

Wildlife Program

Week of November 18-24, 2013

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Golden Eagle Survey Planning: Biologist Gerry Hayes and Section Manager Bruce Thompson have engaged Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff and met with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Regional and Western Golden Eagle Working Team staff to identify extent and prospective financial support for golden eagle breeding territory surveys in 2014. This is envisioned to be the second and final year of surveys to support preparation of the status assessment and Status Review for golden eagles in Washington. Survey efforts in 2014 are expected to be directed only east of the Cascade Crest. Planning is underway for a random sample to support estimation with specific levels of precision, as was done in 2013. Work has been initiated to seek joint financial support among WDFW, USFWS, and wind industry partners for 2014 surveys.

Sharp-tailed grouse: We heard this week of grant awards from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (written by Region 3 Biologists Heinlen and Fitkin and totaling over \$30,000) to support translocation into Okanogan County. The project also received a \$4,200 grant from Spokane Audubon for radios, a receiver, and gas expenses.

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery – New Lancaster Enclosure:
The new enclosure at Beezley Hills is finally complete, except for creating the floppy top as weasel deterrent.



New enclosure at Beezley Hills

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery – Relocation of rabbits: With weather turning colder and ground beginning to freeze we had to get the rabbits moved from the small enclosure at Sagebrush Flats to the new enclosure at Beezley Hills. On Tuesday we had the help of an alternative high school class from Wenatchee. This is part of a science program that Assistant District Biologist Gallie has been working on for several years. At the end of two days of effort we had trapped 31 rabbits, 24 males and 7 females; and estimate at least 10–15 additional rabbits in the small enclosure that have not been trapped. Twenty-two rabbits were moved to Beezley Hills, 17 males and 5 females. There are still rabbits that need to be trapped and moved from the rehab side of the small enclosure, hopefully we can accomplish that this week, along with rolling the top of the fence.



Rabbits get moved to the new enclosure at Beezley Hills as the weather turned colder.



An alternative high school class from Wenatchee helped move rabbits from the small enclosure at Sagebrush Flats to the new enclosure at Beezley Hills.



An alternative high school class from Wenatchee helps trap rabbits (above) and relay data (below).



Washington Connected Landscapes Project Update – Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Planning: Jason Lowe (Spokane BLM) presented a webinar regarding inclusion of wildlife habitat connectivity into the eastern Washington BLM Resource Management Plan (RMP). BLM is developing a Resource Management Plan (RMP) for nearly 425,000 acres in eastern Washington. RMP Planning decisions will be the basis for every on-the-ground action the BLM undertakes for the next two to three decades. Ten species (lynx, sage-grouse, WA ground squirrel, sharp-tailed grouse, Western gray squirrel, Townsend’s ground squirrel, mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat) of 16 RMP priority species (i.e., those species that warrant special consideration for analyses and decisions) are supported by connectivity analyses by the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group (WHCWG; www.waconnected.org). The BLM strongly incorporated the work of the WHCWG into the RMP analysis. Next BLM procedural steps are: Impact Analysis, Draft Environmental Impact Analysis (DEIS), Review of DEIS, and Final Documentation in 2015. More information can be found at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/spokane/plans/ewsjrmp/overview.php>.

Including Habitat Connectivity and Species Recovery GIS Products in Wildlife Area Plans:

As part of a Wildlife Program cross-division (Lands, Science, Diversity) work-session, Intern Stacey Plumley presented information regarding: (1) Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) habitat connectivity investment priorities; and (2) GIS map layers for discussion on how to incorporate habitat connectivity data and sensitive species data into Statewide and Swanson Lakes pilot project wildlife area plan re-writes.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1

Carcass Removal:

Specialist Shepherd and a contract range rider discussed wolves and a horse carcass with a couple living near Spirit Junction in the Smackout wolf territory. Contact was made with another neighbor known to Specialist Shepherd through a possible wolf confrontation a year ago and an agreement to bury the horse carcass with that



View of the farms and ranches in the Spirit Junction/Deep Creek area of the Smackout Wolf Territory.

neighbor's backhoe was made. It remains uncertain whether it will be accepted, but the preference to pay for the service by WDFW was made clear.

Depredation Investigation and Damage Prevention Training: Supervisor McCanna, Specialists Shepherd and Bennett, and Technician Bendixen attended the Depredation Investigation and Damage Prevention Training in Ellensburg.

Contract Range Riding: Specialist Shepherd discussed work duties with a current contract range rider who received a contract extension.

Wolf Presentation: Specialist Shepherd worked on a PowerPoint presentation regarding non-lethal wolf management concerning cattle ranching in Northeast Washington.

District 2

Wolf Reports: Biologist Lewis assisted Supervisor McCanna on a wolf report investigation in the Rock Lake area of Whitman County. One set of tracks were observed and verified as wolf tracks. This area is approximately two miles from wolf sightings in the Ewan area.

Lewis also received a call from a landowner in Endicott, WA who reported a missing Red Heeler dog. The landowner had concerns because they had heard rumors that WDFW had released wolves in the area. Lewis explained that WDFW has never done a wolf release in the state and are just working on managing a population that has moved into the state from Canada, Idaho, and Oregon. The landowner said they would let people know that the rumors of the Department doing a release of wolves are not true. Lewis also answered other wolf and coyote questions the landowner had.

Wolf Rumors: Supervisor McCanna received a phone call regarding two wolves that killed three horses in the Dusty/LaCrosse area. McCanna worked with Officer King two days to track down the story. This ended up being a "RUMOR" that a third party posted on Facebook. McCanna and Region 1 Director Pozzanghera received phone calls from Spokesman Review outdoor writer Rich Landers. McCanna explained what happened and Pozzanghera called Landers back to report the truth.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Moose Survey Methodology Development: Biologist Ferguson prepared transect lines for both District 1 and District 2. Ferguson along with Richard Harris prepped the helicopter for the test surveys for double blind observer tests. Biologists Ferguson, Atamian, Base, Prince and Harris conducted helicopter flights in Districts 1 and 2 to test various protocols and feasibility of surveying moose using Line Distance Sampling methodology. Biologists Ferguson, Atamian and Robinette met with cooperating Biologist Mike Mitchell and master's student James Goertz from the University of Montana who will be working with us on the moose project.

Wildlife Areas

Grouse tracking at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA) – Volunteers Ann Brinley and Dr. Kim Thorburn both came out to track this week for a total of three tracking days. Thorburn located two sharp-tails and five sage grouse on November 19. Thorburn also spotted a sharp-tail without a signal that flew a short distance while she was about 200 meters away. On November 22, Thorburn found four female sage grouse and one male sage grouse with signals. The male flushed with a slightly smaller, likely male, sage grouse without a collar. Brinley located eleven radio-collared grouse on November 21 including one whose radio transmitter may be failing, as it twice produced only a squeal on the receiver.

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Cameras – Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer deployed two additional remote cameras used for wildlife photo-monitoring throughout the winter on Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. Cameras are used to track relative use by deer, elk and moose of this winter range area both inside and outside of habitat improvement treatment units (thinning and prescribed burning). Palmer also checked the two cameras deployed last week; one on the edge of a thinning unit with the second nearby on a game trail into the adjacent untreated area.



Bushnell

11-17-2013 10:04:06

This small buck is sniffing where a doe had laid for a couple of hours before daylight.

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

Wildlife Management



Hunter Check Stations: Region 1 Wildlife Program staff along with Hunter Education Instructor Volunteers conducted check stations this year at Washington State Patrol truck scale facilities on Highways 2 and 395. This was the second year that simultaneous check stations were open on three of the five check station dates operated in October and November. In total, staff ran eight check stations and interviewed 708 hunters who had harvested 140 white-tailed deer and 7 mule deer. Staff also inspected 3 moose, 2 cougars, 1 coyote, 1 bobcat, and a number of forest grouse, ducks and geese. A 10 year summary of hunters checked at the traditionally run check stations along with harvested white-tailed deer (only) is presented in Table 1.

A successful deer hunter visits on the last check station weekend of 2013.

Table 1: Colville District Deer Hunter Check Stations (White-tailed Deer Harvest Data Only)

YEAR:	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009*	2010**	2011	2012^	2013^
Number of Check Station Dates Operated:	5	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5
Number of Deer Hunters Interviewed at Check Stations	884	913	996	848	784	702	723	408	443	484
Total White-tailed Deer Checked at Check Stations	156	167	211	186	88	76	77	66	78	91
Total White-tail Bucks from Check Stations	124	129	146	125	65	57	52	47	52	74
Yearling Only White-tail Bucks Checked	55	58	64	30	24	12	25	16	8	15
Percent Total Yearling White-tail Bucks Checked	44%	45%	44%	24%	37%	21%	48%	34%	15%	20%
Total Antlerless White-tails Checked (does & fawns)	32	38	65	61	23	19	25	19	26	17
White-tail Harvest Success for Check Stations by Year	18%	18%	21%	22%	11%	11%	11%	16%	18%	19%
White-tail Bucks Only Check Station Success by Year	14%	14%	15%	15%	8%	8%	7%	12%	12%	15%
Mean Number of Hunters per Check Station Date Run	177	152	166	141	131	117	145	82	89	97
Mean Number of White-tails Checked per Station Date	31	28	35	31	15	13	15	13	16	18
Mean No. White-tail Bucks Checked per Station Date	25	22	24	21	11	10	10	9	10	15
Mean Antlerless White-tails Checked per Station Date	6	6	11	10	4	3	5	4	5	3

* Youth/Senior/Disabled bag limit of "any" White-tailed Deer (includes antlerless) changed from the entire Modern Firearm Season to October only as of 2009.

** Youth/Senior/Disabled bag limit of "any" White-tailed Deer (includes antlerless) changed from the October only Modern Firearm Season to 4 days only as of 2010.

^ Only counts traditional check stations in 2012 and 2013 when two stations were operated simultaneously on some of the check station dates.

The mean number of hunters per check station date generally declined from 2001 to 2010. There was a slight spike upwards in 2010 and a gradual increase upward through 2013 from the period low in 2011 (Figure 1). The numbers of white-tailed deer checked follow a similar pattern (Figure 2).

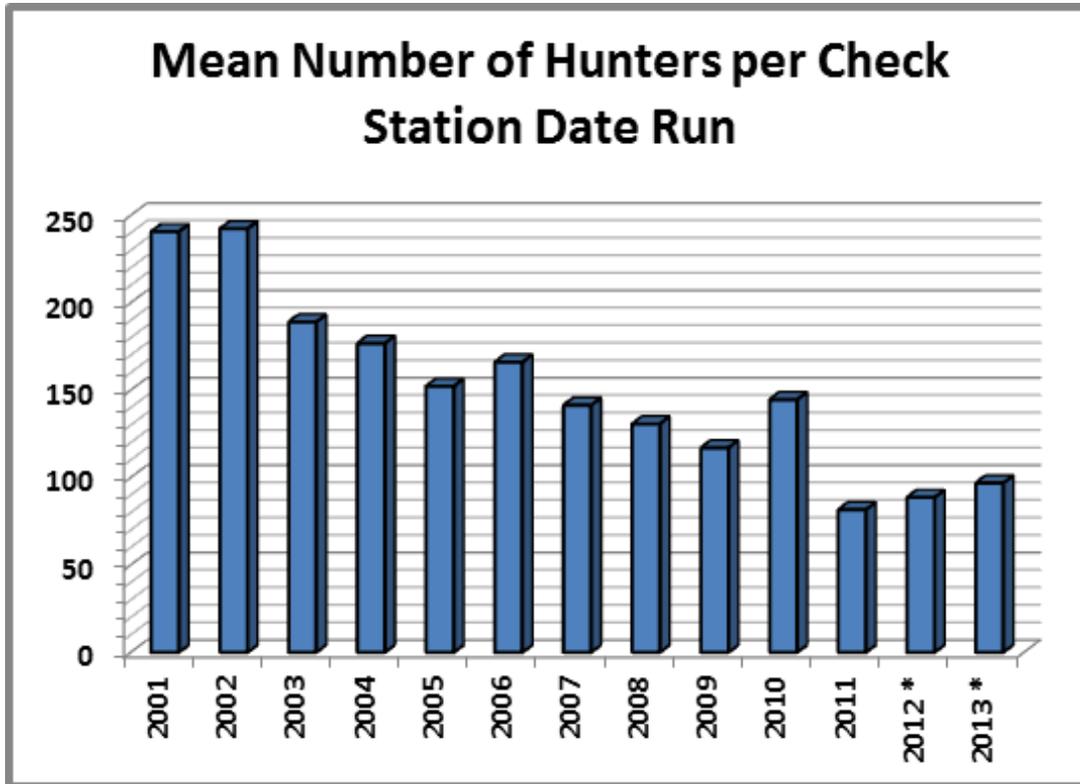


Figure 1: Mean number of hunters per check station date run in District 1, 2001-2013.

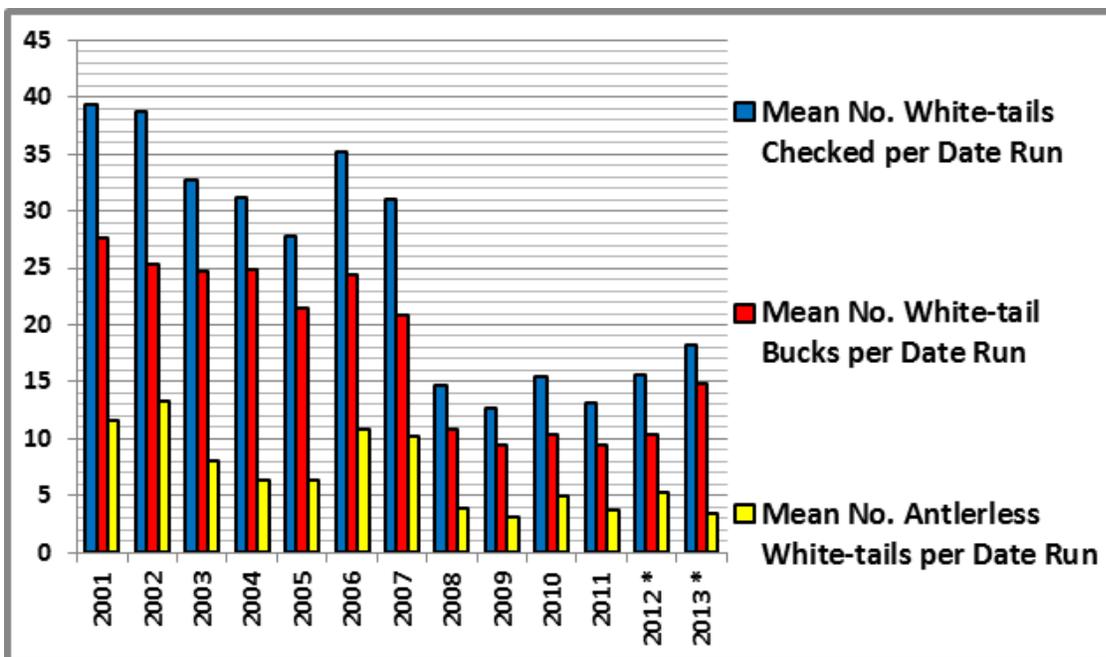


Figure 2: Mean number of white-tailed deer, white-tail bucks and antlerless white-tails inspected at hunter check stations per date run within District One, 2001-2013.

Columbia Plateau Wildlife Management Association (CPWMA) Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP) Program: Biologist Atamian and Program Manager Robinette attended the November general meeting for the CPWMA group and answered many questions regarding the elk and our management of them in Game Management Unit (GMU) 130.

Private Lands/Access

Walla Walla County Access: Biologist Thorne Hadley met with hunters that stopped in the office as well as called on the phone, looking for available areas to hunt.



Successful hunters took advantage of WDFW's Access Program.

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

Wildlife Areas

WT Wooten Wildlife Area – Hazard Trees: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager (AWAM) Dingman worked with Columbia County road department to remove some hazard cottonwood and locust trees that keep dropping branches into the county road and were threatening to fall into the road. The logs were placed in the Hartsock Unit for habitat trees.



Cottonwood trees that posed road hazards were removed by Columbia County Road crew.



Locust trees that posed road hazards were removed by Columbia County Road crew.

REGION 2

Wolf Management

Wolf Depredation: Specialist Bridges along with Biologist Volsen, Officer Day and Manager Cotton responded to a wolf/horse depredation call near Mansfield.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Bighorn Sheep Management: As the Sinlahekin Bighorn sheep moves down onto winter ranges they are becoming more visible. Biologist Heinlen observed 13 Bighorn sheep in the northern end of the Sinlahekin herds range, received one report of 3 sheep from the south end and another report (with photos) of 9 sheep from the middle of the herds range. This total of 25 sheep is similar to the 2012 survey results of 26, but far from the 2011 survey results of 82 animals. Biologist Heinlen also coordinated with Special Species Section Manager Harris about finalizing plans to



Sinlahekin Bighorn sheep observed in Loomis.

deploy a few radio collars within the Sinlahekin herd this winter to be able to more closely monitor this herd through the use of telemetry.

Wildlife Areas

Mansfield Pond Habitat Enhancement – Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei and Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Bechtel planted 200 shrubs at Mansfield Pond. The area in which the shrubs were planted was previously inundated with cattails. The cattails were mowed and sprayed with herbicide to prepare the area for the young shrubs. Once mature, the shrubs will provide habitat for pheasants, quail and mule deer. The shrubs will have an added benefit of providing hunting blind cover for waterfowl hunters.

Burn Team: The prescribed burn team nearly completed burning logging slash piles on the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Pogue Mountain Unit, but by Thursday the clear sunny days dried fuels adjacent to piles allowing the fires to spread in some places where the team then needed to dig check-lines. Consequently, the pile burning is stopped on Pogue Mountain until we receive precipitation. Laying out prescribed fire burn units in the Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration Project – Phase 2 (approximately 1,000 acres) was completed, and data from that effort is being compiled and organized for planning and preparation efforts. Scoping and preliminary burn unit mapping for a potential prescribed fire project comprising 750 acres on the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Chesaw Unit was begun. A draft funding proposal to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is being worked on for this project by Manager Olson, and the burn team that will be submitted to Okanogan Complex Manager Swedberg for review by Wednesday, November 27.

Private Lands/Access

Goat Grass Control Test Plot: Private Lands Biologist Braaten worked with Private Lands Manager Cotton and Vegetation Ecologist Merg to identify plots within SAFE fields that have infestations of jointed goat grass and cheat grass in Douglas County. Vegetation Ecologist Merg sprayed plots with live bacteria to determine if it will control invasive grasses.



Photo by Eric Braaten

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

Wildlife Management

Columbia Basin Mule Deer: Biologist Gallie completed annual post hunting season deer counts in Douglas County, PMU 23. Six standardized drive routes (nearly 300 miles) are completed annually and cover all the GMU's and a variety of habitats, land ownerships, and agriculture in this upper most PMU of the Columbia Basin. A total of 1,187 deer were counted (5% decrease over last year), resulting in a F:D ratio of 73:100 and B:D ratio of 22:100, and mature buck ratio of 5:100 does. These results are typical of Douglas County and similar to last years, with the exception of the F:D ratio which was 12% higher this year. Douglas County deer thrive in the agricultural/shrub-steppe matrix and these monitoring routes usually withstand year-to-year variation in crop rotation. However, this year the Moses Coulee route which has some of the few irrigated alfalfa fields in the county and can draw 100-200 deer in a couple mile stretch were fallow which caused this route total to decline. Calculated totals with the Moses Coulee route removed showed a 10% increase in total deer among the remaining routes, showing a steadily increasing population and presumed harvest.



Douglas County deer in the rut: Will it be Bachelor #1 or Bachelor #2? Photo by J. Gallie.

Recreational Opportunities: Mule deer bucks have been more visible (and oblivious) than they've been since late summer with the arrival of the peak of the breeding season. White-tails are reaching their breeding season peak as well, but remain a bit more elusive, but do show themselves on occasion.



Mule deer buck – Photo by Scott Fitkin.

Turkeys are becoming more visible as they come into open fields to forage during the day this time of year (including the occasional seasonally-confused male).



Wild turkeys – Photo by J. Heinlen.

Private Lands/Access

Columbia Basin Cropland Hunting Access Initiative (CHAI): Biologist Dougherty with the assistance of Technician Steele built and placed a portable disabled hunter access blind in one of the CHAI fields. As of this weekend (November 23-24), everything will be ready for hunting in all CHAI areas, signs will be placed, etc.



Handicap Blind placed in CHAI field – Photo by Sean Dougherty.

Biologist Dougherty made some changes to the CHAI program this year, opting to move away from “Feel Free to Hunt,” and instead used a combination of Hunt by Reservation and Register to Hunt. By making these changes hunters will have a more quality hunting opportunity, landowner concerns about safety and property damage will be alleviated and WDFW will be able to offer more Quality hunting opportunities to both youth and disabled hunters by reserving days for those hunters.

Other

Dryden Depot Access Beaver Damage Removal – With the assistance of Detachment 15 Sergeant Klump and Officer Erhardt the Dryden Depot Access Site was temporarily closed due to dangerous leaning trees over the roadway, Access Managers Graves and Harmon were able to successfully cut and fall multiple trees. These hazardous trees were the result of an active beaver family that resides in the area. Efforts will continue to try and prevent any further damage to the remaining trees.



Dryden Depot Access before (top) and after (directly above) – Photo by Joe Graves.

REGION 3

None.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Snoqualmie Cougar Project: Biologist Smith assisted Research Scientist Kertson with cougar trap setup as part of the cougar project. Traps were covered with native vegetation to provide protection from the elements (rain or sun) for captured animals. Once baited and set, the traps will be monitored daily.



Cougar trap ready to be baited and set.

Snoqualmie Valley Elk Damage:

Biologist Smith used a trail camera to monitor intermittent nocturnal elk/deer activity on agricultural properties. Damage has occurred to various crops in the area including vegetables, flowers and Christmas trees.



Elk seek cover as daylight approaches.

Volunteer Waterfowl Monitoring Effort: Biologist Danilson reviewed and edited a draft proposal to monitor waterfowl (including swans) in and around the Johnson/DeBay’s Slough Game Reserve. This property is part of the Skagit Wildlife Area and the department and other interested groups and individuals are exploring options to potentially expand watchable wildlife and hunting opportunities at this site.

Swan Mortality and Morbidity: WDFW Scientific Technician Sherman Anderson resumed the Swan lead mortality and morbidity project for the 2013-2014 field season. This week Technician Anderson and Biologist DeBruyn began conducting searches for swans in Skagit and Whatcom counties in addition to other logistical duties of the project (including yearly maintenance of all of the boats). Technician Anderson and Biologist DeBruyn also monitored Judson Lake, a potential source of lead. The Swan hotline is up and running. WDFW Tech Brad Otto recovered an injured trumpeter swan in Skagit County and transferred the swan to Northwest Wildlife. The only mortality this week was an adult trumpeter swan in Skagit County collected by WDFW Enforcement Officer Jeff Lee.

	Skagit	Snohomish	Whatcom	Sumas	TOTAL
Powerline suspect					
Pb suspect					
Trauma*	1				1
Unknown					
Feather Pile					
TOTAL	1				1

WDFW Representation – Mountains to Sound Greenway Technical Advisory Committee: Biologist Anderson met with members of Mt. to Sound regarding development of wildlife metrics, in working with the conservation community, to track the ecosystem health and related conservation activities within the entire Snoqualmie Valley. Anderson provided some course to fine-scale metric suggestions used for these types of needs and offered examining draft and final products related to meeting their goals in this effort.

Avian Risk Assessment Comments: Biologist Danilson reviewed and commented on an avian risk assessment plan prepared by a private consultant as part of a Whatcom County permitting process for radio towers at Point Roberts in northwestern Whatcom County.

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw closed the first survey period for the project. The survey was distributed at the public meeting on October 30 and was available online. A purpose of the survey was to solicit volunteers to participate in a Stakeholder Committee for the project which will meet during the alternatives analysis and design process. A total of 26 people volunteered for the Stakeholder Committee; consisting of waterfowl hunters, pheasant hunters, wildlife viewers and photographers, dog trainers, biologists, jurisdictions, and other interests. Projects Coordinator Brokaw will email volunteers this week, and will work to set a date and venue for the first meeting.

Stillwater Revetment Removal Project: Project partners ordered and began staging native plants in the project planting area. The planting area includes the area where the rock revetment was removed, and extends landward up to 150'. A total of 1,650 plants will be spaced seven feet apart in the planting area to provide habitat for wildlife and stability to soils. The work is scheduled to be completed by December 20.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to compile year-end reporting and grazing fees for the 2013 grazing season. Additionally, Manager Boehm collaborated with WDFW staff from the Ebey Island team to address access issues, discuss grazing and agricultural lease options, and contact potential farmers who may be interested in a lease agreement for Ebey Island agricultural fields.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to monitor parking areas and talk with hunters about the pheasant release program. Hunting conditions have deteriorated for pheasant hunting due to very high water. Approximately three-quarters of the unit were under water for most of the week.

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm received numerous calls this week from local hunters. They had reported a number of illegal hunting activities at the Stillwater Unit, as well as Cherry Valley and Crescent Lake. These included hunting without a license, entering before and after hours, and noncompliance with the even-odd regulation. Manager Boehm reported this information to WDFW enforcement officers.

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

Wildlife Management

2014-15 Harvest Recommendations and WAC Changes: Biologist Anderson examined historical harvest levels by permit and general season for GMU's and is adjusting harvest levels and opportunities where appropriate. Anderson has received helpful input and assistance from Detachment 10 wildlife officers, co-managers, citizen collaborators, Bio Smith, Manager Link and Section Leader Nelson regarding urban elk issues and population concerns in North Bend.

Pigeon Guillemot Population Survey Report: Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued work on finalizing the report of the breeding survey of Pigeon Guillemots in Puget Sound.

Wildlife Areas

Hunting Season: Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis and Natural Resources Tech Curran Cosgrove monitored water levels, waterfowl and hunter use on the Island and Samish units.

Pheasant Release Program: Wildlife Area staff assisted with the Friday pheasant delivery. Manager Rotton assisted with a pheasant volunteer that became stuck in the mud while performing a pheasant release on Friday evening.

Skagit Wildlife Area Update – Fir Island Farms Snow Goose Reserve: A fallow field portion of this unit was mowed to knock back weeds and encourage healthier grass growth. Down limbs and brush were also removed from the viewing area. Additional Discover Pass signs were posted.



Water conditions at Field 2 on the Island Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area.

Private Lands/Access

Private Lands Quality Black-tailed Deer Hunt: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn spent time monitoring private access to private timber company lands for the GMU 418 modern firearm “draw only” buck hunt. Danilson also assisted master hunter volunteers with their questions and getting the recertification proof of service forms completed. This particular hunt was limited to 25 special tag holders for November 15-20. Local master hunter volunteers handled the majority of access management, while District 14 and Region 4 Private Lands staff played a minor supporting role.

Private Lands Access Contracts and Unit Set-up: Biologist Milner completed work on Snow Goose Quality Hunt contracts and entering quality waterfowl sites into the WDFW system. All our quality waterfowl sites are now posted online. All active contracts for snow goose quality hunt sites have now been submitted for posting to the WDFW website. Private Lands staff completed snow goose unit set-ups in Snohomish County. This entailed setting up unit boundaries, installing parking signs and preparing parking areas.

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Wildlife Management

Urban Wildlife K-6 Education: Biologist Anderson provided his annual outreach at Gregory Heights Elementary in Burien. This is part of their “Library Education Program” which includes

eight classes of about 30 kids each from K-6 grades. Many of the children have English as second language. Anderson presented how to live with wildlife, how to watch wildlife without disturbing them, respecting that wildlife are wild animals and not pets, and how to keep safe and work with their parents and community to keep wildlife wild. The children always get a kick out of “acting big and scary” for the coyote that is “out during the day” and coming around the bookcase from his “den” towards them. Anderson emphasizes this is their chance to see and touch some of these wild animals – but at all other times be quiet with parents and use binoculars, cameras, and learn about them – “just like those shows on TV.” Most children check-out books at the library on wildlife at this time and are requested by Anderson and school staff to ask their parents to go to their local park to learn about local nature and wildlife in their area.



Biologist Anderson presented how to live with wildlife, how to watch wildlife without disturbing them, and how to keep safe and work with their parents and community to keep wildlife wild.

Wildlife Human Intrusion Effects – Proposed Artwork on SR 520 Bridge: Biologist Anderson spoke to WSDOT biologists and an artist who wishes to install reflective artwork on the R.H. Thompson “ramps to nowhere.” Anderson outlined any state needs if WSDOT felt they needed to request input or take. Overall, the group feels this temporary artwork is not of significant concern to wildlife in the area given the limited amount of it and use on an already built structure.

Osprey Management: Biologist Anderson discussed Osprey and other wildlife management needs and collaboration potential for wildlife enhancements with Sound Transit regarding their SR 520 project. Anderson also provided information to Pilchuck Audubon regarding some of their voluntary platform efforts.

Skagit County Elk Conflicts: Conflict Specialist Griffith continued responding to elk damage complaints just east of Sedro Woolley and south of State Route 20. A coordinated elk damage mitigation plan is being developed that will involve multiple landowners in this area that are experiencing crop losses and farming infrastructure damage from a large group of elk that has moved into the area.

Conflict Specialist Griffith and newly hired Conflict Technician Kyle Pinjuv spent time familiarizing Pinjuv with Elk Area 4941 where the majority of elk damage complaints are ongoing. Pinjuv retrieved a trail camera that Griffith had deployed in the Day Creek area and assessed some fields with recent elk damage complaints.

North Cascades Elk Management Group Committee Meetings: Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn along with Conflict Specialist Griffith attended the monthly Damage Committee meeting on Wednesday night. The meeting was well attended by landowner interest, public interests, and legislative representation. The new private third party facilitator was introduced and led the meeting. The meeting focused chiefly on restructuring the Damage Committee, laying out ground rules, and developing agenda topics for future Damage Committee meetings scheduled over the next several months.

Danilson also facilitated the monthly Population Monitoring and Research meeting. About 10 people attended the meeting and spent most of the meeting time discussing new strategies being considered for estimating the population of elk in agricultural areas. The four working committees of the North Cascades Elk Management Work Group are currently meeting on a monthly basis. Members of the committees will come together on December 5 to report their progress to the larger work group meets. The role of the North Cascades Elk Management Work Group is to advise the department in the update of the North Cascades Elk Herd Management Plan.

Skagit County Deer Conflict: Conflict Specialist Griffith responded to two deer related calls in Skagit County. In one instance, a landowner has deer damaging ornamental plants. Griffith suggested that deterrents and electric fencing be used to keep the deer away from their plants. Griffith advised the landowner on fencing his property. The landowner agreed to report back to Griffith if they have any more problems. The second instance concerned buck deer causing rub damage at a Christmas tree farm. Griffith advised the landowner on fencing. The owner agreed to this and will report back if they have any further problems.

Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management: Biologist Smith attended the monthly meeting of the Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group. Elk herd numbers, area and future management options were discussed.

Wildlife Areas

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to work with volunteers on the pheasant release program. Continued maintenance on the net pens is required to close holes in the netting. About a half dozen committed volunteers continue to assist with pheasant release to the three units despite the wet muddy conditions of the access roads.

During the week, one pheasant died in the pens and two escaped. However, Manager Boehm was able to chase three previously escaped pheasants back into the net pen for distribution to the units later in the week.

Wiley Slough Restoration project: Manager Rotton, and Engineers Ray Berg and Kristin Kuykendall from the Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) met with representatives from DD#22 to review the Statement of Qualifications for engineering firms eligible for the next stage of design for the Wiley Slough tide gate repair project. A conceptual design has been identified and needs to be refined before moving to permitting and construction. Ray will contact the firm chosen by the group to begin the defining the scope of work for this design.

Manager Rotton and Habitat Engineer Bob Barnard met with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Engineer Erika Fifer and representatives from the Whatcom County Conservation District that have experience with agricultural field drainage. They provided comments and suggestion regarding the field drainage concerns on the neighboring Wylie farm.

Samish River Unit: Manager Rotton and Restoration Projects Coordinator Loren Brokaw sat in on a conference call with staff from Natural Resources Conservation Service to discuss permitting, billing and other general project questions. The SEPA review process is underway and the permitting package is nearing submission to the appropriate agencies.

Other Skagit Wildlife Area Activities: Staff continued winter equipment maintenance projects on the tractors, mower, grain drill, and the Wooldridge jet sled used for the ferry operations to the Island. Wildlife Area staff toured field sights to discuss current conditions and plan the agricultural leases for the following season. Staff will be assigned leases and planting plan to coordinate and have oversight for implementation. Staff repositioned ecology blocks at the Big Ditch Access. Vandals have been dragging the block around and driving off the designated road and parking area and many of the signs have been used for target practice. Staff also graded the parking area and entry road while on site.

Samish River Unit (Welts Property) Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw sent responses to all SEPA comments, and the SEPA determination of non-significance was finalized. SEPA comments and responses are available on the WDFW SEPA website at http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/sepa/sepa_final_docs_2013.html.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw drafted a question and answer sheet that will be posted to the project webpage when finalized. The question and answer sheet will address questions that were asked at the first public meeting or were written in the online surveys.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Survey: Private Lands staff toured open Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites checking for any issues and usage. District 13 staff accompanied Tech Otto on his survey to see improvements and enhancements to Waterfowl Quality hunts in his district.

Bow Hill Parking: Skagit Wildlife Area staff continued efforts to keep the Bow Hill Pheasant release site parking area useable by smoothing out ruts caused by heavy use and wet conditions. Thirty yards of cedar wood chips were dispersed over the parking area.

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

Depredation Investigation/Agriculture and Livestock Compensation Training: Biologists attended training sessions in Ellensburg pertaining to wildlife conflicts.



Doe necropsy as part of the depredation training held in Ellensburg, WA.

Work Plans: Region 4 staff completed work plans for 2014. The work plans projects time to be spent on various tasks throughout the year.

Hazard Communication Training: Projects Coordinator Brokaw completed mandatory Hazard Communication Training.

Volunteers: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to work with the Monroe Rod and Gun Club to develop a local project. Club members toured Cherry Valley and

Crescent Lake units early in the week. The Club is working with local contractors and suppliers to determine how best to support the local wildlife units. The Club has approximately 60 members, many of whom hunt in the Snoqualmie Wildlife Areas.

Radio Training: Assistant District Biologist Cyra provided assistance to staff with instruction on radio training, radio use requirements, and assigning radio call numbers.

Aircraft Safety: Assistant District Biologist Cyra assisted Marine Waterfowl Survey Specialist Evenson with preparations for the upcoming winter waterfowl aerial surveys.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Jackrabbits Surveys: Biologists Anderson and Holman along with Volunteer Biologist Flick conducted jackrabbit pellet surveys as part of a study designed to validate a GIS model of White-tailed and Black-tailed Jackrabbit Habitat Concentration Areas (HCA) in the Columbia Basin.

Random plots are being surveyed to determine jackrabbit presence in relation to four different habitat types. Survey sites have been chosen in Klickitat County, representing the western range of jackrabbits in Washington. There has been a noticeable decline in jackrabbit populations in eastern Washington over the past 20 years and these surveys are being conducted to better understand habitat associations of these native species.



Jackrabbit survey plot in Klickitat County where rabbits were detected.

These most recent surveys represent the final effort for 2013 in Region 5. To date, 11 of 37 identified jackrabbit paired survey locations have been visited. Jackrabbits have been detected at 2 locations out of the 11. All data, genetic samples and photographs will be submitted to Region 1 District Wildlife Biologist Ferguson for compilation into the overall effort.

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Wildlife Area Patrol and Fence Repair: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis checked the roads behind the locked gates to see if the

seasonal road closures are being observed by the public. Van Leuven and Davis also inspected fences on the Soda Springs Unit for repairs and removed downed trees and limbs from these fence lines. Some shrubs and trees had to be cut away from the wires as well. Additionally, they coiled up old barbed wire that was on the ground in places where no fence lines currently exist.

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

Wildlife Management

Late Buck Season: Deer hunters in Region 5 enjoyed some good success during the late buck hunting opportunities available within southwest Washington. Please see photographs below of successful hunters in the field with their animals. Hunts featured in this collection include late permit-only modern firearm season in GMU 574 (Wind River), late general modern firearm season in firearm restricted GMU 564 (Battle Ground), and late permit-only modern firearm season in GMU 388 (Grayback). Thanks for offering to share the photos and congratulations to the successful deer hunters in WDFW Region 5.



Late buck season success.

2014 Season Setting: Biologists Anderson, Miller, Bergh, and Holman along with Private Lands Biologist Stephens and Conflict Biologist McDonald met with Program Manager Jonker to discuss 2014 big game seasons. Permit levels for deer and elk hunts, season date adjustments,

seasons designed to address situations of wildlife damage, etc., were all determined during the effort. The 2014 hunting season represents the final year in the current three-year season setting cycle. Scoping for issues related to the development of the 2015-17 three-year period is anticipated to begin during 2014. Members of the public interested in participating in this process should periodically check the WDFW website of opportunities to comment and develop proposals.

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt: The 2013-2014 Southwest Washington goose hunting season continued this week. As of Sunday, November 24, 223 hunters checked a total of 463 geese at three check stations at a rate of 2.08 geese per hunter. At the moment, all zones remain open for Management Area 2A. Sunday, December 1 will be the last hunt day before the break in the season. Goose hunting will resume on Wednesday December 11 for Management Area 2A. For information regarding up-to-date zone closures, hunters can call the Region 5 office at (360) 696-6211 and follow the menu options for hunting and waterfowl. Hunters interested in participating in this season can refer to pages 16, 19 and 20 of the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season Pamphlet or check online at <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01535/wdfw01535.pdf> for further details regarding requirements for participation.

Private Lands/Access

Access Sites: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes worked with the Larch Mountain inmate crew and collected hundreds of pounds of trash at four different access sites in Clark County.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Trumpeter Swan Project – Monitoring: Volunteers monitoring swans in the Sequim-Dungeness Valley reported seeing two groups of swans last week; one group of 6 and one group of 40.

Trumpeter Swan Project – Meeting with the Public Utility District (PUD): Biologist Ament and Martha Jordan from the Trumpeter Swan Society met with local PUD staff on November 19 to discuss the electrocutions of swans in the area from last season. The meeting provided the opportunity to exchange information, discuss preventative measures, and address the need for an Avian Protection Plan. The local PUD has done an excellent job in the past at making modifications of lines in areas where electrocutions of bald eagles and swans have been documented (it certainly doesn't hurt to have a high level PUD staff member married to the director of the NW Raptor Center). On November 26, Bio Ament will lead a field excursion to show PUD staff some areas of past electrocutions and some lines that are of some concern. PUD is willing to mark some lines in high-use swan areas. Bio Ament and Martha will be assisting the PUD with developing an Avian Protection Plan for the county.

Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly (TCB) Habitat Improvement: Bio Ament has been assisting Bio Hays by supervising an AmeriCorps crew working at known TCB sites in Clallam County. Work has been conducted at several sites on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands near Sequim and some sites west of Port Angeles. The crew is conducting the removal of trees and shrubs at the sites in order to improve conditions for specific host and nectar plants used by this newly listed endangered species. The sites are very steep so the crew has to take safety precautions and can only work in suitable weather conditions. A priority of the Action Plan for the species is "Assess and enhance larval food and nectar plants at occupied, proximate, and unoccupied sites." One area selected for work is located on land that was recently acquired by DNR in a land exchange and will be managed for TCB habitat. Adult TCB's and ovipositioning have been documented near the area selected for enhancement. Bio Ament took some time to show the crew some survey maps of the area and educate them on the life history of the butterflies. Bio Ament will be returning to the work area this week to finish some piling of limbs and brush. DNR and USFWS will be conducting an inspection of the site in early December.



The AmeriCorps crew works at a TCB site west of Port Angeles.

Fisher Project: Bio McMillan provided Olympic National Park Bio Happe with the complete data for the 2013 effort accomplished by the District 16 Team which included Bio McMillan, Bio Ament and Bio Cullinan (Pt No Pt Tribal bio). Three hexes were sampled, McDonald-H563, Miller Peninsula-H565 and Sequim-H564. The McDonald Hex and Miller Peninsula Hex had a successful sampling effort, with McDonald Hex results including multiple fisher detections. Miller Peninsula did not have any fisher detections. The Sequim Hex was compromised due to one of the camera stations being removed/stolen by an unknown party (the camera set-up was locked to the tree). Sequim Hex was dropped from the study due to the high human activity and risk of additional cameras being stolen. So the effort this year resulted in completion of two hexes, with one having multiple positive fisher detections.

Harlequin Duck Survey Data: Bio Ament continued her efforts to compile all data for the harlequin duck surveys completed for the USFS this past season. She reviewed her field notes from all surveys completed. Ament wrote up her survey results on specific data forms that Bio Aja Woodrow from the USFS provided. She also made copies of her field notes for each survey. Ament had previously been in communications with Fish Program staff to obtain results from all the surveys they conducted. They provided their survey results in an Excel spreadsheet format. Bio Ament consulted with Bio Woodrow and was informed that the data in the spreadsheet did

not need to be transferred onto the data forms. Fish Program biologists did monitor for harlequin ducks during all fish spawning surveys they conducted in August and September. They observed no harlequins during these surveys on Morse Creek, Gray Wolf, and Dungeness Rivers. Bio Ament provided Aja with some survey data last week and will provide the final submissions this week. Bio Ament did review some of the data that Aja has been compiling and provided some needed corrections that she observed in a few of the spreadsheets.



A pair of harlequin ducks observed by Biologist Ament during a survey she conducted on the Big Quilcene River.

Willapa Bay Waterfowl Surveys: Biologists Hoenes and Murphie conducted the second of three aerial waterfowl surveys in Willapa Bay. They recorded 473 observations totaling 23,415 birds. Of these, the majority were American wigeon, northern pintail and mallard. The number of dabbling ducks observed was substantially lower than what was observed during the October 29 flight.

Wildlife Areas

South Puget Sound: With the forecast predicting freezing temperatures, Manager Gerchak and Assistant Manager Gallegos performed preventative maintenance by winterizing the wells at Koopmans and Scatter Creek Wildlife Areas.

West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area Phase II: Biologist Tirhi worked with regional and headquarters staff to update a Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) Lands

20/20 acquisition proposal in order to meet agency deadlines. The proposal is for acquisition of land owned by Port of Tacoma, currently for sale, and bordering our West Rocky Wildlife Area on the north.

North Olympic: Last week, the Olympic Staff and Manager Gerchak worked tirelessly constructing a fence around the footprint of the old 3 Crabs restaurant that was recently purchased on the Lower Dungeness. A temporary fence was installed during demolition of the building. One of the coastal storms blew the temporary fence over and upset the porta-potty, hastening construction of the new fence.



Robert VanBlaricom and Denny VanBlaricom spent most of the week at Scatter Creek and West Rocky helping replant native grasses.

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

Wildlife Management

Goose Check Stations: Biologist Sundstrom and Scientific Technician Capelli operated the Raymond and Riekkola goose check stations. At the Raymond check station, Sundstrom reported that three hunters brought in 7 geese (3 cackler, 3 western, 1 taverner) on Wednesday and five hunters brought in 13 geese (10 cackler, 2 taverners, 1 snow) on Saturday. This brings the total number of geese checked at the Raymond check station during the 2013-2014 goose season to 83 geese. At the Riekkola check station, Capelli reported that three hunters brought in 12 geese (6 lesser, 4 taverners, 2 cacklers) on Wednesday and two hunters brought in 7 geese (4 lesser, 2 western, 1 taverner) on Saturday. This brings the total number of geese checked at the Riekkola check station during the 2013-2014 season to 139 geese.

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

Private Lands/Access

Olympia Airport SEPA on Master Plan Update: Biologist Tirhi met with USFWS, FFA and airport staff to discuss the withdrawal of the recently submitted SEPA Determination of Non-significance and instead the issuance of a Mitigated DNS. Tirhi also requested that the Airport analyze its activities over the next five years and the following five years after to determine which are considered maintenance, safety, or economic growth. Additionally, USFWS is working with FAA to determine how each agency mandate will play out in terms of species/habitat management at the airport. The group will reconvene in mid-December to receive the homework assignments and take products back to their collective agencies for further analysis and comment.