon River. New GPS collars were deployed on three ewes and a ram, and disease samples and body condition measurements were taken. While in the office he resumed data processing of over a hundred GPS collars that have been deployed on bighorn sheep as part of the Hells Canyon initiative.

Bighorn Sheep Survey: Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock surveyed the Vulcan Mountain bighorn sheep herd. This herd is surveyed from the ground multiple times per year to get a minimum count of individuals. This survey yielded a count of 50, including 16 ewes, seven lambs, and 26 rams.



Vulcan Mountain sheep observed through a spotting scope

2. Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3. Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4. Conserving Natural Areas

Revere Wetland Restoration: Biologists Atamian, Lowe, Kunz, and Gaston attended training on how to operate a Marsh Master with mowing attachment for upcoming wetland restoration work on the Revere Wildlife Area. WDFW is partnering with Ducks Unlimited, recipient of a Duck Stamp grant, to clear dense vegetation and return the wetland to its original depth for the benefit of waterfowl and other wildlife.



Biologists learning how to operate Marsh Master to mow dense vegetation from a wetland (in the background) on Revere, WA.

Swanson Lakes Post-Fire Activities: WDFW Construction Coordinator Chris Alston put the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area office repair work out to a contractor. Work is set to commence as soon as possible but hadn't yet started before snow fell this week. Sealing the exterior of the building with new siding and windows is critical for limiting further damage.

Seeding of some heavily burned shrub steppe habitat with a four-species mix of native grasses has been completed for the fall 2020 season, culminating with the return of a rental tractor to its owner on November 11. Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch and his Natural Resource Technician Donovan Colvin completed the following work: aerial seeding of about 1075 acres on Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area and 300 acres on adjacent U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) ground, then harrowing 600 of those acres on Swanson Lakes

Wildlife Area and 280 on BLM land. They also seeded and harrowed an additional 35 acres of BLM land, on a former farm field near an active sharptailed grouse lek. This was a different grass mix with forb seeds mixed in, and they applied it using a pull-behind air seeder. Work on this BLM field was done under a cooperative assistance agreement. Mike and Donovan are to be commended for working incredibly hard to complete this seeding, running two tractor-harrow sets for days on end!



Left: Seeding BLM ground



Right: Rental tractor for harrowing rougher ground

5. Providing Education and Outreach

Grizzly Bear Education: Wildlife Conflict Specialist O'Connor performed grizzly bear education and outreach in Pend Oreille County during the elk hunt opening day. O'Connor and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Cook met with U.S. Forest Service wildlife biologist to identify geographic areas with high hunter activity within the Selkirk Grizzly Bear Conservation Area. O'Connor and Cook contacted around 12 hunters, an unexpectedly low number for this year, and distributed bear safety pamphlets and bear spray.

6. Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Sunshine Disposal Bear Education Flyers and Bear Resistant Container Effort: Wildlife Conflict Specialist O'Connor communicated with Sunshine Disposal to develop the informational flyers for Sunshine Disposals new customer packets. The WDFW is working towards designing a high quality, eye catching flyer specific tailored for residence of Ferry and Stevens counties. The goals are to educate residence that live in bear country and to reduce the likelihood of human-bear conflict related to garbage management at their homes.

7. Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Pygmy Rabbit Breeding Enclosure/Acclimation Pen Salvage: Regional district biologists and wildlife area staff members assisted with the salvage and removal of fire damaged infrastructure comprising one mobile breeding enclosure and four release/acclimation pens from the Chester Butte Unit. Most of the materials will be used again for the same purpose and now, with the sites free of materials, wildlife area staff can implement fire restoration activities without complication.



Staff remove fencing panels from the breeding enclosure site

Canine Survey Effort for Pygmy Rabbits: Technician Smith has been developing and coordinating a pilot project to utilize scat detecting dogs (Rogue Detections- NE Washington) to assist with annual pygmy rabbit winter survey efforts where we determine the distribution, abundance, and size of the wild populations and survivorship of released rabbits. These efforts normally require a huge labor force of staff, partners, and student volunteers. The success rate can vary considerably if there are poor snow conditions, making their active burrows and fresh scat difficult to detect. Enter *Canus lupus familiaris*! We are hoping the impressive ability for dogs to detect the scent of scat/burrows/rabbit activity will reduce the effort needed to cover our survey area much more effectively than by traditional labor intensive transects. Our study design will break the Sagebrush Flat Recovery Area into quads that dogs will cover, if the dog gets a hit and confirmed pygmy rabbit occupancy then they will continue into a new quad. This method will optimize our ability to document their full distribution which is incredibly difficult to determine. Once we have the known occupied sites, we can follow up efficiently with staff/volunteer survey effort in just those sites- documenting the full number of active burrows and estimating the population size and demographics through genetic analysis of fecal samples collected at each burrow site.

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Fever Vaccination: In response to the emerging outbreak of rabbit hemorrhagic fever (RHFVD2) throughout the southwest and intermountain west, WDFW secured the vaccination for this virus, which has a long track record in the domestic/farmed rabbit sector. We prioritized adults and kits within the breeding enclosures first, vaccinating 24 of the estimated 26 remaining in our three enclosures. Administered by Veterinarian Technician Angel McCormick, all rabbits looked to handle the procedure well in the last rounds of capture. If weather allows, we will attempt to capture and vaccinate kits remaining in the acclimation/release pens in Beezley Hills.

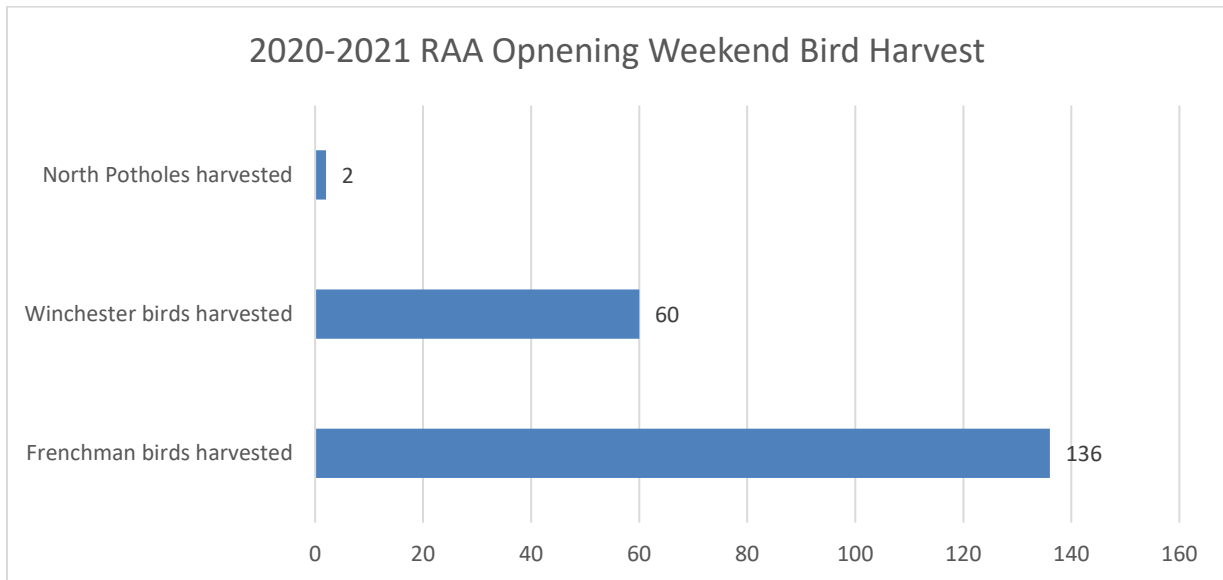
Northern Leopard Frogs: Biologist Grabowsky slowly decreased survey effort over the past few weeks and transitioned to data management and analysis. Despite no reintroductions occurring during 2020, we made several important habitat management decisions and plan to make changes to improve our success rate for the future. Biologist Grabowsky is currently compiling data collected during tadpole, metamorph, and habitat surveys to include in the yearly report. The 2020 northern leopard frog recovery effort report will outline survey effort and results for 2020, challenges this year, habitat management, goals moving forward based on lessons learned in 2020. Compared to 2019, fewer surveys were conducted (including egg mass, tadpole, and metamorph surveys), but over 200 metamorph frogs were processed and 170 ponds were surveyed. These results will add to our understanding of development and habitat selection of this species in Washington.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

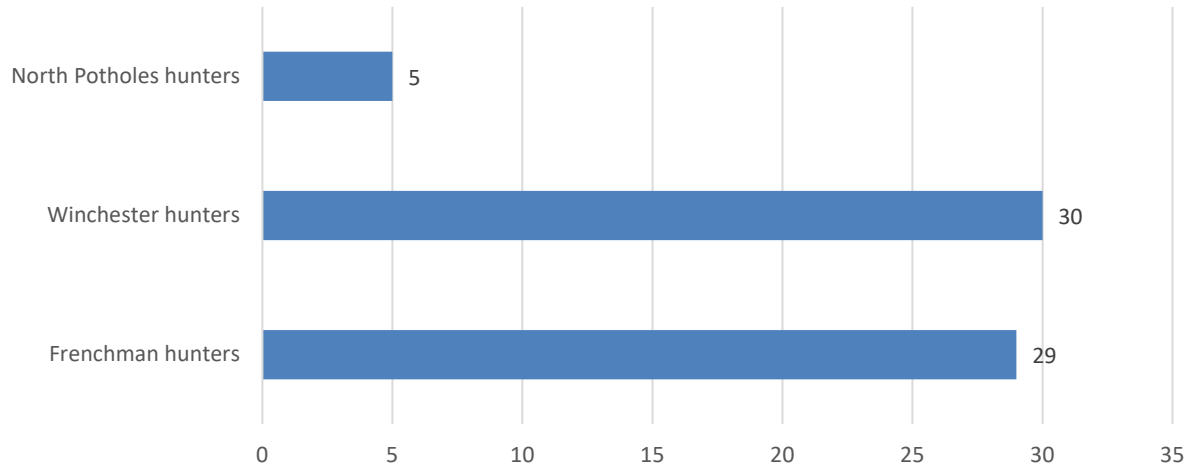
Regulated Access Areas: Frenchman and Winchester Regulated Access Areas have been seeing a good amount of use from waterfowl hunters since opening weekend. North Potholes Regulated Access Area struggled on the opener due to limited water in wetland basins. Specialist McPherson has witnessed at Frenchman and Winchester there has been large increases in waterfowl use with colder weather bringing birds to the basin. The Winchester has been attracting lots of attention from hunters and currently is averaging 3.22 birds per hunter which is great harvest.



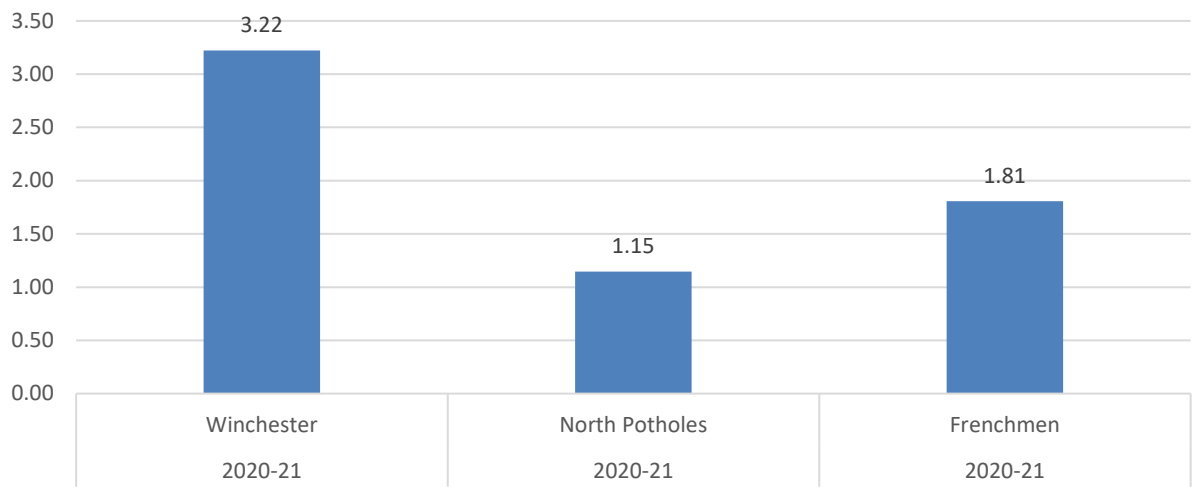
Mid November ducks swarming the Winchester Reserve - Photo by C.McPherson

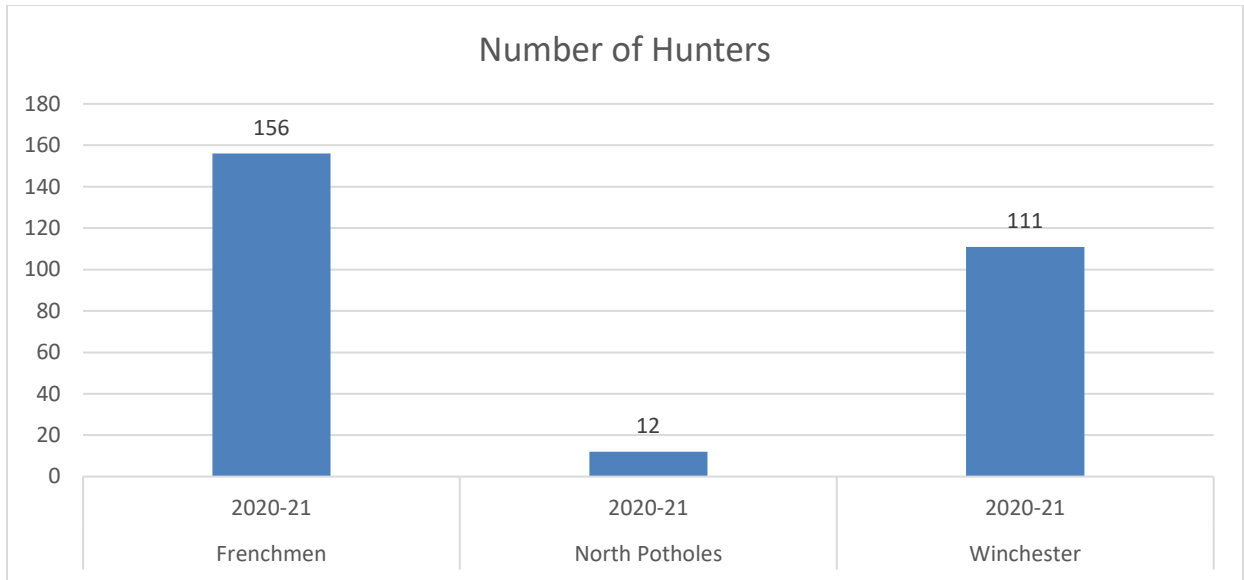


2020-2021 RAA Opening Weekend Hunter Number



Birds per hunter





Frenchman Expansion Fill-up: Specialist McPherson started filling up the first wetland basin in the expansion project area. Last year wildlife area personnel worked extensively on Russian olive removal to provide more wetland habitat in the project footprint. The basin that Specialist McPherson filled was very responsive to water and took only two days before it was seeing use from waterfowl in the area.



November 4, boards put in water control structure - Photo by C. McPherson



By November 5, wetland basin was nearing full pool - Photo by C. McPherson

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Lands 20/20 Application Review: The Okanogan lands operations manager presented a project for the acquisition of an inholding on the Driscoll-Eyhott Island Unit of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. The presentation and review of all 20/20 projects included a number of WDFW personnel from a variety of programs and divisions. The next step is to present each project to the Executive Management Team (EMT) and then on to the commission.

Scotch Creek Riparian Project/Beaver Dam Analogs: Staff members successfully installed 12 beaver dam analogs (BDAs) to start the riparian restoration project along Scotch Creek. This area is centrally located between three active sharp-tailed grouse lek sites and will provide critical winter habitat. The site has been historically difficult to restore due to the dry meadow conditions, especially in July and August. The BDAs are used to raise the water table, aggrade the incised stream bed and provide better sub-irrigation for riparian plants. Scotch Creek staff also received 270 water birch plants (*Betula occidentalis*) for planting along Scotch Creek to improve riparian condition and provide the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse critical winter habitat. These plants were the result of seed collected along Scotch Creek two years ago and propagated at Derby Canyon Natives nursery in Peshastin, WA. The native plants are in 40 cubic inch tubes, three to four feet tall and in excellent condition. The material was planted in previous restoration projects along Scotch Creek as well as in the new project that includes Beaver Dam Analogs (BDAs) to raise the water table specifically for these plantings.



Soft ground allowed us to push the poles in place. Archeologist Kelly monitoring the installation and staff members weaving fir boughs into the log structure. - Photos by Olson

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Careers in Agricultural Event for North Central Washington: Lands Operations Manager Haug participated in an online outreach event involving high school students interested in a career in agriculture. Haug participated on the platform Brazen, which is online career fair software, along with a local representative of the DNR and USFS. Each chatted with local students about career opportunities and what educational pathway we took to get in our current positions. Haug reached out to our agency recruiters to discuss the platform and benefits of the event for the agency. It was refreshing to discuss our profession with a number of high school students who want to pursue a career in natural resource science.

Okanogan High School Ecology Class: The Okanogan High School ecology class was able to have their annual field trip out to Driscoll Island Unit of the Sinlahekin. The students looked for and identified different inverbrates in the Okanogan and Similkameen rivers. They also took water sample to calculated dissovled oxygen, pH, temperature, velocity and turbity of the river. This has been a great spot for the students to visit because they can see the influence of the Simlkameen River on the Okanogan.



Okanogan High School's Ecology of the Okanogan class - Photos by Wehmeyer

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

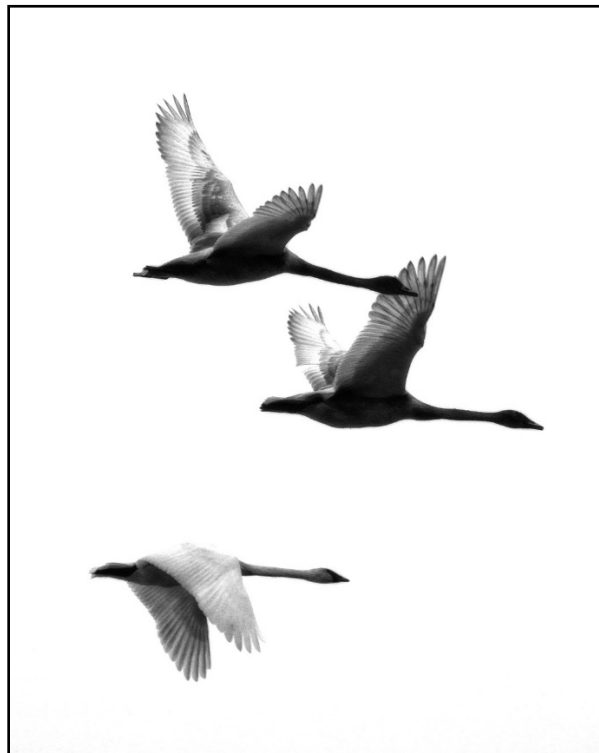
What was going on 20 years ago?

Pygmy Rabbits Listing: Pygmy Rabbits were listed as an endangered species by the USFWS on Friday. Field surveys continue. Temporary Biologist Laura Cook found three possible active burrows on the Coyote Canyon site. No active burrows were found on this site this last spring and summer. This is an exciting find because all our captive rabbits have come from Sagebrush Flats and are genetically similar.

Okanogan County Aerial Deer Surveys: Conducted post-season aerial deer surveys in Population Management Unit (PMU) 21. All told, we classified almost 4400 mule deer in two days of flying. Increases in flight budgets allowed for five to six hours of productive flying time in both the Okanogan and Methow watersheds. This is about what is needed for a well-distributed survey that generates a reasonable sample size in both watersheds west of the Okanogan River. In the Methow, we classified about 3650 deer and observed ratios of 24 bucks per 100 does and 92 fawns per 100 does; 34 percent of the bucks were greater than three point (mature). On the Okanogan side we classified about 750 animals yielding ratios of 19:100 and 76:100. 38 percent of the bucks were greater than three point (mature). Overall, the ratios come out to be 24:100:89, with 35 percent of the bucks greater than three point.



Bighorn sheep visiting the Loomis Post Office – Photo by Wehmeyer



Trumpeter Swans on the Chopaka-Similkameen Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area – Photo by Haug



Pond on the Beebe Springs Unit of the Chelan Wildlife Area – Photo by Haug



Sunrise at the confluence of the Okanogan and Columbia rivers - Photo by Haug

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

District 8 Wildlife Program personnel continue to monitor both the Quilomene and Cleman bighorn sheep herds for pneumonia. The news from Quilomene is good, as there has been no sign of disease. At Cleman Mountain there have been numerous reports of coughing, lethargic, and dead bighorn sheep. This is not surprising as once present, *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (MOVI) typically infects close to 100 percent of a population. Mortality from MOVI can range from 10-90 percent. Horns from adult rams are being retrieved from mortalities when feasible, to discourage illegal collecting by the public.



One of two adult bighorn rams recently killed by pneumonia

District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz attempted to restrict use of a non-green dot road in Sanford Pasture. The road was gated years ago, but users had built a road around the gate. The loss of elk fence due to the Evans Canyon fire makes it more important to provide security for elk to hopefully keep animals from moving east/north.



Closed road with heavy use



Attempt to Restrict Traffic

District 8 Wildlife Biologist Oates recovered GPS collar from a mule deer mortality near Caribou Creek in Kittitas Valley. Carcass was consumed, and mortality cause unknown. Coyotes fed on carcass. Possible cougar kill but insufficient evidence.

Modern Firearm Elk Hunters Donate Hooves to Benefit Disease Study: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand coordinated with multiple landowners and hunters on hunting strategies to target Hanford elk during the modern firearm elk season. Overall, only five elk were harvested

due to poor weather conditions, lack of green wheat, and trespassing hunters. Hooves of the five elk were collected and processed for Washington State University's (WSU) TAHD elk hoof disease research this month. Don met with WSU to transfer 11 sets of hooves for the study collected so far this year.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area staff continue to consult with District Biologist Bernatowicz on monitoring needs for the recently discovered pneumonia outbreak in the Cleman Mountain sheep. We continue to see and get reports of mortality and have assisted in recovering samples for further testing.

Wenas Wildlife Area staff members have been installing metal elk fence posts and clips to prop up eight miles of the 17.5 miles of elk fence that burned in the Evan's Canyon fire. Many thanks to Sunnyside Wildlife Area for loaning us their skid steer and to regional staff that came out for a day to help with propping and clipping wire to the newly added posts.



Natural Resource Technician Stultz pounding in a metal post and Forester Hartmann clipping wire to a post

The remaining 9.5 miles of burned elk fence has been contracted out for complete rebuild with metal sucker pipe. They will be propping up the portion of that fence that may not get replaced before winter shuts down their operations.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Region 3 access staff members conducted weekly maintenance on all access sites and made multiple repairs due to vandalism and graffiti.



Graffiti at Tim's Pond



Vandalized gate at Zillah Bridge



Natural Resources Worker Ruiz removing fire pits at the Bell property

Natural Resources Workers Barbosa and Ruiz replaced damaged boundary fence at Pond 1.



Access personnel replacing boundary fence at Pond 1

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area staff members provided two large dumpsters during modern rifle season so that hunters would be encouraged to pack out their trash. Unfortunately, quite a bit of household trash found its way in there as well.



Large dumpster filled after modern rifle season

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson has been working on replacing a culvert across an access road alongside the Wendel-Phillips drain ditch. The old culvert was rotted out and crushed, reducing water flow and causing water to flow around the culvert through the roadbed and eroding the roadbed. Replacement of the culvert is critical in that to fill Horseshoe Lake and the Haystack Wetlands; the culvert must be functional. Assistant Manager Ferguson is checking into renting a large excavator to complete the job.

The Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (SVID) recently dredged the Sulphur Creek drain from the dam at Holaday Road approximately a half mile upstream including around Sunnyside Wildlife Area's water diversion to Bridgeman Pond, Morgan Lake, and the Johnson Wetland. Assistant Manager Ferguson spoke to the SVID field manager and the equipment operator and was able to have them remove all the mud and vegetation constricting the diversion, greatly increasing the water flow to the pond/wetland system. Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin further improved flow by cleaning all debris out of the diversion weir box and pipe inlet.



Lifting debris out of the Sulphur Creek diversion weir box



Natural Resource Technician Wascisin cleaning debris out of Sulphur Creek weir box

Due to failed bearings, the driveshaft of the Giffin Lake supply pump to the Rice Paddies recently gave out, necessitating a rebuild of the pump. The bearings, driveshaft, belts, and motor bearings were all replaced, and the impeller was rebuilt, all by local contractor Davis Pumps. The pump system is now working better than it has in years, operating very quietly and pumping 2,700 gallons of water per minute. Due to the pump rebuild and new levees, every cell in the Rice Paddies is currently chocked full of water, which has not happened in many seasons.



Rice Paddies south-eastern most cell on a recent frosty morning

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Wascisin and Assistant Manager Ferguson did two pheasant releases at the Sunnyside Wildlife Area this fall with a third coming up on Nov 20. This year, due to extensive fires on the Wenas Wildlife Area, no releases are being conducted at Wenas and Sunnyside is getting almost double the normal amount of birds, about 300 per release. This has been a boon for pheasant hunters so far. Because of the Covid pandemic, fewer hunters overall have been at the Sunnyside Wildlife Area and those venturing out have had awesome opportunity for successful pheasant harvest.



Pheasants exiting crate on November 6 release

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Rattlesnake Hill Elk Damage Claim: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continues to work with a producer who had a substantial elk damage claim to wheat this past year. All the damage documentation has been compiled including harvest yields, weight tickets, pictures, and wheat kernel count sampling, but the final report from the appraiser who conducted the investigation has not yet been completed because of a serious health situation he is experiencing. An extension for claim submittal and guidance on next steps is being requested by the landowner.

Paterson Deer Damage Permits: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand prepared and delivered duplicate annual damage permits to a landowner in the Paterson area to address deer damage to wine grape and row crops. Unfortunately, the initial permits issued were mailed to the wrong address causing a delay in exercising them. Non-lethal tools and hazing are also being deployed to assist in minimizing deer damage.

District 8 Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by several hay growers who wanted more damage permits for elk. Elk use of the hay fields has begun to diminish significantly but some elk are still seen in some areas. No hay crops are currently growing, frost has hardened off the fields, and irrigation has ceased. Aside from some small areas of new seeding, no new damage permits were issued this month. Most damage permits expired on Oct. 15.

While fixing a fence hole in the main elk fence near Taneum Creek, Conflict Specialist Wetzel noticed elk in the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) enclosure and a tree on the fence. BOR was notified of the fence issue.



A cottonwood snag that has fallen on the Taneum Heart K BOR enclosure fence

Elk continue to have high motivation to break or jump over the elk fence west of Joe Watt Canyon. Bulls tend to forge the way when negotiating the fences and are adept at finding the weakest points.



A bull elk caught mid-vault over the elk fence



Some elk are better at jumping

Yakima County: Conflict Specialist Wetzel met with an orchard manager on south Clemans about deer in his new trees. Deer browse was observed on the new trees and some deer were hazed out of the orchard areas. Conflict Specialist Wetzel repaired the main elk fence bordering the orchard where deer were seen getting through several holes.

A hay grower at Nile called about elk damage to his hay crop this year. He indicated that all second cutting as well as the third was lost to elk this year. He has a small field adjacent to an open slope and noticed very high and early elk use this year due to the dry conditions.

District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel obtained another load of tarps for use in protecting haystacks in the Wenas Valley where the Evan's Canyon fire this summer destroyed several miles of elk fence. Thanks to Assistant Manager Taylor for distributing tarps to hay growers that need them to deter elk from visiting hay stacks this winter.



Tarps donated by TarpIt for the Wenas area

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Forester Hartmann assisted the South-Central Prescribed Fire Team (late October) with the implementation of UB502 in the Oak Creek drainage. Forester Hartmann also met with thinning contractors to continue pre-commercial thinning work in the Oak Creek drainage.



From Left to Right: Firefighter Swanson monitors water supply pump while filling portable 1000-gallon tanks that fill the hose line surrounding the unit; South-Central Prescribed Fire Manager Delozier and Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Berry review the operational plan for the day of ignitions; Slash and timber litter consumption on UB502. Burning under cooler conditions typical of fall and spring removes fuel around trees without killing them and moderates future wildfire behavior.



Left to Right: Pre and post-thin condition of pre-commercial thinning unit at Oak Creek



Left to Right: Contractors use wax-layered paper to help reduce moisture infiltration into slash piles. Once fully dried, the protective layer helps keep slash burnable even during heavy rain or snow conditions.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Forester Hartmann, Manager Mackey, and Statewide Forest Program Coordinator Tveten continued marking leave trees in the Windy Point commercial thinning project.

Wenas Wildlife Area staff members and Forester Pfeifle coordinated with the contractor on removal of the Mellotte bridge and associated fill material, as well as removal of the pedestrian bridge at Hardy Canyon and prepping the site for installation of the replacement vehicle bridge.



Mellotte bridge site after removal of bridge and fill material

Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Confer Morris and Statewide Forester Pfeifle conducted a site review of the Cleman understory thinning operation. Harvest is complete on Unit 2 (burned unit in Woodcamp drainage) and a portion of the logs have been hauled. The feller buncher was moved to Unit 1 and began harvest operations. However, with the recent rain and snow events, DNR has determined that conditions are no longer acceptable for harvest operations or hauling, so contractor is on hold until conditions change.



Unit 2 post-harvest



Unit 2 post-harvest



Unit 2 post-harvest



Burned landscape looking west from Woodcamp Ridge

The prescribed fire team completed erosion control tree felling in two drainages on the west end of Cleman Mountain that had burned in the Evan's Canyon fire.



Middle Fork Canyon drainage



Middle Fork Canyon drainage

Manager Babik worked with contractors to seed the old agriculture field at the Teanaway Valley Unit with native grasses.



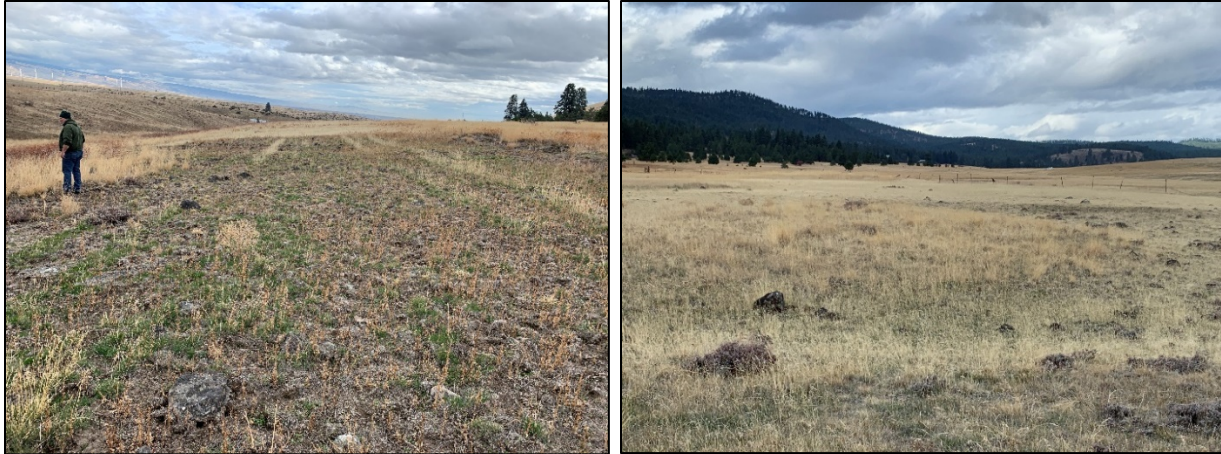
Teanaway Valley Unit field conversion to native grasses

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik inspected units one and three of the pre-commercial thinning work in the Gnat Flats area of the L.T. Murray. Contractors did an excellent job removing small diameter trees and bucking them into pieces. Trees will decompose on site.



Pre and post conditions of the Gnat Flats pre-commercial thinning project

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Natural Resource Scientist Nass and Assistant Manager Winegeart conducted a site assessment and discussed restoration options for the Gress site, a previously farmed and grazed 100-acre parcel in the L.T. Murray that contains a significant population of *Ventemata dubia*. A project area outline was collected via UTV using the Avenza mapping tool and two different restoration methodologies were identified based on differences in soil and topography.



Assistant Manager Winegeart assesses the efficacy of herbicide on ventenata and restoration options for the Gress site in the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Upcoming Presentation on Greenstrip Firebreaks: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett prepared for his presentation on the Blackrock Pilot Project by meeting virtually with the two event coordinators and testing out the presentation through Zoom. Through this project, WDFW help private landowners' places strategic greenstrip firebreaks to help deal with large scale and frequent wildfires on the landscape. The presentation will be on Thursday Nov. 19, at 9am through Washington Resource Conservation and Development's "Fire in Shrub-Steppe Webinar Series."

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart worked with the Washington Conservation Corp (WCC) to remove wire and post from the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area. The crew cleaned up a two mile stretch of fence and was able to salvage more than 200 heavy duty t-posts for reuse.

A selection was made for the new project manager position to plan and oversee restoration activities funded by a Department of Ecology grant on the new Oak Creek Wildlife Area Van Wyk acquisition. Emma Charlet will begin this role on November 23. She will also assist with winter feeding operations. We are excited to have Emma aboard!



WCC crew on Whiskey Dick Ridge



WCC worker rolling old barbed wire



WCC worker pulling t-post

7) **Other**

Nothing this installment.

REGION 4

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 5

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Dusky Canada Goose Surveys: Biologists Stephens and Holman continued dusky Canada goose surveys in Cowlitz, Pacific, and Wahkiakum counties. The purpose of the surveys is to count dusky geese observed and read alphanumeric codes on any red collared duskys. Wildlife managers survey the geese multiple times across their primary wintering grounds and use the data to generate survival estimates. The dusky geese are collared on their breeding grounds in Alaska every other year. dusky, cackling, Taverner's, western Canada geese, and resident dark geese (wuskys) were located and recorded.



Just a small portion of a flock of approximately 3000 cackling Canada geese near Woodland

Columbian White-Tailed Deer Surveys: Biologists Stephens and Holman conducted the initial 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 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 does on Puget Island



Columbian white-tailed buck on Puget Island

Wolf Observation Reports: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen followed up on two wolf reports that had been submitted by the public on the online WDFW wolf reporting tool (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/species-recovery/gray-wolf/observations>). One Clark County observation report turned out to be a photo of a coyote, while a photo of a possible wolf track in Klickitat County turned out to be a cougar track. While one or two claw indentations were visible in the track, the shape of the interdigital pad and the overall track shape confirmed that the track was made by a cougar. Jacobsen contacted the reporting parties, thanked them for the submissions, and discussed the sightings and photos with the reporting parties.



Photo of a Clark County coyote submitted via the online reporting tool



Picture of a cougar track submitted via the online reporting tool

Injured Raptors: Within an hour on the same day, Biologist Wickhem received two separate reports of injured raptors potentially in need of professional rehabilitation. The first, a red-tailed hawk, was hit by a logging truck and picked up by a concerned citizen. The hawk was still very aware of its surroundings but was having mobility problems. The citizen called WDFW and Wickhem met him to collect the hawk. The second report was of an adult bald eagle that had been hanging around an orchard outside White Salmon for several days and could only fly a few feet at a time.

Anticipating an ‘eagle rodeo’ with a still very mobile eagle, Biologist Wickhem recruited the help of Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Wolf Biologist Spence. The team located the eagle at the edge of a row of cherry trees, pinned-up against a thicket of blackberry bushes. Wickhem approached the eagle from one side waving a large net to distract it, while Jacobsen and Spence snuck up behind it and threw a blanket and sheet over the bird’s head. Once it was covered, they were able to easily and safely transfer the eagle into a large pet carrier. Both raptors were transported to Rowena Wildlife Clinic for assessment and treatment. The veterinarian has since reported that the red-tailed hawk has a spinal injury, but still has reflexes in its wings and legs/feet so it is not paralyzed. It is being treated, but she is not sure if it will fully recover. The eagle was found to have two broken “fingers” in one of its wings, and lead poisoning. She thinks it will recover in a few months and should be healthy enough for release by next spring.



Red-tailed hawk after arriving at Rowena Wildlife Clinic



Injured bald eagle, after receiving a splint to help heal its broken wing

Bald eagle wing x-ray

Dusky Canada Goose Survey: Biologist Wickhem conducted the first dusky Canada goose survey of the year in Clark County. Dusky geese are a sub-species of Canada goose that spend summers in Alaska and migrate through and/or over-winter in the lower Columbia River. Dusky geese are closed to recreational harvest due to low population levels. No dusky geese were observed on this survey, but Wickhem did record approximately 619 cackling geese, 12 western Canada geese, 150 snow geese, and hundreds of sandhill cranes. The weather was excellent, and many people were out with binoculars enjoying the birds.

Pelt Sealing: Biologists across the region are sealing several bobcats and cougars for successful hunters. Most of the harvests were opportunistic while scouting or hunting for deer and elk. If you harvest a bobcat or otter this season, you must have it sealed by WDFW personnel by April 20, 2021. If you harvest a cougar, you must report it to WDFW within 72 hours of harvest and schedule a sealing. Please contact your regional office, thaw out the carcass prior to sealing, and leave proof of sex attached to the carcass.



Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen pulling a premolar tooth from a hunter-harvested cougar

Draining Balch Lake: From Sept. 28 through Oct. 8, Region 5 Wildlife Program staff members worked to drain Balch Lake on the Sondino Ponds Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area. The Sondino Unit, purchased by WDFW in the early 2000s, is managed for the benefit of western pond turtles, which are a state listed threatened species. WDFW biologists have documented slower growth among western pond turtles that reside in Balch Lake, one of the water bodies on the Sondino Unit. The quality of the habitat at Balch Lake is comparable to the other ponds, so habitat quality is unlikely to be a limiting factor in turtle vigor. The most important difference between other ponds and this one is that Balch Lake is known to contain a large number of fish. These warmwater fish utilize the same foods that small pond turtles do, and some of the fish (largemouth bass) are capable of eating hatchling pond turtles. We have documented stunted growth in Balch Lake turtles. We believe this is due to competition for food with the fish and that, at least occasionally, hatchling turtles are consumed by the larger fish. No hatchling pond turtles have been captured at Balch Lake during population estimation efforts, whereas hatchlings have been captured at the other ponds.

Spring and summer 2020 have been especially dry, and most of the ponds on the Sondino Unit have dried up. western pond turtles are adapted to tolerate this, however, most of the fish require perennial water. District 9 biologists and the Klickitat Wildlife Area manager made plans to capitalize on a naturally dry year to try to eliminate the fish in Balch Lake, therefore improving conditions for the turtles. Wildlife Biologist Wickhem secured necessary permits from the Washington Department of Ecology and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to proceed with draining the lake.

The job proved to be extremely challenging and involved constantly moving heavy discharge hose, wading and working in 2.5 feet or more of very sticky mud, and intake hoses that were frequently plugged with vegetation and debris. However, over the course of the nine-day draining, the team removed and euthanized approximately 7,047 fish (4,641 bluegill, 1,674 pumpkinseed, 311 bass, and 420 bullhead). At least a thousand more died in the water throughout the draining due to low oxygen levels. A few hundred fish remain, and we hope the herons and other predators will assist in removing the remaining fish over the coming months. A huge THANK YOU to all the staff members that provided advice, equipment, netting skills, time, and effort! We look forward to seeing how the pond turtle populations respond in the coming years!



Draining Balch Lake

Black-tail Buck Research Project: Biologists Stephens and Holman each followed up on hunter harvests of black-tailed bucks involved in the research project. Each of the bucks had been captured in the summer of 2019 in GMU 568 by Holman with an assist from Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald. The successful hunters were happy to learn that WDFW is putting effort into learning about their local deer, interested in various aspects of the study, curious about their deer’s age, capture location and methods, etc. Data has been compiled and sent along to Ungulate Specialists Garrison and Hansen. One study buck remains alive in Region 5.



Black-tailed buck 31555 at the time of his capture as a yearling in GMU 568



Black-tailed buck 31555 in GMU 564 as a two-year-old buck



Successful hunter with black-tail 31555 taken in GMU 564



Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald with black-tailed buck 31553 at the time of capture in GMU 568 as a two-year-old buck



Trail Camera photo of black-tailed buck 31553 as a three-year-old during October of 2020 in GMU 568

Collared Buck on Trail Camera: Biologist Stephens set-up trail cameras in GMU 556 in the vicinity of a buck that was GPS collared as a yearling in May of 2018. Pictures of the collared buck were captured on two of the cameras including one that was only 50 feet from where he was darted two years ago.



Jumbo Peak Goat Survey: Biologist Stephens joined USFS personnel to conduct a goat survey on Jumbo Peak, which is about halfway between Mount Saint Helens and Mount Adams. Observers saw 12 goats on surrounding peaks and on Jumbo Peak itself. The trail has been inaccessible due to a landslide blocking the road. Prior to this year, the last time this area was surveyed was in 2014 during which 21 goats were counted.



Group of nannies and yearlings on Jumbo Peak
Goats – Photo by Tom Kogut



Scanning for Mountain
– Photo by Tom Kogut

Sick Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a report of a severely emaciated deer that needed to be euthanized. The deer had previously been observed by Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Biologist Holman and was designated to be sent to a lab for disease surveillance. Upon arriving at the location, Aubrey found the deer had already died. The carcass was collected, and the necessary samples were sent to a diagnostic lab with the help of Biologist Stephens.

Klickitat Western Gray Squirrel Nest Survey: Biologist Wickhem and Habitat Biologist Johnson conducted a western gray squirrel nest survey on a private ranch in central Klickitat County. The property was surveyed for nests in 2000 and 2010 and has since done some prescribed forest thinning to benefit the squirrels. On the last survey, 387 nests were recorded, and the landowner wanted to do another survey on the ten-year interval. For this effort, the landowner, along with two family members and a ranch employee, joined the biologists for the survey. The team easily found 63 nests on only a small part of the property. The landowner will continue surveying the rest of the property in the coming weeks to get a full count.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Installing Program Signage in Skamania County: With the volunteer help of a master hunter, Private Lands Biologist Ferris installed program signage for newly enrolled Private Lands Access parcels owned by Weyerhaeuser. Weyerhaeuser has opened over 6,500 acres for public hunting in Skamania and Clark counties under the Feel Free to Hunt option managed by the Department of Fish and Wildlife.



Installed new program signage on new Private Lands Access Program properties

Pheasant Release: Pheasants continue to be distributed at three release sites in Klickitat County. With the work of multiple WDFW staff members and help from several volunteers, releases occur on part of the Klickitat Wildlife Area as well as on two Feel Free to Hunt properties in Klickitat County enrolled in WDFW's Private Lands Access Program and the Eastern Washington Pheasant Release Program. Releasing pheasants on program properties with suitable habitat helps to promote and improve pheasant hunting opportunity available to the public. The birds were raised at WDFW's Bob Oke Game Farm and were handsome in their colorful plumage.



Ring-necked pheasants being released at the Gun Club property, which is a Feel Free to Hunt site in Klickitat County

Opening Weekends of Deer Hunting Season: Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven conducted hunter success surveys on the Soda Springs Unit on opening weekend. Hunter turnout was up a bit from the past couple years, however, not many hunters were near a road, so she only spoke with 55 hunters on Saturday and 21 on Sunday. One 3-point buck and one 4-point buck were harvested on Saturday, as well as a small bear. Hunters had favorable weather much of the weekend so many remained in the field through the day. VanLeuven observed that four camps had whole families including small children, which was unusual. Everyone seemed to be in good spirits, enjoying the opportunity to recreate outdoors.

VanLeuven conducted hunter success surveys during the second weekend of the season and noted a substantial increase in deer harvest. Cold nights and snow on Saturday morning seem to have brought deer down from the higher elevations, and the rutting season has started already. VanLeuven contacted 46 hunters on Saturday and either personally checked or took reports of 11 deer taken. On Sunday, she talked with 39 hunters, recording six deer harvested. Several hunters who have been coming to the Klickitat Wildlife Area every year for decades harvested deer. One of the successful hunters is 84 years old! VanLeuven encountered one hunter who shot a perfectly symmetrical 4x4 buck on Friday morning, and then caught a salmon at Leidl Park along the Klickitat River the same afternoon. The season has gone well with a better success rate than recent years.



Successful hunters

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 included mountain goats, big-horned sheep, cougars, bobcats, and 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.



Hunter with bighorn from Chelan Butte



Hunter with goat from Naches Pass



Hunter with mountain goat from Goat Rocks



Region 2 Bighorn Sheep checked at the Region 5 office



Biologist Holman "pinning" a Bighorn Sheep – Photo by Steve Gray



Successful Mountain Goat hunter with a very large Billy from Mt. Baker



Cougar harvested from GMU 572



Bobcat harvest from GMU 556



Cougar harvested from GMU 568

Martin Access Site: After someone filled the Martin access vault restroom with large boulders, a private company had to be hired to drop inside the vault and remove the boulders by hand. Staff members from Peltzer Septic dropped in the vault and hoisted the rocks out.



Martin access site boulder removal

Access Sites: With the arrival of fall, access staff members are spending a majority of their time with backpack blowers, clearing the fallen leaves from access sites. Staff members are also routinely picking up and hauling well over 600 pounds of trash from access sites a week. This often includes large dump piles which appear to be from people conducting their fall cleaning and dumping it on state lands.



Example of garbage dumping at the Barber access site

Vancouver Lake Access: Access staff members Rhodes, McKinlay, Boys, and Holt all worked at Vancouver Lake Access one day clearing blackberries and roadside brush. A total of 380 pounds of trash was removed from Vancouver Lake access site.



Access staff Boyd cutting back black berries

Kress Lake Access Site: Access staff members picked up trash, maintained trails, mowed, cut brush, and applied herbicide treatment at Kress Lake.



Access staff member Holt using walk behind brush cutter at the Kress lake trail to clear brush

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Bear Concerns: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen followed up with a concerned homeowner who had reported issues with a bear in her community. Several neighbors had been visited by the bear, who had repeatedly gotten into garbage cans and bird feeders. Jacobsen and Region 5 customer service provided *Living with Wildlife* information to the reporting party to share with her community. Jacobsen also arranged a meeting with local community members next week to address specific issues and hopefully prevent additional conflicts with the bear.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with an individual having a problem with a black bear. The bear had been on the property the previous night and had gotten into a chicken coop. The coop was sufficient to keep smaller predators out, but not something as large as a bear. The individual had relocated his chickens for the time being, and trail cameras were placed to monitor activity. The bear returned the night after the chickens were moved but has not been back since. A motion sensing noisemaking device was loaned out, and Aubrey worked with the individual to get a hotwire put around the coop before bringing the chickens back. The landowner has installed new deterrents near the chicken coop and has been monitoring the situation closely. A check of a trail camera showed that the bear had not returned since the initial depredation event. Aubrey thanked the landowner for taking the necessary steps to prevent future conflict and collected the trail camera and scare device loaned to the individual.

Habituated Bear: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and WDFW Officer Nelson met with a couple at their residence to discuss ongoing issues with a black bear. The landowners had several bird feeders and suet feeders up at the residence, as well as a large trough full of sunflower seeds that the black bear had been helping itself to. The landowners had recorded video of the bear sitting on its haunches and consuming handfuls of sunflower seeds at a time. Jacobsen and Officer Nelson pointed out several possible additional sources of bear attractants on the property and advised the landowners to completely remove any and all attractants present. Rubber buckshot was issued to the landowner to assist in hazing efforts if the bear continued to frequent the site, and a fox light was deployed to help deter the bear from any remaining food scent that may have been in the area. Jacobsen also advised the landowners to construct an electric fence around their compost bins, which the landowners agreed to.

Missing Cattle: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen observed cattle on timber rangeland while he was on annual leave and hunting in the area. Annual roundup had already occurred, and the cows had been missed during the process. Once he returned to work, Jacobsen worked with Klickitat County Range Deputy Cole to locate the missing cows for the rancher that they belonged to.

Calf Depredation: A Klickitat County landowner's calf was attacked by an animal a few weeks prior, and the landowner eventually decided to contact WDFW to report the incident. Though the landowner had already disposed of the carcass, the description and photos he provided to Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen appeared to match the depredation signatures of a domestic dog. The calf (approximately 200 lbs.) had been bitten several times in the tail and in the groin region. The calf was discovered alive in a ditch, but unable to move. The calf had not been fed on by the depredating animal. The landowner indicated that he had had issues with domestic dogs bothering his livestock in the past.

Goat Depredation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and WDFW Officer Nelson responded to a report of a goat depredation in Klickitat County. One goat was missing, and the other goat had been found deceased in its pen. Jacobsen conducted a necropsy of the carcass and confirmed that the goat was killed by a cougar. After searching the surrounding woods, Jacobsen and Officer Nelson located the second goat, which had been carried over the fence and cached in the leaf litter by the cougar. A houndsman was called out to search for the cougar, but the cougar was not located. Jacobsen discussed livestock husbandry options with the landowner to help prevent further depredations on the landowner's remaining livestock and offered to provide assistance with the construction of a complete night-pen enclosure for the landowner's remaining goat.



Large goat killed by a cougar

Small goat cached in the leaf litter by a cougar

Deer Complaints: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen spoke with a landowner who was upset over deer damage to his pine seedlings. The landowner is attempting to re-forest part of his property in Klickitat County, which happens to lie in ideal deer wintering habitat. Deterrent options were discussed, and the landowner is considering enrolling his property in the WDFW Private Lands Hunting Access Program to help alleviate some of the deer pressure on his property.

Aggressive Fox: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen received a second-hand report of two different encounters with an aggressive Cascade red fox in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. The information was passed along to the USFS biologist and advice was given on installing signage in the area that warned hikers about the dangers of feeding wildlife (dangers to humans as well as to the wildlife).

Cougar Concerns: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen fielded several phone calls and reports of cougar sightings across the region, including a couple reports of cougar depredations on chickens and goats that were called in several days to over a week after the actual depredations occurred. Advice on livestock husbandry, night penning, and general information on living in cougar country was provided, and site visits as well as community outreach activities were scheduled for the upcoming weeks. Jacobsen also passed along the information to WDFW Enforcement Program personnel to help monitor the various situations.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey followed up on a report of a cougar depredation on a small goat initially reported to enforcement. There was no doubt that it was a cougar kill, as the reporting party set up a trail camera and captured images of the cat returning to the area multiple times the following night. Animal husbandry practices were discussed, and the reporting party was going to alter the way they cared for their remaining animals.

Aubrey also followed up on a confirmed cougar depredation on a sheep from the previous week. Enforcement officers responded to the initial depredation on a furlough day, but the initial event was approximately 36 hours old. The landowner had claimed to see the cougar near his sheep again the night prior, although there was no depredation. The landowner was also planning to bring more animals to the area in the near future. A houndsman was called in out of an abundance of caution, but the dogs did not hit on any cougar scent.

A report of a potential cougar in Lewis County was received by Aubrey. The reporting parties had pictures of prints, but they were low quality and difficult to determine what animal had left the prints. Aubrey placed a trail camera at the site and left it for a week, checking it periodically. There was no sign of any wildlife other than deer on the trail camera.

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with a landowner in Klickitat County who had been experiencing damage to his oat crop from elk. The landowner was enrolled in a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA). A kill permit was issued, and public hunting access was discussed. Jacobsen was also contacted by a landowner in Clark County regarding elk damage to fences on a neighboring property. Jacobsen described the requirements for a landowner to be eligible for a DPCA, which was not a fit for this situation. However, he offered to send general season antlerless elk hunters to the area to help with reducing the elk damage. The landowner will contact Jacobsen if they decide to go down the route of offering a public hunting opportunity.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with a landowner who has had on and off issues with nuisance elk on the property. The elk eat ornamental plants and vegetables that are kept in an outdoor kitchen area. With modern elk season opening soon, Aubrey suggested the landowner find someone willing to attempt to hunt the property. A hazing device was also loaned to the landowner in attempt to keep the elk away from the small area where the issues are. Aubrey

continued to work with landowners throughout District 10 on elk damage issues. DPCAs are in the process of being renewed, and other measures to deter damage are being implemented throughout the area. Permits were issued and damage hunters may be deployed as needed to address damage issues.

Patch Fencing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen delivered some patch fencing supplies to a couple of landowners who were regularly having their fences destroyed by elk, which resulted in domestic beef cows escaping and roaming (unwanted) on adjacent properties.

Wolf Observation Report: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen contacted an elk hunter who had submitted a wolf observation report on the WDFW online submission site. The hunter had recorded video of the animal vocalizations that he witnessed and shared the video with WDFW. After reviewing the video and consulting with other WDFW staff, it was determined that the vocalizations in the video were clearly coyote vocalizations. Regardless, WDFW was thankful to the hunter for submitting the initial report.

Injured Cooper's Hawk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted by a citizen who had picked up an injured Cooper's hawk in Skamania County. Jacobsen transported the hawk to the Rowena Wildlife Clinic for rehabilitation, but unfortunately the hawk had suffered severe spinal injuries and succumbed to its injuries in the middle of the night.

Missing Free-Range Rabbits: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with a landowner who was concerned about his free-ranging rabbits in central Klickitat County. The landowner reported that he had approximately 300 free-ranging domestic rabbits on his 40-acre property and was now down to approximately only 100 rabbits. The landowner reported that he initially let the rabbits free to alleviate the predatory pressure on the California quail and Hungarian partridge on his property. The landowner believed a cougar had been eating the rabbits and was concerned about having a cougar nearby. Jacobsen provided advice to the landowner and suggested that the abundance of prey (rabbits) running free over the property and adjacent properties was very likely drawing cougars and a suite of other carnivores into the area. Jacobsen suggested penning the rabbits up, but the landowner was not interested in taking such measures. He wasn't overly concerned for the safety of the rabbits, but just didn't want a cougar hanging out nearby. The property is situated in ideal oak and sagebrush habitat for cougars, bears, coyotes, badgers, raptors, and a variety of other wildlife species that may be attracted to the abundance of white, black, and brown semi-tame domestic rabbits occupying the property. More rabbit losses are expected to continue. The landowner was also missing a male alpaca but wasn't sure if the neighbor had shot it or not when it was ranging around the adjacent properties.



An abundance of free-ranging domestic rabbits around the property (just a few of the property rabbits, circled in red)

Deer Feeding in Ryderwood: Conflict Specialist Aubrey, Biologist Holman, and Enforcement Officer Martin teamed on various aspects of dealing with individuals residing in the town of Ryderwood who are feeding deer. Unfortunately, these individuals have continued to feed deer unsuitable foods including grains and corn. At least four deer have died due to complications related to the feeding.

Aubrey was able to collect one relatively fresh carcass and together, he and Biologist Holman conducted a necropsy of the animal. The investigation revealed indicators of a condition called Acidosis which results from consumption of high carbohydrate foods which deer are not adapted to, nor equipped to digest. Manifestations of the condition in this case included diarrhea, watery rumen contents, ulcers inside the rumen, irritation visible on the outside of the rumen, as well as bird seed and gravel (from eating grain off of the ground) inside the rumen. Most of these are typical symptoms of Acidosis and they can lead to fatality as in the case of this otherwise healthy adult black-tail doe.

More information on the detrimental effects of feeding deer can be found at the following locations:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/news/feeding-wildlife-can-do-more-harm-good> <https://wdfw.wa.gov/news/artificial-feeding-not-best-way-help-wildlife>

Individuals who enjoy having deer around their homes are encouraged to do simple enhancements to their property instead of feeding. These can include allowing native vegetation to grow, keeping pets (especially dogs) inside, driving slowly (especially in morning and evening), minimizing fencing, and encouraging their neighbors to do the same.



Diarrhea



Undigested grains as well as gravel from inside the rumen



Ulcer inside the rumen

Injured Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to multiple reports of a deer likely injured during muzzleloader season. Aubrey was able to find the injured deer in the area it was reported. Unfortunately, the injury was severe enough that the deer had to be euthanized. The deer was donated to a local charity.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to a report of an injured deer in Klickitat County. The deer was in a landowner's back yard and was unable to get up. Jacobsen euthanized the deer and determined it was likely hit by a vehicle. The meat was donated.

Sick Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a report of a sick, confused deer in the same neighborhood where Aubrey and Biologist Holman removed an arrow from a deer earlier. Aubrey searched the backyard and surrounding forested area but was unable to locate any deer that seemed to be in distress.

Black-tailed Deer in Distress: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey and Biologist Holman responded to calls from a Longview neighborhood where multiple parties were involved in frustrations related to each other as well as the local deer. The situation had escalated to the point where eight-foot-tall chain-link fencing was in the process of being constructed around two parcels. While this may ultimately help the citizens get along with each other it is to the detriment of the deer and their ability to access habitat and move throughout the landscape. To make matters worse, somebody in the area fired a target arrow into a yearling black-tail doe. Aubrey and Holman located the deer and assessed the situation. The team was able to capture the deer, remove the arrow, treat the wound with antibiotic solution, move the deer to a parcel where it was welcome, reverse the immobilization drugs and see the deer walk away from the incident. Unfortunately, the arrow, though not sharp, had penetrated four to five inches quartering forward at the final rib, making the young deer's ability to survive the injury uncertain. The arrow and information related to the incident have been passed along to Enforcement Program.



Immobilized yearling black-tailed doe with injury from target arrow



Target arrow removed from the yearling doe

Injured Owl: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey picked up an injured owl in Cowlitz County. The owl appeared seriously injured after a window collision and was transported to a local veterinary clinic to be assessed further. Unfortunately, the injuries were serious, and the clinic euthanized the owl.

Large Injured Bird: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a report from a rehabber of a large injured bird in a tree. The bird turned out to be a turkey vulture sitting in the top of a large tree. It appeared the bird may have just been drying out its wings after a rainstorm as there were no obvious injuries. Aubrey told the reporting party to contact him again if the bird ever ended up on the ground.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Wetland Restoration Field Trip: Biologists Wickhem and Bergh organized and attended a field trip with Private Lands Biologist Ferris and staff members from the Underwood Conservation District and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to a site on private property where the landowner wants to perform a wetland restoration project. The wetland is aimed at benefitting western pond turtles, western toads, and rough-skinned newts. The landowner has already contracted a private company to develop a construction plan and is looking for funding and advice to guide the restoration. The team was optimistic about the project, contributed excellent ideas, and devised several options to help with funding. We believe this project will be very beneficial to the local reptile and amphibian populations and we look forward to watching it progress. Having multiple partner involvement on habitat projects is key to successful conservation efforts!



Wetland site visit in Klickitat county

Cowlitz Wildlife Area - Kosmos Dogpatch Access Area Gate Closure: The gate on the Kosmos Dogpatch access area that restricts vehicle access to the lakeshore will close on Nov. 30. The area is still open to walk-in access and people can still camp behind the gate but must leave vehicles in the parking area. Camping in the parking area is not allowed. The low lake levels and the wetter soils leave cultural and natural resources prone to damage from unlawful vehicular access. The gate will open May 15, 2021 in time for the Memorial Day weekend camping season kickoff.



Kosmos Dogpatch access area gate closure

Cowlitz Wildlife Area - New Rainey Creek Trailhead Parking Area: The Cowlitz area improved a parking lot adjacent to the Clevenger Road gate on the Kosmos Unit of the wildlife area. This site previously served as an undeveloped overflow parking lot for the community park across the street but was locked most of the time. Historically, users would park by the gate often blocking access which is unlawful, and citations have been issued. The parking area will provide ample parking for visitors and parking in front of the Clevenger Road gate will not be allowed.



New Rainey Creek Trailhead parking area

Klickitat Wildlife Area - Seasonal Road Closures on the Soda Springs Unit: Annual road closures went into effect on Nov. 1 on the Soda Springs Unit. These temporary closures, which have been implemented since 2007, reduce disturbance of wildlife during the winter when animals are stressed by harsh environmental conditions. They also help preserve the integrity of the roads that can be damaged by vehicle traffic when soils are soft. The road gates are located on Anderson Road, Old Headquarters Road, South Breaks Road, and Sheep Canyon Road. Segments of most of these roads remain open, and visitors may still access much of the wildlife area by vehicle.

Klickitat Wildlife Area - Grazing Permit Environmental Assessment: WDFW acquired land in 2019 that was incorporated into the Simcoe Mountains Unit. The property has been utilized for cattle range for many decades, and because it has not negatively impacted the quality of the habitat for wildlife. WDFW has committed to continuing this activity to maintain community culture. WDFW is developing a grazing permit renewal for the 2019 land acquisition, and a tour of the property was conducted for the District 9 team of biologists and the statewide range ecologist as part of the normal process. The group inspected the three main watering sites and rangeland used by cattle and completed the assessment forms which will become part of the grazing permit documents.



District team grazing review

Loose Dogs on the Klickitat Wildlife Area: During the past year, hunters have occasionally reported seeing a pair of dogs chasing deer on the Soda Springs Unit, and the dogs have been photographed in remote areas on game cameras that were designed to capture pictures of deer. Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven has also observed the dogs chasing deer. Attempts to locate the owner have not been successful until this week. A deer hunter advised VanLeuven that dogs were chasing deer on the second to the last day of the general rifle season and was later able to catch one of the dogs. Unfortunately, the dog did not have a collar. While WDFW personnel were considering the best course of action, WDFW Officer Nelson received a tip that the owner had placed a notice on social media about a lost dog. Officer Nelson called the owner, who confirmed that it was their dog, along with the other dog that was not caught. Officer Nelson explained to the owners that dogs chasing deer on the wildlife area may be lethally removed under Washington law, as well as the issues with deer being chased on land specifically purchased for conservation of deer habitat and the detrimental effects on deer, not to mention the temptation for angry hunters to dispatch the dogs themselves. The owner agreed to take immediate steps to keep the dogs at home.

Klickitat Wildlife Area Guzzler Maintenance: Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven and Natural Resource Worker Boyd inspected and cleaned three of the guzzlers on the Klickitat Wildlife Area. One of the guzzler water reservoirs was filled with dirt from animals digging next to the structure and flinging the soil into it. Boyd excavated the mud from the guzzler and restored it to functional condition.



Shoveling soil out of Guzzler F

Klickitat Wildlife Area Grazing Permit Monitoring: The date for cattle to be moved off the Simcoe Mountains Unit was Oct. 15, so Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven inspected the grazing permit areas for presence of cattle and utilization of forage. The permit holders had gathered their animals earlier in the week, however, VanLeuven found ten cattle that had eluded the riders and reported their location to the owner. All the cattle were picked up the following day.

Klickitat Wildlife Area Soda Springs Unit Patrol: Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven and Natural Resource Worker Boyd patrolled the Soda Springs Unit checking for trees that pose a hazard in high-use areas and repairs needed to gates or other infrastructure (missing signs, etc.). While making the rounds, a new road sign was added to one of the reader boards.



Grayback Road reader board

5) Providing Education and Outreach

School Presentations: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen, among other local speakers, was invited to present to classes of middle school students at Wildwood Academy regarding cougars during their cougar emphasis week. Jacobsen presented on multiple days to small groups of socially distanced students in an outdoor setting. The students had several great questions regarding cougar biology and behavior and enjoyed seeing the various cougar specimens that Jacobsen used as visual aids during the presentation.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Upside Down Tree: The Klickitat Wildlife Area office received an inquiry about a dead tree on the Soda Springs Unit and Natural Resource Worker Boyd went to investigate. A hunter nearby pointed out the tree, and it turned out to be a pine treetop that has broken off, tipped over, and fallen straight down so that it drove into the ground like a huge spike. The top is about 12 inches in diameter where it is stuck in the ground, and the top stands about 20 feet tall. The base of the tree is a little taller than the top and is located about 20 feet from where the top landed.



Upside down tree

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Grouse Wing Collections: Biologist Murphie collected 25 samples between the two barrels, George Adams and Mill 5, so far this season.

Buck Project: The remaining collar deployed on a buck in District 15 transmitted a mortality signal on November 5, 2020. Biologist Murphie investigated to determine cause of mortality and recover the GPS collar. The collar was recovered and had either broken off or been cut-off; an unusual occurrence for these collars as they are made of a hard, plastic material. No remains or other evidence at the site allow determination of the disposition of this study buck. Biologist Murphie will attempt to capture images of an ear-tagged animal by using trail-cameras placed in the vicinity.



Olympic Elk Herd Plan: Biologist Murphie worked on the draft plan and associated data; updating composition count database.

Mountain Quail: Biologist Murphie participated in a group discussion regarding mountain quail surveys and other related work that may be conducted in the near future.

Black Bear Density Monitoring Project: Biologist Tirhi received an update from the carnivore program regarding the bear monitoring project that was conducted in District 11 May-July 2020 (see earlier reports for overview). Overall, 1167 hair samples were collected at the 36 baited hair-collection stations in the district: 347 from week 1, 377 from week 2, 258 from week three, and 185 from week four. After subsampling (reducing multiple samples of the same individual at a site) and removal of non-hair samples (grass, bug legs, lichen, etc.), 498 samples were sent to Wildlife Genetics International in Nelson, BC. to determine individual bears. Additional samples

may be removed after the fact for bears that were killed during the study for timber damage removal by commercial timber landowners (Hampton and ORM). The results from the lab should be available by late-winter 2020.

Wolf Monitoring: Biologist Tirhi and volunteer Terry spent one day replacing batteries and/or moving high speed trail cameras (video) on private industrial timber land in GMU 654. Tirhi spent an additional half day replacing batteries on a camera near the Glacier View Wilderness. So far abundant game has been recorded in this project but no wolves. Three cameras have been stolen during the life of the project and all cameras have now been moved to upper tree canopy level for security. One camera was sent to the manufacturer for repair. Tirhi spent significant time submitting a permit to the National Park Service for wolf monitoring within the park in partnership with Northwest Trek. Tirhi included the option of tracking (by foot or snowmobile), camera monitoring, and aerial flights within the permit in the event any three options are needed. Northwest Trek obtained a grant to purchase four trail cameras; the intent is to circulate those cameras within the park near more recent wolf reports. Tracking by snowmobile and foot will occur, as needed. Aerial surveys would only be conducted within the park boundary if/when wolves are radio-collared outside park boundary but later cross into park boundary.

Streaked Horned Lark Species Status Assessment (SSA): Biologist Tirhi reviewed extensively and provided edits to the draft federal status review. The initial recovery plan and the subsequent SSAs guide the USFWS regulatory response and requirements to federally listed species recovery, in this case for federally listed larks. Overall, Tirhi found the SSA well-grounded but did specifically call out the need to address the lethality to larks of rodenticides used on airport grounds.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Belfair Duck Blinds: Biologist Murphie participated in a group meeting to discuss maintenance of the Belfair duck hunting blinds. The Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group received Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) funds to repair or replace these blinds and this was the first discussion in planning this activity.

Elk River Unit: Biologist Novack reports that the Elk River wildlife unit has been cleared of Scotch broom, and elk and snipe have already made well use of the area.

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.



Elk River Unit

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Teams Trainings and Meetings: Biologist Tirhi has been inundated with nearly daily Teams meetings involving species and project planning and agency-wide informational topics (records retention, home office, retirement systems, program updates, etc.). Teams is a game changer in terms of working collaboratively but the daily schedule is as busy now as it has ever been.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.