

Wildlife Program

Week of March 24-30, 2014

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Sage-grouse: Biologist Stinson scheduled volunteers and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff for the sage-grouse capture trip to southern Oregon. We have a permit to capture up to 40 birds, and the males will receive GPS transmitters purchased by BLM. As of March 28, a total of 14 birds had been captured. A capture crew from the Yakima Training Center captured 10 females in southern Idaho in one night of trapping; they were released on the training center. Stinson initiated work on the periodic status review of the sage-grouse.

Biologist Jeff Lewis got the first batch of five male sage grouse from Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge and delivered them to Washington.

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery: Biologists Wisniewski and Finger conducted a joint Washington ground squirrel (WAGS) and pygmy rabbit tour for the Othello Sandhill Crane Festival. Despite a lack of WAGS due to weather conditions, the participants were able to view burrowing owls and the rabbits cooperated so all felt the tour was a success. The participants were able to help with feeding rabbits and have already contacted us regarding future volunteer opportunities. A win-win!

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

District 1 Golden Eagle

Survey: Biologists Dana Base and Annemarie Prince carried out ground-based surveys at four golden eagle nesting territories this week to help determine occupancy.

Two golden eagle nests spotted at Lake Ellen in Ferry County.





Left: *Three golden eagles observed flying in the Moran Meadow Nesting Territory on March 26, 2014. Right:* *Nest on the Tonata cliff face rediscovered this week.*

Wildlife Areas



Sage grouse translocation progress report: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area staff began receiving sage grouse trapped in Oregon, late this week. Thursday, Heather McFerrin of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in Wenatchee assisted Wildlife Area Manager (WAM) Juli Anderson with release. On Saturday, March 29, Northwest Public Radio (NWPR) reporter Courtney Flatt conducted an audio report of that morning's sage grouse release.

As of Sunday, March 30, a total of 17 grouse were released locally, with another 5 on their way for release on Monday, March 31. The goal is 40 birds total for the season, 20 of each sex. The Oregon trapping crew has run into equipment and weather troubles which have slowed down captures, and as usual they're finding it more difficult to catch females than males.

Male sage grouse in transport box, March 30, 2014, wears a new GPS transmitter. Photo by Mike Finch

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

Conservation Workshop: Biologist Lewis helped plan and conduct a habitat conservation workshop in Pullman. The meeting focused on conservation options for producers in Whitman County. Presentations were delivered on no-till farming, cost-share programs, riparian habitat,



upland habitat, and human/wildlife conflict. The workshop had 22 attendees and was filmed for a local television news report.

The habitat workshop in Pullman focused on conservation options for producers in Whitman County.

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

Wildlife Areas

Cuevas Winegeart Retires: After 21 years of service to the State, Cuevas Winegeart put in his last week of work this week. WAM Bob Dice and Cuevas met at the end of the week to fill out and submit exit paperwork. On Friday, Wildlife Area staff and many other co-workers, friends and Cuevas's family attended a retirement luncheon party at Roosters restaurant across the street from the Clarkston Shop. Cuevas has been a valuable employee to the wildlife area and a good friend to many WDFW staff. His fencing work, metal fabrication, and carpentry projects have been a huge benefit to the area. Cuevas has definitely left his mark on the wildlife area over the years and we'll miss having him around.



Left: Cuevas Winegeart at the Chief Joe Wildlife Area. Right: Cuevas receives his Governor's Letter from Regional Director Steve Pozzanghera.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wolf Conservation and Management

Okanogan Wolves: Specialist Heilhecker met with a livestock producer regarding the potential for hiring a range rider this season in the Lookout pack's territory. She explained the livestock Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) and options for cost-share agreements to help mitigate livestock-wolf conflicts. So far, the livestock producer is having a little trouble finding a person to hire for the range rider position. Specialist Bridges participated in the Wolf Ecology interview process with Catherine Gowan.

Wildlife Management

Wolverine Research: Biologist Fitkin and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) staff captured and recollared Logan, the presumed dominant adult male in the center of the study area. In addition to replacing his marginally functioning collar, we were able to assess how he had healed from the serious injuries he sustained tangling with another carnivore early in the season. True to his X-Men character namesake, Logan had healed so completely we had difficulty finding the wound sites, despite the fact that they had been gaping gashes just three months earlier (see photos). In addition, he has gained more than a kilogram in weight and is in excellent condition and is every bit as feisty as his legendary father Rocky. Wolverines are as tough as critters come.



Superhero wolverine Logan before (left) and three months later (right) – Photos by Scott Fitkin.

Golden Eagles: Biologist Gallie continued surveys for occupancy at selected Golden eagle territories in Chelan and Douglas counties. We are about 80% complete with the first round of

occupancy checks. Currently most birds are incubating on the nests, allowing for easy assessment of territory occupancy. Occupancy checks (first round) will be finished next week.



Burch Mountain (Eagle Rock) nest with greens. This is the highest elevation site we have at 4,700 feet. Snowshoes were required to get there. Photo by J. Gallie



Viewing an incubating Golden Eagle site in northern Douglas County (no snowshoes required!). Photo by J. Gallie

Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse: Biologists Gallie, Braaten, Schroeder and Comstock have been conducting lek counts on both species in Douglas County. We have just passed peak breeding for sage grouse, and at this half-way point of the lek survey season, results are disappointing as the total male count (the index we use to monitor the population) is on pace to equal a 10 year low with at least three leks that have recently gone inactive or birds have moved considerably. No new leks have been found as of yet. It is still early for assessments on Sharp-tails but next week we will have a better idea, especially within areas that were burned in 2012.



Male sage grouse spotted in northern Douglas County – Photo by J. Gallie.

Wildlife Areas

North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team: Weather conditions were favorable the first three days of the week which allowed the prescribed burn team to complete the Farm 3 and Farm 4 burn units on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Sinlahekin Assistant Manager Wehmeyer was given a Type 3 Burn Boss trainee assignment one of those days, as did Prescribed Burn Team Member Davis the following day. Burn objectives for all three days were well met except for a small portion of one unit which had been grazed in the past year. Wet weather arrived the last two days of the week so the team focused on preparing fire lines for future prescribed fires, and improving equipment.



Left: *A prescribed fire moves through an aspen clone on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area.*

Right: *The team used a two-track roadbed for a fireline on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area.*

Photos by Ray Guse

Columbia Basin Wetland Projects: Biologist Finger held a meeting to discuss the Artesian and Black Lake wetland project and review the 50% engineering design by Ducks Unlimited. Partners from the Bureau of Reclamation, East Columbia Basin Irrigation District (ECBID), Ducks Unlimited (DU), and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) were all present and able to discuss next steps necessary to dig soil test pits, conduct seepage loss tests, and determine the location and type of turnout to be installed on the East Low Canal to service the project. WDFW, DU, and ECBID met on site following the meeting to further discuss options for the turnout. Afterwards, WDFW and DU then went to Mansfield Pond to discuss next steps for the feasibility assessment of re-routing the spring flows around Mansfield Pond to help better dry up the lakebed for enhanced management options.

Private Lands/Access

Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit Safe Harbor Agreements: Biologist Comstock contacted another three landowners for Safe Harbor Agreements. Biologist Comstock and Biologist Wisniewski met with a landowner in the Beasley Hills Area. At this time the landowner stated that they are amicable to having pygmy rabbits on their property, but that they do not want to enter into a Safe Harbor Agreement. The landowner did, however, show us an impressive rock collection. Biologist Comstock completed pre-contract surveys on over 1,100 acres of land to be put into Safe Harbor.

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

Wildlife Management

Sandhill Crane Festival: Biologists Finger and Wisniewski led an all-day field trip to see ground squirrels and pygmy rabbits, which went well aside from no ground squirrels being observed due to rainy weather. However, we were able to deliver a pair of burrowing owls just north of Moses Lake, plenty of pygmy rabbits at Sagebrush Flats, and an unconfirmed long-tailed duck among a wide diversity of waterfowl seen at Lake Lenore.



WDFW booth display at the Sandhill Crane Festival in Othello generated some good discussions and questions from a steady stream of visitors. Photo by R. Finger

Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei participated in the Sandhill Crane Festival in Othello by attending a booth with a display of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area, presenting two lectures covering ground squirrels and sage grouse, and hosting a field trip to observe ground squirrels at Sage Hills Golf Course, a reintroduction site, and a natural site on native grassland. The booth received a regular stream of visitors and some good questions and discussions.



Washington ground squirrel field trip stops at Sage Hills Golf Course to see the source population used for reintroductions within the district. Photo by O. Duvuvuei

Wildlife Areas



Snow Grooming Apparatus: Rob Wottlin, the Methow Wildlife Area's (MWA) resident artist and Chief fabricator, put the finishing touches on the new and improved snow grooming apparatus, which volunteers will use next winter to create and maintain winter recreation trails on the MWA.



Left: *Harlequin duck observed on the Methow River. Right: Methow mule deer welcome spring.* Photos by Scott Fitkin

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management



Burrowing owls: Biologist Gregory and volunteers Ross and Martin continued refurbishing the artificial burrows around the Tri-Cities. Many of these burrows contained evidence of use by skunks thus making them unsuitable for owls. Newly refurbished burrows have a smaller, 4-inch diameter tunnel that should be too small for skunks.

A refurbished owl burrow fitted with a 4-6 inch coupler/reducer and new 4-inch tunnel.

Photo by L. Martin

Sage Grouse: Biologist Gregory participated in the annual sage grouse trapping effort transporting four grouse (two males and two females) from Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge in Oregon to Washington. As of March 30, a total of 21 (12 females and 9 males) of 40 birds have been captured. Biologist Gregory will be returning to Oregon to assist with trapping on March 31.

Colockum Elk Surveys: Biologists Bernatowicz and Moore collaborated on the annual aerial surveys and subsequent population estimates from the data collected. The total population estimate was just over 6,000 elk with 6 bulls and 27 calves per 100 cows. Yearling bull recruitment was good.

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

Wildlife Areas

Safari Club International (SCI) and Boy Scouts Volunteer Effort: Manager Huffman spent quite a bit of time finalizing a weekend volunteer project with the local chapter of Safari Club International (SCI) and the Boy Scouts. The group of 26 volunteers spent a day removing old fencing and cleaning up the wildlife area in the Oak Flats area along Hwy 410. This group is very excited about volunteering and is interested in adopting the Rock Creek Unit to do an annual clean-up day similar to what our Wildlife Education Corp does for the rest of the wildlife area. The SCI group set up at the park and ride at the Junction of Hwy 12/410 and removed and hauled a lot of fencing back to the headquarters.



The pile of wire volunteers removed and hauled back to Oak Creek for disposal.



Members of Safari Club International pictured at their work day.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area – Road Maintenance Abandonment Plan (RMAP): Manager Huffman worked with Capital & Asset Management Program (CAMP) and the Yakima Construction Shop (YCS) on a budget for some RMAP work in Oak Creek. The USFS is going to provide \$25,000 for road work and they need a scope of work and budget for the contract.

Colockum Wildlife Area: John developed new signs for the Wanapum Reservoir closure and posted them along Tarpiscan Road. These will give the public warning that the riverbank is closed before they walk the half-mile down to the river. Enforcement has reported encountering several people upset that they had hiked down to the river without seeing signs that said it was closed.

Pete made arrangements with Engineering to come out next week to look at the drainage problems on the North Fork Tarpiscan Road. We are still having problems with runoff on that portion of road even after extensive road improvements made last fall. New engineer Shawn Stanley will be here Monday.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Bids were opened for the FY14 Wenas elk fence rebuild. Two companies applied, both were significantly higher than the budgeted amount. Engineering is planning to modify the contract and put it out to bid a second time.

Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom worked on administrative tasks related to the wildfire such as filling out reports, developing a restoration plan, planning cleanup activities, etc. Greg also worked with an Ag lessee on plans for replacement of one of the nine pivots on Windmill Ranch. Assistant Manager Sak worked on a fire damage list in order to come up with a total cost of the fire including buildings and equipment lost and habitat restoration.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Study Wrap Up: Biologist DeBruyn and Tech Anderson wrapped up the swan project for the year by preparing all the tissue samples for shipment to Canada for analysis, putting away all the equipment and returning the swan truck to the motorpool. Over 300 sick and dead swans were collected and sampled for lead poisoning during the course of the winter.

Elk Clover Trapping: Biologist DeBruyn continued monitoring elk traps with the tribes for the last week of the trapping season. Emerging vegetation competing with the bait (apples) for the attention of the elk has made the last two weeks pretty slow on the trapping front. Sixteen captures resulted in 11 new collars being put out this year in an ongoing capture-mark-resight study designed to assess the health of the population. No elk or trappers were seriously injured during the season although we did catch our first non-target organism this week when Chico, a

32-year-old horse, wandered into a trap. He was released unharmed and given the rest of the apples.



Clover trap baited with apples attract elk.



Cow elk in clover trap. No elk were seriously injured during the trapping season.



Closing down of trap on the cow elk prevents the need for using drugs to sedate the animal.



Sixteen captures resulted in 11 new collars being put out this year in an ongoing capture-mark-resight study. Here is the release of a newly-collared cow elk.

Jim Creek Low Elevation Pika Survey: Biologists Milner and Cyra submitted paperwork in order to gain access to the Navy Base this year. The procedures have changed and we now must obtain clearance from the Everett Naval Base security office. Anticipating the need for pre-

planning, we started early this year to make sure we have everything lined up prior to starting the survey season. Surveys this year will likely concentrate on better defining the populations found last year.

Washington Audubon Northwest Chapters Regional Meeting: Biologist Milner was the featured speaker at the annual meeting of Audubon society's northwest chapters. The topic was the recent designation of the Skagit Bay Important Bird Area and what that might mean to bird conservation interests.

Wildlife Management Consultation/Permitting Requests – Municipal, Private Utilities, other: Biologist Anderson fielded requests for heron management plan support and assistance under local code needs per Growth Management Act; state wildlife take authorization requests and ongoing consultations; bald eagle nest reports/status updates and explaining changes to management of this species.

Species of Greatest Conservation Needs (SGSN) surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra began planning discussions with District Biologist Milner for SGCN surveys in the San Juan archipelago this summer. Surveys for multiple species are planned throughout the season on a number of different islands with several cooperating partner organizations.

Peregrine Falcons: Assistant District Biologist Cyra returned to the Index Town Wall peregrine falcon site to attempt to determine nesting chronology and ledge location for this pair. Index Town Wall is a popular rock climbing destination and working together with Washington State Parks that manages the wall and the local climbing community, temporary volunteer closures of climbing routes are established to reduce disturbance to the nesting birds. While both birds were observed on this visit, establishment of a nesting ledge is not yet evident.

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and meeting facilitator Hilary Wilkinson discussed and drafted agenda outlines for an upcoming Stakeholder Committee meeting and public Open House. The outlines and upcoming meeting dates will be set in the next few weeks. An announcement for the public Open House will be distributed in a press release and to the project email list. To subscribe to the project email list, please send a request to Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw removed a malfunctioning water quality monitoring device from the site, scheduled its repair with the manufacturer, and ordered an additional spare device. There are 13 devices on the site that measure groundwater and surface water levels, temperature and salinity. Data collected before construction of an estuary restoration project will be compared to data after construction to help WDFW and the project steering committee detect if any of the measured parameters change over time.

Rainbow Pond Water Control: Manager Kessler met onsite with a biologist and engineer with Ducks Unlimited on the replacement of the collapsed water control in Rainbow Pond on the Lake Terrell Unit. They also looked at one of the water controls on the Intalco Unit that beavers

have repeatedly tried to plug up. They will work up designs for both controls. The Rainbow Pond control will be replaced later this summer when conditions are dryer.

Lake Terrell Wood Duck Boxes: Natural Resource Tech Deyo installed new wood duck boxes, and maintained older boxes on the Lake Terrell and Intalco units. The new boxes were made using materials purchased with Duck Stamp funds.

Lake Terrell Island Signage: Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo posted the No Trespassing and Closed Area signs on the border of the island areas of Lake Terrell. This closure is to protect ground nesting waterfowl from disturbance by fishermen in the Island areas.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with two volunteers to continue spreading mulch on the access roads within the unit. The mulch was donated by Kemp West and a tractor and loader was donated by one of the volunteers for the task. Approximately 100 truckloads of free mulch have been placed on the access roads so far. Additionally, maintenance mowing has been started on the unit.



Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm completed the livestock exclusion fencing on the west portion of the unit. Manager Boehm observed waterfowl entering the breeding and nesting life stage on many of the ponds in the unit. Manager Boehm has closed the west portion of the unit as a nesting area. Signage and a letter of explanation have been installed to inform the public.

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

Wildlife Management

Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant review and scoring: Biologist Milner finished reviewing and scoring the grant applications submitted for ALEA funding. A total of 57 grant applications were reviewed and scored.

Volunteer Legal Needs: Biologist Anderson continues to work with area municipalities to provide for their legal request to allow WDFW volunteers to survey on their public park lands.

Waterfowl Aerial Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra provided coordination for Waterfowl Specialist Evenson in preparation for this year's breeding waterfowl aerial surveys.

North Cascades Elk Management Issues: Biologist Danilson prepared data summaries and GIS map products from the March 17-18 elk surveys and presented during meetings that occurred last week. Among the meetings Danilson attended were the North Cascades Elk

Population Monitoring and Forage Enhancement Committee Meetings, which Danilson prepared agendas, presentation materials for and facilitated. Additionally, Danilson and Program Manager Link attended a WDFW co-managers technical committee meeting to discuss big game issues including elk conflict and harvest allocation. Danilson also addressed several elk related issues including coordination on upcoming various efforts to survey the North Cascades elk herd, recovery of an elk radio collar, and providing guidance to a graduate student working on an elk habitat preference modeling project.

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Unit: Manager Rotton and Natural Resource Specialist Meis took a field tour with Ducks Unlimited Engineer Steve Liske and Project Biologist C.K. Eidem to take some marsh vegetation elevations on Port Susan Bay and the Davis Slough Marsh areas. This information will be helpful during the discussion of the modeling process.



View of the high marsh area on Port Susan Bay outside the diked area on Leque Island.



Leque Island Unit: Sampling vegetation types and elevations with Ducks Unlimited staff for modeling discussion.

Skagit Wildlife Area Access and Property Line Work: Staff worked on Wildlife Area property line changes that need to be made in WDFW's Go Hunt online mapping service. Staff checked two areas (Johnson/Debay's Slough Reserve and Cottonwood Island) on the ground to observe boundary status. Manager Rotton worked with Lands Agent Kye Iris to resolve several property line issues that have developed on Skagit Bay Estuary, Cottonwood Island and DeBay's Slough.

Wiley Slough Restoration: Manager Rotton compiled edits on the Wiley Slough Pump station agreement and forwarded to the Dike District #22 for review during their next Dike District #22 commission meeting.

Samish River Unit (Welts) Access Facility Funding: Projects Coordinator Brokaw sent a capital funding request to Wildlife Program Manager Link for review to construct access facilities on the Samish River Unit including a parking area, turn-around pad for a portable toilet, and fencing. Brokaw also continued work on a grant application to the Recreation and Conservation Office for the same project.

Bass Fishing Tournament: The Borderline Bassin Contenders fishing club held a weekend bass fishing tournament at Lake Terrell. The fishing was tough due to weather conditions, but the event was well attended. After the tournament, the club members dropped off 13 wood duck nest boxes they had built to Manager Kessler. These well-made boxes will be installed on units of the wildlife area.

Island Unit: Skagit Wildlife Area staff checked the Barn Field tide gate structure with the underwater camera. Staff observed current flowing into the culvert through various holes and gaps in the tide gate and culvert structure, explaining the large amount of water observed on the Island Unit agricultural fields during high-river flows.

Private Lands/Access

Spring Bear Hunt Coordination: Technician Otto completed hunter packets for the April 12 meetings in La Conner and Mill Creek. Technician Otto called and ordered more tooth packets for the 2014 hunting seasons.

Western Washington Pheasant Release Program Review and Summary: Biologist Caldwell completed working on the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program Review and Summary report. The summary report will be submitted for upper management review.

Kenmore Access Renovation Project is complete: Located at the mouth of the Sammamish River at the north end of Lake Washington, the access site is now complete and open to the public. The project was funded through a special legislative capital appropriation known as the "Jobs Now Bill."

The renovation to the site is made possible, in part due to the cooperative efforts of the City of Kenmore, who provided funding for upgrades that would not be made possible without the

partnership with the City. Now that construction is completed, the City will perform substantial maintenance responsibilities at the site.



Newly-completed Kenmore Access Renovation Project (above and below).



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

Wildlife Management



Skagit County Elk Conflict: Conflict Specialist Griffith finished an elk exclusion fencing project in Concrete this week. One Master Hunter volunteer was able to assist for one day with the project. Griffith delivered elk exclusion fencing materials to a property in Rockport. This project is slated to begin mid-April with Master Hunter volunteers clearing out some old fencing and brush.

The elk exclusion fencing project in Concrete.

Project Review: Biologist Milner reviewed a project proposal for a University of Washington student who wants to work on wildlife corridors in Granite Falls; reviewed the species of concern list and likelihood of occurrence for the proposed Sunset Falls fish passage and hydro project; and provided comments to the Private Lands Access Program review of potential pheasant hunting sites that Biologist Caldwell prepared.

Master Hunter Volunteer Project: Biologist Milner prepared the list of hunters who need to be contacted relative to their stated hunt in Game Management Unit (GMU) 410. We believe many of them failed to notice that many of the islands in this GMU now have their own GMU number and therefore hope to get more accurate information from them about which island they actually hunted in 2013. Milner prepared a questionnaire and data sheet with Volunteer Coordinator Dazey and we hope to get some assistance from Master Hunters looking for volunteer hours.

Seattle City Light (SCL) Wildlife Research Program: Biologist DeBruyn met with the grant committee to award 93,000 dollars to projects studying subjects ranging from insects to beavers to wolves and coyotes. SCL's program is part of its Federal Energy Siting Committee permit and is intended to mitigate negative effects of power projects on wildlife.

Bald Eagle Recovery: Biologist DeBruyn responded to a request from Washington State Patrol (WSP) to pick up an adult bald eagle that was creating a traffic hazard on State Route 20. The eagle was badly injured and died after being picked up. It was conveyed to the USFWS.

Wildlife Areas

Samish River Unit (Welts) Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw submitted response letters to comments received through the Skagit County Special Use permit process and responded to a request from the County to identify any known wells within the project vicinity. The next step in the Special Use permit process is a public hearing with the County Hearing Examiner.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Access Payment: Technician Otto followed up on the last A-19 payment with a Skagit partner. He also coordinated efforts to utilize migratory bird enhancement funding on their properties.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt (WQH) Site Breakdowns: Technician Otto removed Ritter and River road blinds and completed garbage clean-up in Whatcom County. All materials were shuttled to the Skagit Wildlife Area, La Conner office and to the Lake Terrell barn. He also performed Norman road garbage clean-up, checked and cleaned drainage at Bayview #3 field and completed garbage clean-up at old HWY 99. All WQH sites have now been removed and cleaned from the 2013-2014 hunting season.

Volunteer Coordination for Hunter Harvest/Success Monitoring: Biologist Caldwell met with Hunter Education & Volunteer Coordinator Steve Dazey to review a prototype survey box. Cost estimates, design and a timeline for completion were discussed. This project is approaching the final phase. Follow up will be conducted in the coming weeks to finalize the project.

Western Washington Agricultural Association (WWAA) Meeting: Biologist Caldwell met with Executive Director Brandon Roozen to discuss agricultural issues pertaining to Pheasant release/hunting in the Skagit area and to discuss future enrollment of agricultural lands into the Private Lands Access Program. This was set to be the final meeting with the WWAA for 2014 on a contractual basis. Future cooperative efforts were discussed for future endeavors on a non-contractual basis. It was agreed upon that the WDFW and WWAA would work cooperatively on agricultural related issues to resolve conflicts and form agreements.

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

Pesticide License Course: Natural Resource Tech Deyo attended a three day Pesticide Licensing course in Bellingham.

Asbestos Survey: A contractor performed an asbestos survey on the Lake Terrell manager's residence in preparation for the upcoming energy improvement remodel work.

Radio Communications: Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued to be involved with discussions concerning the future of radio communications within the Program, as well as providing radio support to Program staff.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Mt. St. Helens Elk Herd Surveys: Region 5 biologists along with Deer and Elk Specialist McCorquodale and pilot Jess Hagerman of Northwest Helicopters completed aerial surveys of the Mt. St. Helens elk herd. Survey unit boundaries cover most of GMUs 520, 522, 524, 550, and 556. Elk are counted and classified while other environmental and landscape covariates are also recorded. Elk numbers appear to be lower than in previous years, with just over 300 groups seen this year compared to just over 400 groups seen on the 2013 survey. Survey data will be input into a sightability model to produce an elk abundance estimate for 2014 to be included in an index of elk abundance for the Mt. St. Helens herd.



Left: Margaret bull. Right: Bull group on Mudflow.

Public Meeting: WDFW Director Anderson, Assistant Director Pamplin, State Wildlife Veterinarian Mansfield, and Wildlife Program Manager Jonker along with Washington State Representatives Blake, Orcutt, and Takko were on a panel as part of a public meeting on elk hoof disease hosted by Cowlitz County Commissioners in Longview. The meeting was well attended (approximately 250-300 people). Following a brief overview presentation of results to date on WDFW's hoof disease diagnostic investigation, the remainder of the meeting provided an opportunity for Questions and Answers on a variety of topics related to hoof disease in elk in Southwest Washington.

Black-tailed Deer Research Project: The Region 5 portion of the black-tailed deer research project is ongoing. The 2014 study does are being monitored by a combination of remote (satellite) and field (VHF) methods. The does are located in two study clusters concentrated within the Washougal (568) and Coweeman (550) GMUs. During 2014, eight does have been captured in GMU 550 and six have been captured in GMU 568. These study does will be monitored and fawn captures will be attempted in May and June.

Black-tailed Deer Research Project Update: The Washougal cluster of study does was reduced by one this week when Biologist George followed up on a mortality event previously reported on March 21. The doe was heavily scavenged and very little remained at the site. Due to the lack of determining factors, a likely predator was not identified for this event. Five does are now being monitored in the Washougal study cluster, while eight still remain in the Coweeman cluster.



Observed remains of Washougal study doe.

Wildlife Areas

Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area – Tree Planting: Wildlife Area staff along with members from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) and Master Hunters worked to plant over 4,000 trees along the North Fork Toutle River this past Saturday. The trees were planted along one and a half miles of riverbank to help stabilize the bank, reduce erosion, and to protect and enhance elk foraging areas. Species planted included red alder, serviceberry, red flowering currant, thimbleberry, mock orange, and pacific dogwood. Funding for this work was provided by a grant from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, whose dedication in supporting elk enhancement projects on the Wildlife Area over the years has helped to implement projects that otherwise could not have been accomplished without their funding.

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Fence Repair: Given the short weather window opportunity of opportune wet/dry conditions for fence and road maintenance, Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis worked hard to repair, replace, and maintain several fence lines and roads on the Wildlife Area on the Soda Springs Unit and Sheep Canyon Road area. The soil dries out early in these areas and it was important to set the new posts while soil could be

packed tightly around them. Weather conditions were highly variable and rocky soil presented a challenge, but staff made good progress.

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

Wildlife Areas

Cowlitz Wildlife Area – Hunter Education: Wildlife Area staff conducted a traditional 16 hour hunter education course at the Cowlitz Wildlife Area office. All five students enrolled in the course successfully passed the requirements. The students were instructed in safe firearms handling, principles of conservation, and the ethical elements of sportsmanship. At the end of the instructional portion of the class the students have to pass a 75 question test (80% required to pass) and demonstrate their understanding of safe handling skills while walking a simulated field course. Once the students have passed the course they are rewarded with an opportunity to shoot stationary targets at the shotgun range. The students are directly supervised during all shooting activities.

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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Conflict – Depredation: Conflict Specialist Conklin and Officer Schroeder responded to a depredation of a lamb on a farm in west Lewis County. They performed a necropsy of the lamb; significant trauma was identified on the neck, the abdominal cavity had been opened, and the lung consumed. This owner has lost five lambs in a month and a half, but this lamb was the only one he found; the other four simply disappeared. The land owner was advised to lock his sheep up in his corral and tree cameras were also installed. Conklin sought advice from Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil and this residence will be monitored closely.

Wildlife Conflict – Elk: Conflict Specialist McDonald signed a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement with a Klickitat County farmer/rancher. Elk started browsing on fall wheat as it began to green up with the spring. The wheat was planted in a newly established field that was previously in timber. No other planted agriculture is in the immediate area, and the elk seem very comfortable in the field surrounded by timber. McDonald observed 20 elk in the field one day and 40 elk two days later. Depredation permits were issued for the remainder of March, and a nonlethal hazing plan was set up.



Wildlife Conflict – Range Rider Contract: Conflict Specialist McDonald and a Klickitat County cattleman signed a damage prevention cooperative agreement with ranger rider tasks included. The range rider contracts are a proactive measure to try and reduce potential conflicts between wolves and the cattle ranching community. McDonald emphasized the importance of monitoring cattle behavior while on grazing allotments, maintaining a human presence when possible, removing attractants, and alerting WDFW immediately to potential wolf sign or depredations.

District 10 and Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: December and January temperatures and precipitation were below normal, with little snowfall below 2,000 feet. February started off cold with 5-10 inches of snow accumulating to the valley floor. Rainfall for the month of February was above average and temperatures were below average. Temperatures have begun to moderate in March with close to normal temperatures and above normal rainfall.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will fluctuate between 3,000 to 4,000 feet for the upcoming week. The 6-10 and 8-14 day forecast are for above normal temperatures and precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The April forecast is for an equal chance for either above average, below average, or normal temperatures, and below normal precipitation. The three month forecast predicts above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

Habitat: Forage is available in lower and mid elevations, with green up starting to show signs in the lower elevations.

Snow Depths: Lower elevations are snow-free, with mid-elevation snow beginning to decrease in depth.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The monthly winter elk survey was conducted on March 4 with 130 elk observed on the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area.

Animal Condition: Most animals observed to date appear to be in good to fair condition. Some of the elk observed this past week while conducting aerial surveys were in very poor condition.

Mortality: Wildlife Area staff has observed seven mortalities so far this winter on the Mudflow Unit while conducting other work. Mortalities were noticed this past week while conducting aerial elk surveys in the Coweeman and Toutle GMUs.

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.

The Public is reminded the portion of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle, and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30, 2014, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Conditions this week changed with considerable precipitation and snow accumulation around 5000 ft. in the south Cascades. Winter snowpack/water conditions for the basin are good and there is little concern for spring runoff.

Winter Severity: Winter conditions overall have been mild with no long duration severe weather. Snowpack is primarily above 4000 ft. and currently there is little concern for big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County. Those portions of Klickitat County east of Rock Creek are starting to green up and deer are reported in good condition.

Habitat: Habitat is in good conditions with high rainfall during the month of March. Habitat in eastern Klickitat County is in good condition.

Animal Concentrations: Deer are bunched in normal concentrations in good habitat at mid and lower elevations east of Highway 97.

Animal Condition: Deer and elk appear to be in good condition and little winter stress/mortality has been reported.

Mortality: No deer or elk mortalities have been reported this week.

Public Contacts: None this week.

MOUNT SAINT HELENS ELK HERD
 2013/2014 WINTER CONDITIONS - SNO-PARK SNOW DEPTH,
 NRCS SNOTEL DATA, AND SNOWPACK

From web page <http://www.fs.usda.gov/activity/giffordpinchot/recreation/wintersports/?recid=31178&actid=91>
http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/sno_narr3_pl
<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snotel/Washington/washington.html>

SNOWPARKS:								
Name	Elevation	12/6/2013	12/13/2013	12/20/2013	12/27/2013	1/3/2014	1/10/2014	1/17/2014
MARBLE MT	2,700'	No report	4" new snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	No new snow, 2" base	Slush. No new snow.
WAKEPISH	2,800'	No report		1-2" snow	1-2" snow	2" snow	2" base	No new report

SNOWTEL STATIONS:

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
		Avg Snow							
JUNE LAKE	3,340'	Depth (inches)	0.66	5	5.3	7	6.7	7.9	22
		Min Temp (F)	14	19	23	29	31	26	31
		Max Temp (F)	45	27	50	54	51	47	55
		Avg Temp (F)	30	22	36.2	38.3	39.5	36.7	39.8
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	27	27	27.7	30.9	31.3	36.6	43.5

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
		Avg Snow							
SPIRIT LAKE	3,520'	Depth (inches)	2.43	3	0.86	0.86	0	1.3	3.5
		Min Temp (F)	11	18	21	29	30	20	31
		Max Temp (F)	46	27	52	51	52	46	54
		Avg Temp (F)	29	25	36.8	36.8	39.2	36.8	38.5
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	17.5	17.9	18.3	22.1	22.7	25.5	30.5

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
		Avg Snow							
PEPPER CREEK	2,140'	Depth (inches)	0.31	2	0.3	0.42	0	0	0
		Min Temp (F)	14	16	24	28	29	25	29
		Max Temp (F)	48	26	46	46	51	46	51

Avg Temp (F)	31.5	22	34.5	34.8	36	35.2	37.3
Year to date precipitation (inches)	13.1	13.5	13.6	15.3	15.6	17.9	21

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
SHEEP CANYON	3,990'	Avg Snow							
		Depth (inches)	4		7	8.6	7.9	11.7	25.5
		Min Temp (F)	12		20	28	29	23	30
		Max Temp (F)	43		50	51	50	50	59
		Avg Temp (F)	26		35.3	36.8	38.8	35.8	39.3
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	23.1		24.4	27.8	28.4	32.5	38.5

Name	Elevation	Stats	11/30-12/6	12/7-12/13	12/14-12/20	12/21-12/27	12/28-1/3	1/4-1/10	1/11-1/17
CALAMITY	2500'	Avg Snow							
		Depth (inches)	1	5.5	0.1	0	0	0	0
		Min Temp (F)	16	18	27	32	33	30	34
		Max Temp (F)	47	27	55	52	53	48	56
		Avg Temp (F)	31	23	39.2	41.2	42.3	39.8	43.3
		Year to date precipitation (inches)	18.8	22	20.3	23.2	23.6	27.4	32.7

Snowpack % of Avg Snow Water Equivalent	12/6/2013	12/13/2013	12/20/2013	12/27/2013	1/3/2014	1/10/2014	1/17/2014
JUNE LAKE	5%		13%	21%	14%	23%	33%
SPIRIT LAKE	122%		100%	48%	33%	73%	77%
SHEEP CANYON	20%		20%	27%	22%	38%	55%

1/24/2014	1/31/2014	2/7/2014	2/14/2014	2/21/2014	2/28/2014	3/7/2014	3/14/2014	3/21/2014	3/28/2014
No new report	No new report	6" new snow	14" new snow	No new report	No new report	No new report	No new report	3" snow	3" old snow
No new report	No new report	5" new snow	No new report	12" snow	No new report	24" snow	12" snow	14" snow	No new report

1/18-1/24	1/25-1/31	2/1-2/7	2/8-2/14	2/15-2/21	2/22-2/28	3/1-3/7	3/8-3/14	3/15-3/21	3/22-3/28
19.7	18.7	30.3	37.3	52.3	65.3	57.6	49.4	46.4	47.8
32	31	5	16	28	27	27	30	27	32
57	60	37	41	42	41	46	53	50	56
43	40.2	21.2	32.2	33	33.7	37	40.5	35.5	39.3

1/18-1/24	1/25-1/31	2/1-2/7	2/8-2/14	2/15-2/21	2/22-2/28	3/1-3/7	3/8-3/14	3/15-3/21	3/22-3/28
43.6	48.6	51.4	58.1	71.4	72.8	86.6	91.5	95.8	99.6

1/18-1/24	1/25-1/31	2/1-2/7	2/8-2/14	2/15-2/21	2/22-2/28	3/1-3/7	3/8-3/14	3/15-3/21	3/22-3/28
0.1	2.5	7.6	3.8	12.2	15.9	5.1	0.3	3.3	0.5
34	31	7	18	28	24	28	26	28	32
54	60	45	48	48	42	50	54	54	55
42.3	39.7	21.5	34.3	33.5	35.2	39.2	41.5	36.2	39.7

1/18-1/24	1/25-1/31	2/1-2/7	2/8-2/14	2/15-2/21	2/22-2/28	3/1-3/7	3/8-3/14	3/15-3/21	3/22-3/28
30.6	33	33.4	36.8	44.6	45.4	51.6	55.5	58.6	60.3

1/18-1/24	1/25-1/31	2/1-2/7	2/8-2/14	2/15-2/21	2/22-2/28	3/1-3/7	3/8-3/14	3/15-3/21	3/22-3/28
0	0	2.1	7.7	2.8	12	11.1	4.3	0	0
30	28	11	17	32	30	28	29	29	28
56	55	38	45	44	47	48	62	57	65

35.8	35.5	25.5	33	34.8	36	37.5	40.5	38.2	40.3
21	22.9	23.2	27.8	35	35.4	41.1	43.3	45.2	46.9
1/18-1/24	1/25-1/31	2/1-2/7	2/8-2/14	2/15-2/21	2/22-2/28	3/1-3/7	3/8-3/14	3/15-3/21	3/22-3/28
24.1	22.8	32.2	37.6	53.4	67.4	56.6	49.8	52.3	54
33	30	3	18	26	21	30	27	26	26
54	56	37	40	41	45	46	53	46	55
43	40.2	20	32.8	31.5	34.5	37	38.3	33.5	37
38.6	42.3	43.4	49.4	60.7	62.3	73.8	79.7	84.3	87.5
1/18-1/24	1/25-1/31	2/1-2/7	2/8-2/14	2/15-2/21	2/22-2/28	3/1-3/7	3/8-3/14	3/15-3/21	3/22-3/28
0	0	1.1	1.7	2.1	2.7	0.5	0	0	0
32	34	9	17	32	28	28	32	32	31
54	54	37	39	46	46	51	56	55	58
43.3	42.2	24.2	26.5	35.8	35.5	41.2	44.2	39	42.1
32.7	36.2	36.7	37.3	51.2	52.1	58.5	62.5	64.7	68.2
1/24/2014	1/31/2014	2/7/2014	2/14/2014	2/21/2014	2/28/2014	3/7/2014	3/14/2014	3/21/2014	3/28/2014
27%	29%	30%	34%	57%	55%	53%	51%	51%	57%
42%	29%	44%	6%	107%	79%	no data	no data	110%	27%
47%	44%	48%	56%	87%	78%	71%	64%	62%	69%

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Snowy Plovers: The Western Snowy Plover nesting season is fast approaching and District 17 worked on a variety of tasks in preparation for the upcoming nesting season. Biologists Sundstrom and Michaelis spent one day disassembling old snowy plover nesting area signs from posts and installing new signs in preparation for site installation at Midway Beach next week. Biologists Hoenes and Sundstrom met with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services specialist James Lev at Midway Beach for a pre-season tour of the work area.

Biologists Hoenes and Sundstrom and Research Scientist Pearson attended a conference call initiated by Dan Elbert of USFWS. The purpose of the call was to engage Washington in an otherwise Oregon centric recovery effort. Dan plans several visits to the Washington plover nesting locations this summer and fall to become more familiar with core nesting areas. Other topics of discussion were funding, winter and breeding adult survey totals, continuity of data collection between the two states, predator management, and meeting recovery goals.

Biologist Hoenes assisted with the installation of two large sign posts at Wash-Away-Beach that will mark the property boundary of Department of Natural Resource (DNR) lands and lands owned by the Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe (see photos below). Assisting the Tribe with installing these signs has significant conservation value because snowy plovers nest on lands owned by the Tribe and this area has experienced numerous problems in the past with people driving ORVs (Off-Road-Vehicles) onto DNR lands and then trespassing onto Tribal lands and disturbing nesting plovers in the process. In the past, the property boundary was not signed which made it difficult to enforce the trespassing issues. Hopefully now with the signs in place, Tribal Police can address the trespassing issues while simultaneously decreasing the amount of human-caused disturbance to nesting snowy plovers. Big thanks go out to the WDFW Shellfish and Weed Eradication Programs for assisting with this effort. This could not have been accomplished without the manpower, skill set, and equipment these two programs provided.



The signs that were installed at Wash-Away-Beach were larger than 20 feet in length and made of steel, which required the use of a Marsh Master and water pump to get them installed. Both signs were set 8-9 feet in the sand so they could withstand the pounding waves.

Dead Eagle Protocol: Biologist Ament provided other regional biologists with the most recent copy of the Dead Eagle Protocol provided by agency veterinarian Kristin Mansfield. She had spoken with USFWS staff recently and they do appreciate the efforts of WDFW staff to collect dead eagles that can be provided to the repository.

Sandhill Cranes: Biologist Sundstrom took this picture of a Sandhill Crane at a location off South Bank Road while she was conducting the Dusky goose survey. Although Sandhill Cranes are frequently observed flying over District 17, they are rarely observed on the ground and actively foraging, so this was a very unique and interesting photo opportunity.



Trumpeter Swan Monitoring: Biologist Ament conducted a few counts of trumpeter swans on March 25, 2014, since she was passing by the swan areas. One group of swans was located in the Clapp West field off Anderson Road. There were a total of 16 swans in this group (11 adults and 5 cygnets). In another Clapp field west of Smuck Road (leased by Nash's Farm) there was a group of five adult swans. Biologist Ament was at a recent Audubon meeting and requested any information the members may have about possible new night roost sites for the swans. She was suspicious that there may be some new night roost areas that need to be documented. Bob Boekelheide conducted some monitoring last week and located a new night roost site. He sent an email with the information below:

Here's some recent info about the swans using Nash's field on the west side of the Dungeness River, and clues about where this group has been spending the night.

March 20, morning observations of Nash's field — 07:20 to 07:40

07:20 — no swans in field

07:28 — 14 adults flew in from the east, over the river, and landed in the field

07:33 — one adult and three immatures flew in from the southwest (direction of the Game Farm) and landed in the field

07:37 — 51 adults and 5 immatures flew in from the southwest (direction of the Game Farm) and landed in the field. So by 7:40, there were 66 adults and 8 immatures in the field.

March 21, evening observations of Nash's field and from the cemetery on Lotzgesell Rd (overlooking the Game Farm and adjacent gun club and Lotzgesell Farm) — 19:40 to 20:00

19:40 — 39 swans in Nash's field, looking very alert and moving around

19:42 — 10 other swans visible already swimming in pond west of Game Farm, at private hunting club (viewed from cemetery on Lotzgesell)

19:51 — 19 swans flew from Nash's field towards the southwest and landed on the same pond, joining the 10 other swans.

19:53 — the 20 other swans took off from Nash's field and headed towards the east.

Denny Van Horn says that recently the swans have occasionally been spending the night in the Dungeness Habitat ponds off 3 Crabs Rd. (Les Jones former property), so maybe that's where the easterly flying group was going and coming from.

March 28

09:11 — five swans (unknown ages, but best I could tell there were four adults and one immature) flew from Nash's field to the northwest, over Dungeness Bay, and out of sight over Dungeness Spit. Headed north? Other swans still hung out at Nash's carrot field.

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

Wildlife Management

Black-tailed Deer Monitoring – Satsop/Mason Deer Sites: In 2009, WDFW initiated a study of the effects of forest management practices on black-tailed deer reproduction. Two of eight study sites are represented in District 15: Mason and Satsop. Bio Murphie reports no new mortalities. Two does in the Mason cluster lost their collars as designed; Bio Murphie recovered them last week. The Mason cluster now has nine does and one fawn on air, while the Satsop cluster has six does and two fawns still transmitting.

Black-tailed Deer Monitoring – Capitol Forest Site: Biologist Michaelis continued to monitor five adult does in the Capitol Forest Cluster. He attempted to get a data download from the doe for which this task had not been completed, but the collar failed to communicate with the receiver once again. This particular collar is obviously not functioning properly, so Michaelis will not make any further attempts to complete the data download. No mortalities were reported this week so the number of deer being monitored remains at five adult does.

Black-tailed Deer Monitoring – Pysht Deer Site: Six does, two fawns and one yearling continue to be monitored in the Pysht cluster. No mortalities this past week. On Sunday, March 30, Biologist Loafman conducted deer study site visits in order to retrieve data on radio collars.

Dusky Canada Geese: Biologists Sundstrom and Michaelis conducted the monthly Dusky Canada Goose (dusky) surveys in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. Biologist Sundstrom observed 4,773 geese, of which 1,184 were duskies and 16 were collared. Sundstrom observed nearly twice as many cacklers during the dusky survey than she did during the cackling goose surveys which were conducted three days later (see Cackling Canada Geese topic below).

Cackling Canada Geese: Biologists Hoenes, Sundstrom and Michaelis completed Cackling Canada Goose (cacklers) surveys in Grays Harbor, Pacific, and Thurston counties. Surveys were completed as part of a multi-jurisdictional (Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, USFWS, etc.) effort to estimate the size of cackler populations that winter in Oregon, Washington, and southern British Columbia. Population size is being estimated using mark-resight data that is collected by observing collared cacklers during surveys. The survey consists of two surveys that occur one week apart. During the first week of the survey, biologists observed close to 7,000 cacklers, but only 983 were close enough to determine whether or not they had collars and no

collars were observed. During the second week of the survey, biologists observed 1,236 cacklers and only 1 cackler had a collar.

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

Wildlife Management

Long Beach Bear Conflict: Biologists Hoenes, Michaelis, Harris and Regional Wildlife Program Manager Cope attended a meeting with Enforcement Program staff to discuss the ongoing bear conflict issues on Long Beach Peninsula. Also in attendance was Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil. In addition to the resident near Ilwaco that is feeding bears, there continues to be recurring conflicts between bears and humans along the entire peninsula. The group came to a consensus that the bear feeding issue will be dealt with by trapping and removing the bears. The overall and more general conflicts will be addressed by increasing public outreach efforts to educate property owners about steps they can take to reduce conflicts with bears.

Harvest Data Review: Biologists Hoenes, Michaelis and Murphie spent considerable time this week reviewing projected harvest statistics from the 2013 big-game seasons. Data will be uploaded to the WDFW website following this review so it's important that biologists review this data so any errors can be identified and corrected prior to the data being released to the public. Biologists Murphie and Michaelis did identify some errors and informed Statistician Owens.

Pelt Sealing: Trapping season officially ends March 31, which is evidenced by the number of trappers that have been bringing in pelts so they can be sealed. In accordance with CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), trappers must have all of their otters and bobcats sealed before the pelts can enter the fur market. CITES is an international treaty to prevent species from becoming endangered or extinct because of international trade. Under this treaty, countries work together to regulate the international trade of animal and plant species and ensure that this trade is not detrimental to the survival of wild populations. In the past two weeks, Region 6 biologists have sealed over 80 otter and bobcat pelts.

Wildlife Conflict – Willapa Valley: Biologist Harris sent emails to Master Hunters requesting assistance on two fence projects. One project is in the Willapa Valley. The fields are leased by a local dairy farmer where the department has deployed Master Hunters. The landowners also own a commercial raspberry patch. On one visit Harris noticed that the fence protecting the patch is getting old and deer had been trying to get through. Since this was a potential future conflict issue, the landowner was contacted. The landowners are elderly and operate the patch by themselves. Being that they have a very liberal access policy allowing hunters and fishermen on their property as well as being very open to Master Hunter access outside of the hunting season, Harris offered Master Hunters' assistance in repairing the fence. An email requesting assistance was sent to all Master Hunters who were deployed to the Willapa Valley this year, many of whom were successful in harvesting an animal. It would benefit the program for landowners to

know that the hunters came back to help out on the fences. Currently six Master Hunters have said they will help. We expect a few more will volunteer. The work party is scheduled for April 19.

Landowner Contact – Grays Harbor County: Biologist Harris also sent an email to Master Hunters and Master Hunter applicants in Grays Harbor County requesting assistance on another fence project. A landowner in the Brady area contacted Harris requesting Master Hunter assistance on his fence. He has been reluctant to use them in the past but a recent hip injury has left him no choice. The landowner has experienced damage from the Satsop elk forays to the bulb farm and beyond. So far, 12 Master Hunters have responded that they would like to help. Work party dates will be scheduled soon.

Wynoochee Elk Herd: Biologist Sundstrom checked on the location of the Wynoochee elk herd and found approximately 45 headed up Geissler Road. Sundstrom was able to identify one cow with a major hoof deformity and two calves with either hoof or ankle issues.

Satsop Elk Herd: Biologist Sundstrom's check on the location of the Satsop elk herd found the herd of at least 45 up the West Satsop Road. The collared cow was amongst the herd and another cow was identified with a right front hoof anomaly.

It is important to note that Biologist Sundstrom's report of elk with hoof issues in the Wynoochee and Satsop valleys could be the first credible report of hoof deformity in these areas. Efforts will be made to confirm this.

Landowner Contact – Pierce County: Conflict Specialist Novack visited property near Eatonville with elk problems. Advice provided on increasing the fence height, while a critter-gitter device was provided for deterrence.

Contact with second Eatonville resident regarding elk problems with fence. Novack visited an elk fencing project at a cranberry bog near Eatonville. About two-thirds of the fence has been installed. Further work is delayed until soil dries.

Landowner Contact – Jefferson County: Conflict Specialist Novack made contact with a Dosewallips resident regarding elk problems

Landowner Contact – Kitsap County: Conflict Specialist Novack revisited property near Silverdale with USDA Wildlife Services staff where landowner is experiencing severe browsing damage to his ornamental landscaping. Novack submitted volunteer event and sent notifications for deer-proof fencing project near Gig Harbor. Four to five volunteers have already signed up. He ordered a fence stretching tool to assist the event.

Landowner Contact – Clallam County: Conflict Specialist Novack was contacted by leasor of city-owned pasture regarding elk issues south of Hwy. 101. He contacted a Sequim landowner regarding status of his damage claim. The landowner had failed to submit an application with his damage assessment. Forms were provided.

Private Lands/Access

Hunting Access: Bio Harris met with a landowner who has Feel Free to Hunt and Hunt by Reservation areas. A-19 for this landowner was submitted. Landowner had no issues with hunters this year. Increased staff time monitoring the area appears to have paid off by reducing conflicts between landowner and hunters. We also discussed elk depredation on leased fields in the Lower Satsop. Will do a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) with landowner this year and attempt to be proactive in reducing problems. Landowner also reported beaver problems. Apparently the population is increasing as is the dam size resulting in increased flooding and slow drainage of fields. Information was given to landowner on how to hire a Nuisance Wildlife Control Operator (NWCO) as well as other options. Part of the discussion included ways to get access for state fur season trappers. This may be a better long term management solution than hiring a NWCO.

Remote Cameras: Eye's in the Woods (EITW) remote camera team volunteers performed maintenance on cameras deployed on private timberlands. Biologist Harris met with local EITW representative on future camera deployments. Goal is to install the Clearwater system early this year. Additionally, they are going to be installed on an elk conflict area to see if this helps in both monitoring and reacting to elk use on crops.