

Wildlife Program

Week of February 23 – March 1, 2015

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Oregon Spotted Frog Inventory and Monitoring: Biologist Hallock conducted Oregon Spotted Frog surveys at two sites in Thurston County and assisted Region 6 and Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge with a survey along the Black River.

Range-wide Wolverine Coordination: Biologist Jeff Lewis, Acting Diversity Division Manager Penny Becker, and Acting Deputy Assistant Director Eric Gardner drafted a letter for Director Unsworth in support of a multi-state (ID, MT, WY, and WA) Competitive State Wildlife Grants proposal to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The grant would support a wolverine monitoring and conservation project in the northern Rocky Mountains and the North Cascades and will include a connectivity analysis, a possible investigation of translocation feasibility, the development of a regional monitoring strategy, a pilot monitoring project in Wyoming, and the full implementation of the regional monitoring project in all four states. The main goals are to 1) determine the current distribution of wolverines in these four states to serve as a baseline indication of current status and conservation opportunities, and 2) use a connectivity analysis to determine how wolverine movements, population establishment, and population connectivity can be enhanced through habitat management, highway crossing projects, and acquisitions. Lewis and Becker are assisting with the development of the proposal, which will be submitted to the Service by 13 March 2015.

Western Gray Squirrel: Biologist Wiles, Coordinator Connally, and Acting Division Manager Becker met with Research Scientist Matt Vander Haegen to define several milestones and the timeline for this year's upcoming WGS range-wide surveys, supporting District Biologists with Citizen Scientists at various levels as needed. Wiles and Connally picked up 600 recently fabricated hair snag tubes from the Lacey Shop and brought these to the Natural Resources Building in Olympia for later distribution.

Ferruginous Hawk Survey Planning: Biologist Gerry Hayes worked with Science Division staff in early survey planning for comprehensive nesting territory surveys of Ferruginous Hawk in 2016. District biologists were provided information on the number of nesting territories in their district and general guidelines on survey protocol, including the number, duration, and timing of nest site visits, to facilitate scheduling field survey effort. Survey results will be used in a status review of this state threatened species.

State Wildlife Action Plan: Biologist Stinson submitted the spreadsheet with the ecosystem associations for 45 invertebrate species, and wrote a draft summary for the Species of Greatest Conservation Need invertebrates. Biologists Hays, Azerrad, and Testke began outlining habitat chapters for the SWAP.

South Puget Sound Prairie Conservation: WDFW and partner biologists reviewed monitoring results from past prescribed fires and discussed information needs for the future. One of the significant monitoring results was that prescribed fires conducted in August appear to be much more likely to prepare sites for improving habitat quality through native seed enhancement than September prescribed fires. As the Department of Natural Resources restrictions currently limit prescribed fire during dry periods in August, this result is particularly troubling for our restoration efforts. Future planned monitoring efforts will help clarify this issue.

Sage-grouse Translocation Coordination: Biologist Stinson worked with Region 1 District Bio Atamian to schedule staff and volunteers for upcoming sage-grouse trapping.

Sage Grouse CCAA: Section Manager Wilkerson and Environmental Planner Teske, along with Range Ecologist Burnham and Private Lands Biologists Comstock, Braaten, Cotton, and Stutzman, led a work session with several members of the Washington Cattlemen's Association and US Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the sage grouse CCAA in Ellensburg on 26 February. Significant progress was made and a follow-up meeting to continue the work is scheduled for 30 March.

Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Programs: Because of her past professional involvement in the State Wildlife Grants Effectiveness Measures development, Coordinator Wendy Connally participated in a small WSFR Working Group to explore and help craft a message for Hannibal Bolton to carry to the State Fish and Wildlife Agency Directors at the North American meeting.

Periodic Status Reviews: Biologist Wiles collated public comments received by the Listing and Recovery Section during the one-year period leading up to the preparation of the periodic status reviews that will be written for sixteen state-listed species in 2015. The public was asked to submit new information regarding demographics, habitat conditions, threats and trends, conservation measures that have benefited these species, and new data collected since the last status review for these species. Wiles then distributed the comments to the nine authors who will be writing the periodic status reviews.

Arid Lands Initiative: Section Manager Wilkerson participated in a meeting of the Arid Lands Initiative on February 25th in Ellensburg. Participants included the National Resource Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, Audubon Washington, Ducks Unlimited, US Fish and Wildlife Service, WA Department of Natural Resources, Trust for Public Land, and The Nature Conservancy.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Professional development: Biologist Hallock attended the 8th Annual Northwest Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) annual meeting and workshop in Portland, Oregon. Citizen Science Coordinator Wendy Connally gave two presentations at the conference: *iNaturalist and the Success of Herps of Texas* and *eBird Northwest A Successful Partnership*, both concentrating on the state agency's role in using existing social observation platforms to engage nontraditional constituencies and get data for our business needs. PARC is an inclusive

partnership dedicated to the conservation of reptiles and amphibians and their habitat. Membership comes from all walks of life. The meeting and workshop was a one-day event focused on various aspects of Citizen Science including the design, implementation, and success of amphibian and reptile projects, as well as the roll of mobile Apps, Bioblitzes, and outreach programs in conservation and stewardship.

Professional development: Biologist Hallock attended The Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology meeting (joint meeting with NW PARC) in Portland, Oregon. The theme of the meeting was “Defining a New Ecological Baseline: Pacific Northwest Fauna and Flora in the Anthropocene.” Sessions featured research on Western Pond Turtles, Oregon Spotted Frogs and molecular sampling using environmental DNA (eDNA). Western Pond Turtles and Oregon Spotted Frogs are state endangered species with recovery programs coordinated by Biologist Hallock. Biologist Hallock is also conducting an eDNA study to develop a protocol for using eDNA to inventory for Oregon Spotted Frogs.

Cross Pollination Between Programs: Coordinator Wendy Connally delivered a presentation to the WDFW Technology and Financial Management Program at David Giglio’s request, demonstrating the connections between our Programs and our interdependence to deliver good conservation per our shared mission.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Douglas County Prairie Grouse Project: Biologists Atamian, Lowe, Gallie, Schroeder, Braaten, and Doloughan (BLM) conducted a pilot capture effort. Two adult male sage grouse were captured and outfitted with solar powered GPS transmitters. The new battery powered capture system (previous system was powered by satchel generator) was tested and proved successful.



Biologists Atamian, Schroeder, and Doloughan band and attach a backpack-style GPS transmitter to a male sage grouse in Douglas County

Pronghorn monitoring: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy assisted Moose Specialist Oyster and a Yakama Tribal Biologist with a pronghorn survey in Benton and Klickitat Counties. We counted sixty-three pronghorn over two days, and the Tribe will also survey the Reservation and expect another sixty-seventy to be counted. The release of ninety-nine pronghorn on the Yakama Reservation occurred in January 2011.



Pronghorn group

Wildlife Areas

Cooperative project: Access Manager Scott Young built a display for WDFW Aquatic Invasive Species Technician Mike Wilkinson. This is to increase public awareness of invasive mussels. It will be used in the Upcoming Bighorn Outdoor Show and other events.



Display showing a license plate left in a lake with invasive mussels, from another state

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

Wildlife Areas

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Shooting Range: WAM Bob Dice looked at the shooting range on Monday after Eagle Scout Joseph King and his helpers spent Saturday making improvements to the facility. The covered bench was outfitted with new metal siding and gravel was spread. Also installed were a new exterior gun rack, signs, a firing line, and range markers.



Asotin Creek Wildlife Area shooting range improvements

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

Wildlife Management

Turkey Issues: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley and Biologist Thorne/Hadley continue to work with several homeowners regarding problem turkeys in Walla Walla. We currently have three separate bait sites going in the city limits.



One of the problem turkey flocks in Walla Walla

National Wild Pheasant Technical Committee Report: Supervisor McCanna worked with Ollie Torgerson (Wisconsin, representing Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA)) on the by-laws for the national wild pheasant technical committee. McCanna completed all edits for the report and sent it to twenty-three state coordinators and Torgerson. McCanna will be following up and guiding the Minnesota coordinator for a June presentation to MAFWA in Minnesota.



Whitman County Moose: Biologist Lewis assisted Supervisor McCanna and WDFW Officer King with hazing moose from a farm in the Steptoe Butte area of Whitman County. The cow and

Whitman County Moose heading to Steptoe Butte

two calves happily cooperated and moved on to a more appropriate area near the base of Steptoe Butte.

Wounded Hawk: Biologist Earl, NRT Wade, and Biologist Wik responded to a call of a wounded hawk at the Vineland Cemetery. The red-tail hawk had a broken wing and was delivered to WSU.

Injured Red-tail hawk captured and delivered to WSU



REGION 2

WOLVES

Okanogan Wolves: Specialist Heilhecker talked to a WSU graduate student regarding their upcoming field season involving the Lookout Pack and range riders. The student is not able to attend the meeting next week with the rancher and a representative from Conservation Northwest. The student wanted to make sure Specialist Heilhecker understood the study design and protocol. Specialist Heilhecker worked on a draft fact sheet about livestock carcass disposal in cooperation with Olympia staff for the Department's wolf outreach material.

Tunk Mountain Wolf Report: Biologist Heinlen received a follow up report from UW graduate student J. Dellinger that he found what he believes are wolf tracks within two miles of the wolf photo east of Tunk Mountain posted in last week's weekly. These two observations are approximately one month apart.

North Cascades Wolverine Research Project: This last week we had a wolf visit an active wolverine trap, a first for the project and likely a function of the mild winter.

Wolf at active wolverine trap –
Photo by WDFW remote camera

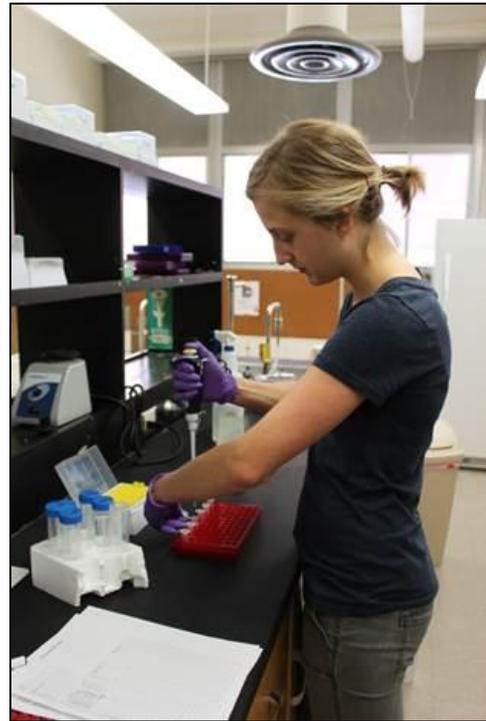


GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Northern Leopard Frogs (NLF): Biologist E. Duvuvuei prepared data associated with NLF genetic samples collected in 2004-05 and delivered the samples to the genetics lab at WSU. Mikki Brinkmeyer, the WSU genetic technician assigned to the project, set up a small batch of samples and explained the DNA extraction process to Duvuvuei. The resulting information will be used to complete a population viability analysis (PVA) to determine the effective population size, minimum number of breeders, and gene flow between the wetlands. Inclusion of the ninety-nine samples from 2004-05 in this analysis will increase the accuracy of the estimate of the effective population size.

WSU genetics lab technician Mikki Brinkmeyer adds buffer solution to NLF tissue samples while explaining the DNA extraction process – Photo by E. Duvuvuei



Washington Ground Squirrels: After several years of unconfirmed observations in the Gloyd Unit, biologist E. Duvuvuei observed a suspected Washington ground squirrel darting across road 16. Duvuvuei and Finger visited the area and were able to confirm a previously unknown but suspected colony of Washington Ground Squirrels in the Gloyd Seeps area. Approximately ten alarm calls were heard, two active burrows with fresh scat were confirmed, and an additional fifteen likely burrows were located in the ten acre colony. Biologist Finger shipped four Washington ground squirrel carcasses to the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostics Laboratory at WSU. These four males all died together in the same enclosure, raising suspicion that this could be disease related. However, males are likely in very poor condition at this time of year and depending on behavior (i.e. territoriality versus use of nest boxes for shelter), could have succumbed to exposure.

Spring Deer Surveys: Biologist Heinlen, with assistance from WDFW staff and volunteer Fischer, conducted the Pateros Unit deer survey, given the unseasonably warm weather and early start to the growing season. We classified 243 deer (172 adults and 76 Fawns) for a fawn:adult ratio of 44:100. This unit will be resurveyed during the normal mid-March time period to look for any changes in the fawn ratio.

Pateros Unit looking north up the Methow River – Photo by Jeff Heinlen

Wildlife Areas

Methow Post-fire Forest

Management Project: Work continues on the Timber Sale.

Forester Jamie Bass has been out administering the sale every day.

This week has brought warm weather and even some precipitation.

Though operations are occurring only in the higher elevation unit, they have been limited to either early

morning when temperatures are below freezing or to non-ground-equipment activities such as hand-felling and equipment maintenance. Current efforts are concentrated on felling trees to prepare for cold morning temperatures when skidding and processing will be

feasible. Department Foresters Rod Pfeifle and Doug Kuehn did a field visit with Methow WLA Forester Bass to discuss the results of treated areas, possible post-thinning activities, and reducing runoff on roads that run through thinning units. Overall, the sale, despite setbacks in un-

merchantable timber, operability, and timing, has met a majority of the objectives for future large woody debris, releasing survivor trees, reducing hazard, and improving the overall quality of the stand health.

Picture depicts the difference in canopy of a treated versus untreated stand. To the left, trees have been thinned to historic densities which will reduce fire risk by breaking canopy connectivity, allow released pines to grow and mature, and cause regeneration



Central Ferry Shrub Planting: Fidel, Virgilio, and Natural Resource Technician Angel Hastings planted plugs of bitterbrush and sagebrush, 1,000 each, at the Central Ferry Canyon Unit. By using our shrub planting machine, they completed the project in just a few hours. Eric Ellis of the BLM provided the plugs.

Shrub Planting Work – Photo by Dan Peterson



Annual Deer Survey – Pateros Unit:

Area Manager Dan Peterson, Assistant Manager Noel Winegeart, Natural Resource Technician Brad Zabreznik (Chelan Wildlife Area), and volunteer Bob Fischer helped Assistant District Biologist Jeff Heinlen survey deer on the Pateros Unit. Although all participants have spent a fair amount of

time on this unit in the months following the Carlton Complex Fire, the complete loss of the shrub and tree component remains as striking as ever. Most of the aspen groves visited show little or no re-sprouting and are devoid of any herbaceous vegetation. Beyond these sites, however, grass species are making a return. Yarrow is growing, as is the Dalmatian toadflax.



Aspen grove, Pateros unit – Photo by Dan Peterson



Pateros unit once covered with bitterbrush, now a moonscape. In the background are Alta Lake and the surrounding community where 52 homes were destroyed the night of July 17, 2014 in the Carlton Complex fire –

Photo by Dan Peterson

Carlton Complex Photo Points: Dan Peterson joined Research Scientist Mike Schroeder for an outing at Indian Dan Canyon. The purpose of this 9.5 hour field trip was so that Mike could reconnoiter and collect current photos at points established following the Carlton Fire. In addition, Mike also wanted to find the locations from which the previous manager, Marc Hallett, had taken photos taken in 1975. They visited 22 of the 28 established sites and found the locations for eight of Marc’s photos. These points will be used to monitor post-fire recovery, long-term vegetation changes, and habitat quality, and function as an integral part of the Department’s Ecological Integrity Monitoring.



Mike Schroeder at a Marc Hallet Photo Point
– Photo by Dan Peterson



Indian Dan Canyon, 1975 – Photo by Marc Hallet



Indian Dan Canyon, February 2015 – Photo by Dan Peterson

Private Lands/Access

Sage-grouse Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA):

Biologist Comstock and Braaten attended a meeting in Ellensburg with the Washington Cattlemen’s Association, WDFW, and USFWS. This meeting is the fourth or fifth in a series of meetings between agency personnel and WCA to hammer out the details and conservation measure requirements within the draft CCAA for Greater sage-grouse. This meeting ended with a clear message that DFW needs to significantly revise the structure and content of the CCAA if we are to expect landholders to be willing to sign up for it. DFW agreed to make revisions and come back for a meeting at the end of March. The goal of the CCAA is to offer landholders an opportunity to reduce their liability for any “take” of a greater sage-grouse, should they become listed. Another meeting was scheduled for the end of March to discuss the details of a newer draft CCAA.



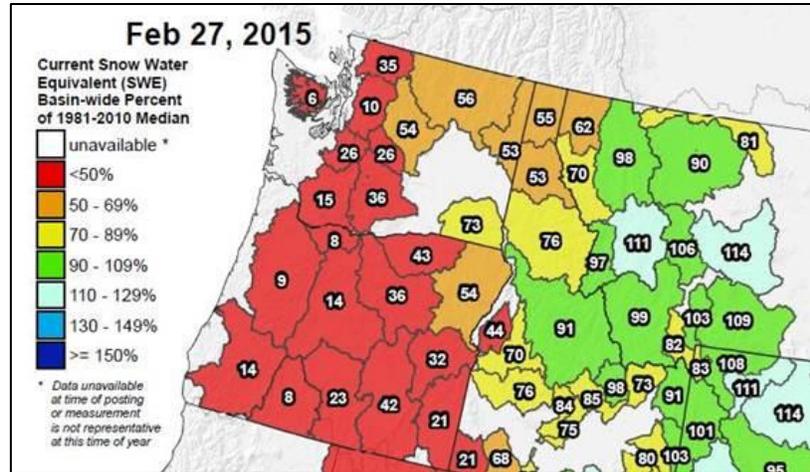
CCAA Meeting – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

Observed Environment

District 5 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Temperatures have been warming with lows in the mid-30s and daytime highs in the mid-50s.

Short-Term Forecast: The ten-day forecast is relatively warm with temperatures ranging from the low 30s at night and the low 50s during the day.



Long-Term Forecast: The winter season is forecasted to be warmer and drier than normal.

Habitat: Green vegetation with little to no snow cover.

Snow Depths: 0" at lower elevations with minimal and very patchy snow at higher elevations.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date.

Animal Condition: No reports of animals in poor condition that can be attributed to winter conditions. Animals observed to date appear to be in great condition.

Mortality: None reported or expected in short-term.

District 6 Winter Conditions

Recent Weather: The past week was mostly dry with seasonal temps.

Short-Term Forecast: Near normal temperatures with a slight chance of snow showers followed by a warm up are forecast for the next 7-10 days.

Long-Term Forecast: Warmer than normal temperatures and normal to below normal amounts of precipitation are forecast for the remainder of the winter and early spring.

Snow Depths: Snow is gone from all aspects at lowest elevations and from middle elevations on south facing slopes. Only the highest elevations near the Cascades Crest received any additional snowpack this past week. Snow is now either absent or patchy across most deer winter range in the district. As a result, this will be the last winter condition report for this year.

Snotel sites –*

Hart's Pass (6500 ft): 78 in

Salmon Meadows (4,460 ft): 17 in

Muckamuck (4,470): 11 in

**No snotel sites exist in core deer winter range areas.*

Habitat: With snow now mostly gone from lower and middle elevations and spring green-up underway, forage now exists to some degree throughout much of traditional deer winter range both in and out of last year's burn perimeter.

Animal Concentrations: In general, deer remain well distributed on the landscape and the low snowpack has allowed some animals to drift back up to higher than average elevations for late winter. Green-up has eased pressure on orchards near Pateros.

Animal Condition: In most areas, deer generally look to be in average to good condition for this time of year.

Mortality: Little to no new mortality is being reported.

District 5 - Recreational Opportunities: With the recent warming trend, large numbers of waterfowl have moved back into the Columbia Basin. We have noticed a significant increase in mallards and pintails on wetlands throughout the wildlife area. Now is a great time to get out and observe waterfowl completing their courting flights and mating rituals.



Canvasbacks and Tundra Swans at the Birders Corner at Dodson Road – Photo by R. Finger



Mallards and Pintail at Birder's Corner – Photo by R. Finger



Drake Eurasian Wigeon at Birders Corner –
Photo by Rich Finger



Drakes lifting off – Photo by Rich Finger



***A light dusting of snow on the Methow
Wildlife Area –*** Photo by Sherry Furnari



***Palmer Lake and Chopaka Mountain,
Northern Okanogan County –*** Photo by Jim
Olson



Winter wheat field at Washburn Island –
Photo by WDFW



Moon over Indian Dan Canyon – Photo by Dan
Peterson



Indian Dan Canyon – Photo by Dan Peterson



Retired US Forest Service employee Bob Strand provided this photo he made of an adult bald eagle hunting waterfowl on the Columbia River in the vicinity of Bridgeport Bar

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Oak Creek staff wrapped up feeding at the Nile and Junction feed sites on Friday. Hay was cut back to one bale at both sites for the week. On Friday, there were only twenty-five elk at the Nile following a tribal elk hunter incident the day before. Elk numbers at the Junction jumped to over 200 elk on Friday because of some snow and heavy rain; numbers had been dropping all week.

Peak Elk Counts for Week:

Headquarters-
Junction- 216
Nile-250
Sheep-
Cowiche-

Winter Weather: Weather this past week was very mild with highs in the 40s and 50s and lows in the 20s. There was some heavy rain and a little snow on Friday. Weather this coming week is mild.

Vegetation Access: Access to vegetation is good with a lot of grass green up.

Animal Condition: Elk are in seasonally good condition and are no longer being fed as of 2/27.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: The Sunnyside Wildlife Area's Mesa Lake Unit was recently featured in a Ducks Unlimited brochure on DU habitat projects in eastern Washington.

Noxious Weed Control: Manager Bjornstrom and Assistant Manager Sak attended a coordination meeting in Yakima regarding noxious weed control in Yakima, Benton, and Franklin Counties. The meeting was administered by WDFW's Dave Heimer. Representatives from Yakima County, Benton County, DNR, AGR, WSU, Yakama Nation, and WDFW were in attendance. Among the topics discussed were noxious weed concerns, reporting requirements, personnel needs, and the use of Weed i-Form.

Wood Duck Nesting: Assistant Manager Buser helped the Richland Rod and Gun Club get started on wood duck nesting box inventory and cleanup across the district.

LT Murray Wildlife Area

Elk Conditions: Elk numbers at Watt fluctuated from fifteen to five hundred elk, and in Robinson numbers were between two hundred and four hundred fifty elk. Two calf mortalities occurred in Watt, one of which was a lion kill. The lion-killed calf had a swollen hind hoof. The leg was removed at the knee and delivered to Biologist Moore for further examination.

Winter Conditions: Unseasonably warm weather has continued and will be similar next week. Highs are predicted in the upper 40s with lows in the mid-20s to 30s. An inch of snow fell in Robinson on Friday.

Wildlife Management

Rattlesnake Hills Elk Survey: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand coordinated and participated in the 2015 Rattlesnake Hills elk survey. This year it was WDFW's responsibility to coordinate and pay for flight costs associated with the survey. Leading Edge Aviation, from Lewiston ID, provided the aerial service while USFWS Biologist Newsome, WDFW Biologist Moore, and Specialist Hand performed flight observations. A total of twelve units were surveyed and included US Department of Energy, US Army Training Center, and private lands in the Hanford area. Preliminary raw data suggest that 1,019 elk were observed and classified with a calf to cow ratio of 24:100 and a bull to cow ratio of 44:100.



A group of bull elk on Hanford

Benton County Pronghorns: Stutzman was in the field for parts of two days looking for pronghorns in Benton County. A combination aerial and ground survey was conducted over two days as a joint effort between WDFW, Yakama Nation, and Safari Club International. Over sixty individuals were observed on non-tribal lands.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz took down the Clemans Mountain sheep trap with a lot of help from the Oak Creek WA staff. Due to a warm, mostly snowless winter, no sheep were trapped.

Montana Bighorn Sheep Study Results: Biologist Bernatowicz corresponded with Section Manager Harris and Francis Cassier (Idaho) regarding some recent results from a study in Montana. The published results that appeared to be potentially erroneous were correct. In one herd, the prevalence of *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* (MOVI) was much higher via nasal swabs than in the serum test for antibodies (ELISA). For some reason, a fairly large number of bighorn sheep are not producing antibodies to MOVI and aren't showing signs of pneumonia. In a second herd, the minimal prevalence and serology test for antibodies was fairly low and the herd hasn't ever shown signs of pneumonia. The study is still in the early stages and strain-typing has not been completed on MOVI.

Elk Hoof Issues: Biologist Bernatowicz became aware of some hoof issues in elk at feed sites outside of Ellensburg. Dr. Mansfield, Biologist Moore, and Wildlife Area staff were contacted. The hoof from one inflected elk (cougar kill) was collected. Biologist Bernatowicz advised agency staff to not move/use carcasses for eagle bait. Further sampling may occur next week.

Squirrels: Biologist Bernatowicz traveled with Wildlife Area Manager Huffman to the area where some large, unknown squirrels were observed. Only California ground squirrels were observed and no tree nests could be found. The squirrels seen earlier were not believed to be ground squirrels. Cameras were set on walnuts and suet bait.

Golden Eagles: Biologist Bernatowicz surveyed the Oak Creek territory for an active/occupied nest. None were found and no birds observed. The Oak Creek golden eagles often build new nests, which complicates determining which areas to close to climbing. Unfortunately, during the survey, there wasn't any wind or thermals (dead air). Eagle activity tends to be lower in such conditions.

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

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman met with DNR Recreation Manager Jones and John McGowan of the Naches Lions Club to discuss a proposed ATV Poker Ride that the Lions Club wants to put on. The event will cover both WDFW and DNR ownership. The meeting went well, and a lot of the requirements from WDFW and DNR were figured out so that the large event can be permitted.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Hunt began working with a representative from a Bellevue LDS Church to plan another hand cart trek on the L.T. Murray in June. The group will be getting in touch with Leah for permitting, and we'll continue to work on finalizing a route, camp spots, parking logistics, etc.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Colockum staff installed another new green dot readerboard, this one at the wildlife area entrance on Tarpiscan Road.

Assistant Manager John Hagan putting the finishing touches on a new green dot readerboard



Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom met Assistant Manager Buser at Rattlesnake Slope to install a new information kiosk at the access site.

Assistant Manager Buser and a newly installed information kiosk at Rattlesnake Slope



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

Wildlife Management

Deer Conflict: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand traveled to the Crow Butte area of southern Benton County to meet with two large wine grape producers to monitor for deer damage in their vineyards and to set up non-lethal hazing equipment. Although the weather has been extremely mild this winter, bud growth and plant development on the grape plants are not showing early. Only minor deer activity was observed.

Pronghorn Observations: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with several landowners in District 4 concerning pronghorn observations.

Damage Prevention Permits: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with Olympia HQ staff on the development of new WAC's pertaining to increasing quotas on Damage Prevention Permits and season timing.

Bobcat Sighting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and responded to a complaint of a bobcat within the Pasco City limits. The homeowner called to report that their security system (camera) captured images of an animal resembling a bobcat and they were concerned for their own pets' welfare. Reference to "Living with Wildlife" was provided and possible preventive measures discussed.

DPP Permit Status: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored the harvest of DPP permits in Elk Area 3721. No elk were reported this past week on DPP permits. Harvest since the August 1 opener is forty-nine antlerless and six spike bull elk.

Ellensburg and Cle Elum Area: Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by a landowner in Cle Elum who reported that turkeys were creating a problem in her yard. She reported that over 100 turkeys had been living around her and wanted them removed. A visit to the area revealed a few dozen turkeys. The landowner and her neighbors were contacted and offered non-lethal deterrent options. All will allow hunting during the upcoming spring seasons.

Elk Hazing: Conflict Specialist Wetzel contacted a large landowner in Caribou and Colockum Creeks regarding access for elk hazing and potential harvests. This landowner will coordinate harvest on his ownership.

Elk Conflict: A landowner in south Cle Elum reported elk damage to his hay fields. Conflict Specialist Wetzel met the landowner's representative and reviewed the field and damage areas. Hazing and other deterrence methods were discussed in addition to planning efforts for the next agriculture season.

Orphaned Elk: An orphaned elk that had been living for approximately three months near I-90 moved to an adjacent horse corral and became entangled in fencing. It eventually freed itself. The landowners were contacted and options were discussed if problems continue.

Wolf Activities: Conflict Specialist Wetzel was called by a livestock owner in Green Canyon who reported seeing a wolf cross through his calving area at about 9 am Tuesday morning. The area was checked for tracks, a camera was set up, and fladry was deployed around the calving/lambing/kidding area. Foxlights were relocated and wolf depredation prevention measures such as carcass disposal were discussed with the livestock owner. Another nearby landowner with active kidding operations was notified of the potential of a wolf or wolves in the area and advised to take precautions.



Fladry placed in Upper Green Canyon, along with Foxlights in key locations

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

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman provided updated budget information to Budget Analyst Nelson on the Oak Creek PR funding. Huffman and Forester Mackey had a quick conference call with Nelson and Wildlife Area Section Manager Dahmer on projected income and expenditures for the timber sale. Dahmer and Nelson are working to update the PR contract to cover the timber sale.

Oak Creek Forest Restoration Project: Forester Mackey continued with field assessment/familiarization of the Oak Creek Forest Restoration Project. Mackey worked on Purchaser Contract Drafts and completed timber sale appraisal using current log prices. Mackey also spoke with Hampton and Yakama Forest Products log buyers about their interest in the project, products, and markets into this coming spring.

Oak Creek Forest Management Plan: Forester Mackey began preliminary work on Oak Creek Forest Management Plan and began to develop GIS inventory of manageable stands in the Rock Creek Unit.

Suspicious Activity: Thursday afternoon a person stopped by the office to report elk being harvested next to the Nile feed site within the Winter Closure Area for Tribal Hunting. They reported a vehicle driving back and forth on the road in a strange manner. The last time they observed the vehicle was about 30 minutes before stopping by the office, and it was driving further up the 1600 road with a bull elk in the back. Huffman contacted Officer Myers with the information and a vehicle description. Myers responded to the area, located two gut piles, and stopped the vehicle leaving the area. The case was turned over to Tribal Enforcement.

Seeding Trial: Assistant Manager Berry and NRW2 Stevenson drove to Sunnyside to pick up a seed drill. We are borrowing the drill to complete a seeding trial on the HQ feed site. Berry also picked up barley seed to use in the seeding trial.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt met with Darrel Eason regarding his continued volunteer work on the Manastash Cabin. Darrel discovered upon visiting the cabin last weekend that someone had removed the “No Unauthorized Vehicles” sign next to North Fork Manastash Road, taken the combo lock off the gate, gotten stuck crossing the creek, and driven up to the cabin. There was no sign of entry and no damage to the cabin. The lock has been replaced with a WB2 once again for the time being.

Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt also met with the owner of Fast Lane Signs to discuss getting an interpretive sign made to place along the road near the Manastash Cabin. We’ll be getting a quote and some proofs to look over soon, and we’re hoping to find an old photo to include on the sign.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Taylor field reviewed the Ridge Road, doing GPS work on sections that will need maintenance to allow equipment to access the upper end of Black Canyon Road. He also checked on the barricade on upper Black Canyon Road and found that ATV’s were getting around the barriers and proceeding clear to the cabin (and wetland where they like to mud).

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Project: Science Tech Anderson, Biologist DeBruyn, and cooperators from Puget Sound Energy and the Trumpeter Swan Society continued to conduct field surveys this week to monitor for sick and injured trumpeter and tundra swans. WDFW responded to public inquires placed via the hotline throughout Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties. This week, ten trumpeter swans & one tundra swan was collected in Skagit, Snohomish, King, and Whatcom Counties. A grand total of 219 swan carcasses have been collected this season (November 2014-present). Gizzard and liver samples were collected for contaminant analysis. Tracheal and cloacal swabs were taken to monitor for other diseases.

	Lead	Power line Strike	Trauma	Unknown	Feather Pile	Total (per county)
King				22		22
Whatcom		23	4	41	12	80
Snohomish	4	6	5	11	1	27
Skagit		34	5	40	8	87
San Juan				3		3
						219 (Grand Total)

Elk Trapping: Biologists Yarborough, Witman, and DeBruyn, along with volunteers, moved an elk trap to another location close to HWY 20. We have completed building another elk trap and will place it out in the field sometime next week.

Oregon Spotted Frogs: Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn surveyed for Oregon Spotted Frogs in Whatcom County and helped the Samish Indian Tribe survey another site.

Wildlife Areas

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Werkhoven Dairy to discuss the renewal of the agricultural lease for 90 acres of cropland. The lease provides forage and cover for wildlife, waterfowl, and pheasant.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to prepare a draft agricultural lease for 100 acres of cropland on the middle and west lobe of the unit.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with a Dike District 7 representative and Ecology to discuss plans to repair the breach that occurred in the dike in December. The breach is approximately 100' across.



Wood Duck Nest Boxes: Manager Kessler handed out wood duck nest box materials to volunteers. These materials were purchased using Duck Stamp funds. The volunteers will build the boxes, which will be installed on units of the wildlife area.

Duck Stamp Project Proposals:

Wildlife Area Managers wrote up and submitted ten Duck Stamp proposals for their wildlife areas. Proposed projects included the replacement of a failing water control, increased farming for waterfowl winter feeding, Eurasian milfoil control in Lake Terrell, tree plantings, and more.

Manager Kessler coordinated with a teacher from the NW Indian College on using the new Tennant Lake boardwalk for spring classes. They hope to visit the area several times this spring.



British Petroleum Earth Day Habitat Plantings: Manager Kessler coordinated with Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association managers on an upcoming habitat project on the British Petroleum Unit. This project will plant trees and shrubs adjacent to Terrell Creek for Earth Day on April 18th. Manager Kessler will monitor the area, and make sure no recreational conflicts occur during the project.

Waterfowl Program: Thousands of ducks (the majority being mallard, with some pintail and wigeon as well) were seen using the DeBay's Slough and hunt field, where corn was mowed after the waterfowl season to increase duck and swan use.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project Open House: The WDFW and Ducks Unlimited (DU) project team hosted an Open House on Wednesday evening in Stanwood. At the Open House, staff presented a summary of progress made over the past year on the Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project, as well as six design concepts that are currently under consideration to be selected as the preferred design for the Leque Island Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area. After the presentation, regional Wildlife, Habitat, Fish, and Enforcement programs, as well as DU staff, hosted themed breakout stations where attendees asked questions and provided input on the project related to the theme of the station. Station themes included: fish and wildlife impacts of the design alternatives, public access and infrastructure impacts, hydrodynamic model results, design evaluation and screening criteria, and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee process. Approximately sixty people attended the meeting, many with diverse interests in the project. WDFW will use input from this meeting, as well as input received through the Stakeholder Advisory Committee, to select the preferred design alternative for Leque Island by the end of April. More information about the project is available on the webpage at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/skagit/leque_island_project.php.



An aerial photo of Leque Island, which is located between Stanwood and Camano Island. WDFW's Leque Island Unit was the subject of a public Open House last Wednesday evening



WDFW Project Coordinator Loren Brokaw speaking at the Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project Open House

Leque Island Site Visit Discussion: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Wildlife Manager Rotton, Ducks Unlimited staff, and commissioners of the Stillaguamish Flood Control District met on Leque Island and walked around the property. The Flood Control District Commissioners pointed out areas of interest to them on the property, and provided input on the Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project.

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

Wildlife Management

Brant Survey: Biologist DeBruyn took advantage of good weather over the weekend and flew a final brant survey in the North Puget Sound. There has been some discussion about moving the season into March to target northbound black brant migrants (as opposed to gray-bellied western high arctic brant). Brant numbers this weekend were very similar to earlier flights this winter, indicating there has been very little influx from the south thus far.



Brant mixed with scaup in Drayton Harbor

Port Susan Snow Goose Festival: Biologist Milner teamed up with Research Ecologist Gary Slater from Ecostudies Institute (<http://www.ecoinst.org/>) to teach a 90-minute shorebird identification class at the Festival. The goal is to introduce the public to shorebird watching and enhance their visit to the area during the festival. Forty-three people signed up for the class, and festival organizers reported that all field trips were filled to capacity and attendance at other festival events was higher than usual on Saturday.

ALEA Grant Project Review: Biologist Milner reviewed and preliminarily scored ALEA grant proposals. Final evaluations will take place in April, but each grant takes time to review and think about, so it's most efficient to review a few at a time rather than waiting until April to consider the applications.

Wildlife Areas

Ebey Island Land Use Planning Funding: Projects Coordinator Brokaw finalized and submitted a draft grant application to a Migratory Bird Stamp funding opportunity. The proposal involves working with stakeholders to develop a master plan for Ebey Island that will improve freshwater wetland habitat, public access for recreation, and drainage infrastructure to improve WDFW's ability to manage the Ebey Island Unit.

Samish Unit Enhancement Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, and Natural Resource Specialist Meis met with Ducks Unlimited staff to discuss the next steps of this project, including finalizing the design, review of the design by WDFW Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) staff, securing all necessary permits, and construction details.

Private Lands/Access Management

Panther Lake in Kent signage:

Access staff placed the new sign at the end of the road that directs traffic to the 30' easement entry road to the site. Staff are still working with Kent's Public Works Department to attach another Public Fishing sign to their street sign at the main four-way intersection leading to the dead end road.

New public fishing sign to direct the public to the WDFW Access Site on Panther Lake



Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination

Volunteer Coordination: Volunteer Coordinator Dazey assisted several Master Hunter applicants to find service projects to complete their volunteer service requirement to become certified as a Master Hunter. Dazey also worked with Biologist Milner and Boehm to identify project needs for them. With the new Master Hunter applicants coming online, many hours of volunteer service are available to assist DFW in meeting our needs. Dazey also assisted the Region 6 Volunteer Coordinator to identify appropriate opportunities for disabled Master Hunter applicants to complete their service hour requirements.

Recap Hunter Education Classes taught at Ranges: Region 4 Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey researched and provided the breakdown of Region 4 class sites taught at gun ranges vs classes taught at other non-range venues, as well as the projected number of students served by each, to Hunter Education Program manager Dave Whipple.

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

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Wildlife Area Headquarters: Rotton and Meis continued to finalize documents for the Open bid process on Fir Island Farm leases, South Padilla Bay leases, Leque Island lease documents, and Duck Stamp proposal documents. Cosgrove took advantage of the sunny weather to treat an area of poison hemlock at the Headquarters Unit. Manager Rotton met with CAMP engineer Ray Berg and Dike District #22 representatives to discuss a number of project items for the Skagit Wildlife Area, in particular the Wiley Slough Tidegate Repair, Spur dike, and pump station, as well as details related to the Fir Island Farms restoration project.

Samish River Unit: Manager Rotton toured the Samish River Unit to examine potential locations for porta-potties on site for the fishing season. Four wheelers have accessed the site recently, which means additional site modifications to restrict vehicle access will be needed.

Island Unit: Manager Rotton continues to work with Ted Nelson, Contracts Specialist, on the wording for the new barge and boat lease agreement.

***Natural Resource Tech
Cosgrove continues to monitor
the beaver deceiver installed
last week on the Island Unit.
The beaver had not returned to
rebuild the dam.***



Leque Island: Manager Rotton and Lands Agent Kye Iris toured the Highway 532 work and examined the administrative access and parking area developments. Manager Rotton participated in the Leque Island Public Input meeting to provide the public an opportunity to comment regarding the alternatives for repair and restoration of the site. Meis contacted the lessee for the Leque Unit to discuss the new agriculture lease agreement for the next two years.

DeBay's Slough Reserve: Cosgrove and Meis posted new "Game Reserve" signs along the East section of DeBay's Slough at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Reserve Unit.

Fir Island Farms: Cosgrove removed over 200 pounds of Styrofoam from the Bayfront dike at the Fir Island Farms Reserve Unit. Manager Rotton is coordinating with CAMP Engineer Ray Berg and Environmental Planner Jenna Friebel regarding the Fir Island Farms Restoration project construction phase. Manager Rotton has requested quotes from local contract farmers for the planting of the restoration portion of the site. Meis and Manager Rotton prepared bid notifications for the Fir Island Farms and South Padilla Bay leases and have posted with local farm supply vendors and the Western Washington Agricultural Association.

Samish Unit: Meis and Cosgrove monitored field drainage levels, waterfowl use, and public use on the Samish Unit. Manager Rotton and Meis met with Ducks Unlimited to discuss the upcoming proposed construction project on the Samish Unit this summer.

Agricultural Lease Excise Taxes: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm completed the documentation and collection of Leasehold Excise Taxes for the agricultural leases on the Crescent Lake, Stillwater, Ebey Island, and Cherry Valley Units.

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman monitored elk damage on private land along the HWY 9 and HWY 20 corridors. Witman spoke with multiple landowners to discuss recent elk damage. Witman discussed the use of a property in the Acme area with Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn, who may consider the property for elk trapping and collaring. Witman spoke with a landowner on Whidbey Island that is concerned with the increasing deer population on his property and the issue of nearby neighbors feeding deer. Witman agreed to meet with the landowner and discuss options. Witman also will attempt to educate neighbors about the negative effects of feeding deer. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and Biologist Smith met and toured Snohomish and King County damage areas. They also conducted several landowner meetings and assessed fencing conditions. Follow up monitoring will be conducted by both staff members next week.

Wildlife Conflict Meetings: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with landowners in the Deming/Acme area that have had a growing local elk herd causing agricultural damage. Landowners discussed and agreed on using several different hazing options. Witman met with Tribal Co-Manager representatives in the Day Creek area to discuss a fencing project with a landowner. The meeting was very productive with the landowner. Tribal Co-Managers will attempt to go forward with the project and cover the cost of the project.

Master Hunter Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman received several phone calls from Master Hunters looking for volunteer projects. He advised them that several projects will be available in early spring.

Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell, Private Lands Biologist Hans, and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands (WCTL) staff to tour their lands and discuss wildlife conflict and game management issues. During this meeting, WCTL staff showed WDFW staff bear damage, identified damage areas, identified elevation strata that will be used to focus damage prevention efforts, and discussed strategies on how, when, and where to better focus management efforts in the future. It was agreed that identified lands would be held in consideration for the 2016 North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt and considered for other management actions related to damage. Follow up meetings will be held in April of 2015.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination

Hunter Education Access: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey assisted several students to find hunter education classes near them and directed them to the website to sign up for the classes.

Hunter Education Class Needs: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey activated four hunter education classes. Dazey also forwarded two new instructor applications to Olympia for background checks and sent out six instructor applicant packets to instructor applicants who had passed their background checks.

GOAL 4: SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Work Plans: District 12, 13, and 14, in concert with Manager Link, completed their draft of the 2016-2017 work plan.

Employee Training: Hunter Education Volunteer Coordinator Dazey completed the required Sexual Harassment and Ethics training. Dazey also took the Conflict Resolution and De-escalation training. Dazey also participated in a Volunteer Coordinator meeting with Volunteer Program manager Christine Redmond, Hunter Education Program manager Dave Whipple, and the new volunteer coordinators in Regions 3 and 6.

New Hunter Education Training: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey obtained a training site for a Pre-Service Training (PST) opportunity for new instructor applicants in King County. Dazey also started the Pre-Service Training (PST) for applicants in Snohomish County. Dazey held the first class room session of the PST at the Region 4 office in Mill Creek. The second, or practical, session is scheduled for March 14th and will be at the Boy Scout Camp Pigott where the applicants will be evaluated as they teach an actual class of hunter education students.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Columbian White-tailed Deer Translocation: Biologists Bergh and McDonald joined volunteers and staff from the USFWS to translocate deer from the Westport, OR area to Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. This is the third year of the effort to establish a viable population of these endangered deer at Ridgefield NWR. Trapping by drop-net occurs once per week and this week a doe, her female fawn, and a buck were captured at Westport. This brings the total deer translocated for the year to nineteen.

General Goose Surveys: Scientific Technician Johnson finished the General Goose Surveys for the month of February this week. These surveys are conducted once a month in various areas around Districts 9 and 10. This year the surveys focus more exclusively on accurate counts of the Dusky Canada goose. Surveyors also record any collars of duskies and other species seen. The purpose of these surveys is to observe Dusky Canada goose numbers as well as any collared waterfowl and record the information necessary for population estimation of the dusky and analysis of survival and movements of all collared geese. Areas where geese congregate in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties rounded out February's surveys, with both Dusky Canada and collared Cackling geese observed.

Pronghorn Antelope Survey: Biologist Anderson provided assistance with a coordinated aerial and ground pronghorn antelope survey in Region 3, 5, and on the Yakama Reservation. Prior to the aerial survey, landowner contacts were made, as well as ground surveys conducted to optimize the aerial transects. The two day survey was conducted to get the best current population estimate before pronghorn move to their summer ranges. Pronghorn antelope were seen in District 9 of eastern Klickitat County and the overall results of the survey will be reported later in March when both ground and aerial surveys are evaluated.

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

Wildlife Management

Wahkiakum County Waterfowl Hunting Access: An effort to secure additional waterfowl hunting access for the 2015 and 2016 seasons onto privately owned properties within the Columbia River Flyway in Wahkiakum County is currently underway. This effort is an attempt to expand the Private Lands program in this county to include additional access agreements for landowners that are interested in participating and may not otherwise consider providing access. Funding for cash incentives and materials for duck blind construction will come from the State Migratory Bird Stamp Grant, pending approval. A letter outlining the program was sent to landowners throughout the county, specifically those with property in the river valleys and other suitable areas for waterfowl. Included with the letter was a survey form containing questions

regarding bird use. It is intended to determine the level of interest landowners may have in this program.

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A Special Late Season Goose Hunt: One week remains in the 2015 Management Area 2A Special Late Goose Season, which ends on Saturday, March 7th, 2015. The purpose of this special late season hunt is to assist landowners in mitigating crop depredation due to geese. Since February 4th, sixty-one Master Hunters have assisted the properties in the program bi-weekly with the hazing of geese. Each of the eight properties enrolled in the program have experienced varying degrees of goose damage throughout the season, ranging from almost no damage to severe depredation.



Access

Vancouver Lake: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes met with Clark County Corrections for litter pick up. One hundred pounds of trash was collected and hauled away.

Modrow: As a follow-up to Conflict Specialist Conklin's response to beaver damage at the Modrow Access site, Access staff Spangler and Rhodes wrapped the cotton wood tree at Modrow Bridge with wire mesh to prevent any further beaver damage.

Wire mesh on cotton wood tree

Kress Lake: The restroom door was vandalized beyond repair over the weekend. It's thought the vandals used a steel bar to try to get the brass hinges off the door. They were unsuccessful in removing the hinges, but caused enough damage to the steel door and hinges that it was unrepairable. Access staff Spangler and Rhodes removed it and replaced it with a spare door they had saved from a restroom replacement project last summer.



Kress Lake Repair Work



Kalama River, Kress Lake, and Mineral Lake: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes Pressure washed restroom roofs and walls along Kalama River, Kress Lake, and Mineral Lake.



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

Wildlife Management

Hoof Disease: Wildlife Program Manager Jonker presented an update on results to date of the WDFW hoof disease diagnostic investigation and proposed management approach at a seminar for Western Washington Professional Foresters. There was a lot of interest in this complex issue and a good Q&A and discussion followed.

D-10 Wildlife Conflict

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin issued two kill permits to two land owners experiencing elk damage on crops. During a sight visit, Wildlife Specialist Conklin was asked to stop by a neighboring land owner's place. The landowner was experiencing elk damage to his cultured crop of Red Alder. Conklin attempted to find a main trail that the elk were utilizing in order to place an alarm on it to deter their presence. Unfortunately, the elk were coming in from numerous locations.



Elk damage to Red Alder

While assessing the damage to the Red Alder, Conklin also detected other damage to the trees. Something was eating the bark of the trees from ground level to approximately six inches up the tree.





In addition, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin was asked to come out to a farm in Onalaska to verify elk damage to the hay field. Conklin could see a very distinct area where the elk had grazed the property, as if part of the field was actually mowed.

Onalaska field

Geese: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin issued a bird banger and projectiles to a farmer experiencing heavy damage from geese. In addition, Conklin and Biologist Stephens had

been receiving numerous calls about a Canada goose at Lake Sacajawea that could possibly be sick, injured, or just domesticated. The goose was very friendly toward people and would not socialize with the flock of geese at the lake. The goose at one time was even captured by a citizen and taken to Ocean Beach Veterinarian Clinic to be assessed. Nothing was determined to be wrong with the goose so it was released back to the lake. Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to the lake to capture the goose. She was instantly greeted by the goose and a city employee who was working at the lake. The employee explained she had been protecting the goose from dogs and people who were harassing it. She assisted Conklin in capturing the goose. While attempting to capture the goose two other citizens contacted Conklin and were very protective about the goose. Once Conklin identified herself as a WDFW employee, the citizens also participated in the capture. One of the citizens said she is friends with the mayor and had called him regarding the goose after she felt she wasn't getting feedback from multiple



other agencies including the Humane Society, Longview Police, and WDFW..... She said she had to rescue the goose from juveniles who were trying to catch it to remove the metal band from its leg. She called the Longview Police to protect the goose. Conklin transferred the goose to a farm where the owner raises all species of birds and often takes in "troubled" birds. Conklin also talked to the Veterinarian that treated the goose to assure it was healthy.

Lake Sacajawea goose

D-9 Wildlife Conflict

Geese: Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald issued a launcher and bird bangers to a Clark County farmer experiencing goose damage on his grass hay fields. Several thousand geese visit the property, which is adjacent to a National Wildlife Refuge. The farmer allows goose hunting during the fall season, but lies outside the 2A late goose damage hunt boundaries.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Wildlife Management

Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology Conference: Biologist Bergh attended one day of the SNVB conference in Portland. The theme for the morning's plenary speakers was urban wildlife conservation with great ideas coming from Portland and Seattle, which could be applied to the Vancouver (Clark County) area. The afternoon session on ecology and conservation of northwest freshwater turtles included information and recent research on western pond turtles as well as work on the impacts of non-native turtles.

D-10 & MSHWA Winter Conditions

Past Weather: November temperatures and precipitation were both below normal. Light accumulations of snow fell on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area the last weekend of November and at the end of December. There has been no additional snowfall on the MSHWA since the first of the year. Temperatures for December were above normal with slightly less than average precipitation. The average temperature for the month of January was slightly above normal and precipitation for the month was below average. February temperatures have been above average.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will fluctuate between 2,500 to 4,500 feet during the upcoming week. The 6-10 day forecast is for normal temperatures and below normal precipitation and the 8-14 day forecast is for above normal temperatures and precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The March forecast is for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation, and the three month forecast is for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

Habitat: Forage is available at middle and lower elevations, with some green-up starting at the lower elevations.

Snow Depths: Lower elevations are currently snow free, with minimal depths at the middle and upper elevations. Snow pack in the region is only 10-20% of normal.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The third winter elk survey was conducted on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area on February 6th, with 79 elk being observed.

Animal Condition: Animals appear to be in good to fair condition

Mortality: No mortalities reported this past week

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.

The Public is reminded the portion of the Mount 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: Mild conditions continued in District 9 with warming temperatures. Mid-week rainfall resulted in new snow above 6000 feet improving drought condition slightly.

Winter Severity: The Klickitat Wildlife Area continues to have all areas open and available to wintering deer. There is no concern for the current severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County. The eastern portions of Klickitat County have had no snow accumulation this winter and deer are reported in good condition.

Habitat: Habitat is open and forage available below 5,000 feet in most of the south Cascades. The current snow pack in the south Cascades is extremely low and below 30% of normal. Noticeable green up is being seen at all elevations below snowline. Eastern Klickitat County ranchers report green up occurring on open range.

Animal Concentrations: Elk concentrations are being seen in western Klickitat County and deer are very active and moving with no snow or other weather conditions impacting behavior.

Animal Condition: Animals appear to be in good condition and numerous deer have been seen in the past week with healthy fawns.

Mortality: None documented this week.

Public Contacts: No concerns raised by the public this week.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Oregon Spotted Frog: Biologist Tirhi, citizen scientists Bonnie Blessing and Joanne Schuett-Hames, and staff from Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium completed a full survey sweep of the Fish Pond Creek Oregon Spotted Frog oviposition site in Thurston County. Eighty-one egg masses were located during the survey, including a new location on the eastern edge of the wetlands. All egg clusters were flagged and will be revisited at least once to determine hatch rates.

Biologist Tirhi reviewed and provided additions/corrections to the draft GIS layer of spotted frog known and potential Thurston County locations that will be used for land use permit review under the final Thurston County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). Consultants are finalizing this coverage and others for the eight species that will be included under the HCP response to federal listing.

Biologist Michaelis and Officer James conducted a survey for Oregon spotted frogs and their egg masses in the lower portion of the Black River. No frogs or egg masses were spotted, but they did observe a group of 35 wood ducks, an unexpectedly large number for this early in the season.

Great Blue Heron West Bay Heronry, Olympia: Biologist Tirhi provided the WDFW Habitat District Biologist with comments regarding an open land use building permit that has been re-applied next to an existing heronry in the City of Olympia. This heronry has been very controversial between the city, the landowner attempting to build, and the local public who have adopted this heronry. Recently, the heronry was purchased by a local conservationist. Tirhi and WDFW biologist Blatz provided the new owner with a history of activity at the heronry which she will be using to apply for County Public Benefits Rating System tax exclusion of the property. A building permit for townhouses was redesigned to reduce impacts to the heronry based on comments provided by Tirhi and the public in 2014. Tirhi has provided those comments once again to the WDFW Habitat Biologist who is reviewing the redesign permit application.

Canada goose tested positive for HPAI: Biologist Ament had sent a Canada goose that had been euthanized at a local vet clinic to the National Wildlife Health Center on Jan. 30th for a necropsy and AI testing. Agency Vet staff Rowan notified her that the bird had tested positive for HPAI. Further testing was going to be completed to determine the strain of the flu. Biologist Ament spoke with the local vet staff and provided them with a copy of the NWHC report. The woman who brought the bird to the clinic was previously informed to notify WDFW staff if she observed any other sick birds at the wetland site along Discovery Bay.

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

Wildlife Management

Elk Hoof Disease: Biologist Tirhi and USFWS Refuge Biologist Marian Bailey confirmed elk with noticeable limps suggestive of elk hoof disease in a sub-herd that frequents the Black River Refuge, Thurston County. Both got good visual confirmation of the following with limps: one cow, two branched bulls, two calves, and one spike. Bailey was also able to video limping behavior using her smartphone. Tirhi has provided the video clips to WDFW veterinarian Mansfield and Elk Hoof Disease Project lead George and is awaiting instructions on response, if any.

While still covering calls from his former Conflict Specialist position, Biologist Novack responded to a Thurston County landowner's request for an elk damage permit. Advice was provided. Reportedly over 100 elk, including many that are limping, have found security on a nearby dairy farm that is now part of the Black River Unit of the USFWS Nisqually Wildlife

Refuge. Currently, there is no public access allowed to this unit of the refuge. This is the same group of animals reported in Biologist Tirhi's report.

Biologist Harris continued to work with landholders on access for the prevalence survey effort.

Deer and Elk Harvest Data Review

Biologist Novack conducted an initial review of raw numbers for deer and elk harvest in the district. Results appear to concur with historic numbers for most types of tags. The new damage tags revealed some obvious discrepancies between the tag reports and the reports obtained by Conflict Staff and maintained separately on the SharePoint website.

Below is a table summarizing the reports for each region of Landowner Damage Prevention Permit harvest prior to 1/4/15. Novack compared those reports listed on the Wildlife Conflict Program's SharePoint sites with the Raw Hunter reports from our recently created Damage Tag under which LDPP permit harvest should've been reported. Generally, more harvest is recorded onto the SharePoint site than is reported through the damage tag. Some discrepancies may be resolved after the March 31st end date for tags and LDPP permits usage.

	SharePoint Reports of LDPP harvest prior to 1/4/2015		Damage Tag reports prior to 1/4/15	
	Elk	Deer	Elk	Deer
Region 6	13	1	7	0
Region 5	14	1	9	0
Region 4	4	3	3	2
Region 3	90	11	60	10
Region 2	5	0	0	3
Region 1	3	41	17	160
Totals	139	57	96	175

Table: Damage Tag/LDPP Harvest Data Review 2014

Notes

- SharePoint reports without a specific harvest date were excluded
- SharePoint permits described as KP-LDPP or some variant were excluded
- 1/04/15 was the last day of reported harvest prior to what I believe was the cutoff date for the damage tag harvest data

Black-Tailed Deer Mortality Study

Vail Tree Farm Deer: Biologist Tirhi responded to two separate mortality events last week of radio-collared does at our Vail study site. District 11 staff and Research Scientist Rice (who leads the project) had previously radio collared eleven does as part of this western Washington study. Both mortalities this week were caused by cougar predation in classic fashion: gut entered, vital organs consumed first, puncture wounds representative of cougar on neck, hair line

loss along back of neck, fully cached remains, and clean kill site. The last also had a faint remnant of a track. Interestingly, the two mortalities occurred within several hundred feet of each other in the matter of 24-48 hrs. Each doe had been using a clear-cut hillside on either side of a logging road and were predated when they entered a wooded glen next to the road that contains a small creek.



Cached remains of first collared deer doe, Vail Tree Farm, Thurston County

Pysht Deer: Five new does (with Vectronic collars), four 2014 fawns, one yearling doe (collared as a 2013 fawn), and one doe (collared as a 2012 fawn) continue to be monitored in the Pysht cluster. A signal from a fifth 2014 fawn has not been heard since June 30th. There were no Separation Events for the past week. Collars from five does that were captured in 2013 were programmed to “drop-off” on Feb. 10th and 11th. Text messages were received that the collars had eagle dropped off. Four of the collars were collected. There were no known collared deer mortalities for the week of Feb. 22nd – Feb. 28th.



Cached remains of a second collared deer doe, Vail Tree Farm, Thurston County

Capitol Forest Deer: Biologist Michaelis investigated an adult doe mortality in the Capitol Forest cluster. Indications were that the animal had died naturally with no interference from humans. Michaelis also assisted research Scientist Rice in night ground darting. They darted two and one was equipped with a radio collar.

Willapa Geese: Five years of goose data for three specific locations in Pacific County were compiled and tabulated after receiving a request from the Shoalwater Bay Tribal Environmental Department. The tribe is interested in the data to demonstrate waterfowl usage on these specific land locations which were recently acquired by the Tribe.

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

Wildlife Areas

Wildlife area staff took advantage of the good weather and brush and cleaned the ditches on the access road to the Pinkney Unit part of the Olympic Wildlife Area. Some 1500 feet goes through a ten to twelve year old clear cut that had grown over. Limbs were pruned off the trees to daylight the road and make it passable.

Staff brushed and cleaned the ADA trail and waterfowl blind at the Chehalis Wildlife Area. High water and winter storms had left the walkway covered with debris and branches.



Wildlife Conflict

Cougar Complaint: Biologist Harris deployed Biologist Sundstrom and Technician Capelli to a reported cougar depredation of a deer in Willapa Valley. This was reported on a farm with cows currently calving and in an area where it has been reported by several locals that the WDFW introduced cougars to address the limping elk problem. No cougar kill site was located and no sign found. After further questioning, the RP stated that they were about 100 yards away when they thought they had seen the dead deer and chose not to approach. Staff continues to inform landowners that the WDFW is not relocating cougars.

Hunting Season Changes: Biologist Harris received the following letter from the Long Beach Cranberry Growers Association supporting changes to hunting seasons in GMU 684.

Long Beach Cranberry Growers Assn.

P.O. Box 384
Long Beach, Washington 98631

Phone 360-642-2563 • Fax 360-642-8301

Washington Department of
Fish and Wildlife
Attn: Scott M. Harris
48 Devonshire Rd.
Montesano, WA 98563

February 24, 2015

Dear Mr. Harris,

Thank you for your help this past year. The Long Beach Cranberry Growers appreciate the attention given to the issue of big game property damage. Cranberry bogs are particularly vulnerable to damage by the roaming herds of deer and elk. The damage problems seem to increase every year. The Long Beach Cranberry growers, as a group, solidly support ALL of the new big game hunting proposals that WDFW has proposed for the next three years on the Long Beach Peninsula (Unit 684).

We would suggest that the twenty antlerless elk permits proposed, be effective with the opening day of the modern rifle season and run the entire modern rifle elk season in Unit 684. Thank you for your continued support.

Regards,


FRANK O. GLENN, IV, CHAIRMAN

Long Beach Cranberry Growers Association
PO Box 384
Long Beach, WA 98631