

# Wildlife Program

Week of November 3-9, 2014

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Yellow-billed Cuckoos:** Biologist Wiles spent most of the week working on a new periodic status review for the species. This report will summarize available information on the biology, population status, and threats of the western DPS of cuckoos, with emphasis on Washington. This species probably hasn't bred in the state since about 1940, but continues to occur as an extremely rare migrant. The western DPS was recently listed as federally threatened, which is the impetus for this state review.

**Draft USFWS Prelisting Mitigation Policy:** Division Manager Eric Gardner collated agency comments on the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS's) *Draft policy on crediting voluntary conservation actions taken for species prior to their listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)*. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) sees the finalization of such a policy as providing important conservation benefits, especially if the State program is designed to track priority actions and is adequately supported. The policy should result in increased support for and implementation of conservation actions that support State management objectives, which is a highly desirable goal. Despite overall support for such a policy, WDFW is concerned that the State does not currently have the resources to develop and maintain a full program. Among other things, WDFW encouraged the USFWS to provide clarity regarding how state programs are approved and what the state's role would be in determining mitigation rates.

**Sage-grouse:** Biologist Stinson and Listing and Recovery Section lead Becker, along with staff from Regions 1, 2, and 3, attended the annual Sage-grouse Working Group meeting at the Wild Horse conference center near Ellensburg on November 5<sup>th</sup>. The meeting was well attended, with a full agenda of updates from regions and partner agencies, as well as briefs about Farm Bill programs, the Sage-grouse Initiative, and a Candidate Conservation Agreement under development.

**Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse:** Biologist Stinson and Listing and Recovery Section lead Becker, along with staff from Regions 1 and 2, attended the annual Sharp-tailed Grouse Working Group meeting at the Wild Horse conference center near Ellensburg on November 5<sup>th</sup>. The meeting was well attended, with a full agenda of updates from regions and partner agencies, as well as briefs about Farm Bill programs and habitat restoration projects underway.

**Wildlife Action Plan:** Wendy Connally met with Lynn Helbrecht and agreed to contribute a section to the SWAP framework related to Diversity's Citizen Science efforts. They also discussed others in WDFW who are also employing this tool. A section of the SWAP may address WDFW's initiatives in Citizen Science to meet certain data needs for SGCN conservation following the range and HUC analyses.

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

**WildWatch Cams:** Wendy Connally met with Chris Sato over the WildWatch Cam activities spreadsheet to discuss information gaps, set up a site visit with Greg Falxa to two cam sites needing repair, and identified a few other information gaps which will need to be addressed – partners, agreements, budget, maintenance/repair time, data contracts per camera, equipment needs – before we start a strategic plan process to improve the WildWatch Cam activities.

**REGION 1**

***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Wildlife Management**

**District 3 Wolf Activity:** Radio-collared wolf OR-15 remained in Washington during the week. District biologists spent a day in the Blue Mountains south of Dayton placing remotely activated cameras. A lot of ground that has recently had wolf reports on it was covered without seeing any sign, although recent rains could have obscured tracks. District Biologist Wik also radio-tracked in on OR-15 and was able to get within 0.25-0.5 mile without obtaining a visual.

***DB Wik radio-tracked a collared wolf to the area off the end of this ridge. Time ran out prior to being able to get a visual.***



**Wildlife Areas**

**WBLS RMAP Work Follow Up:** Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer spent two days this week at the West Branch Little Spokane WLA. Palmer checked on recently completed Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan work and reseeded disturbed areas as needed to suppress weed establishment. Palmer also installed some new “Property Boundary” and “Safety Zone” signs, as well as removed other confusing or redundant signs.

***An undersized culvert was removed from under 15 feet of fill along this abandoned road***



**Chief Joseph WA – 4-O Lands Check:** Biologist Woodall spent a day at the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area. He looked for any stray cows that may have wandered off the USFS lands and found none. He also looked for a sizeable patch of goat grass that would be suitable for bacterial suppression trials to be conducted with Range Ecologist Merg later this month. What he found should be adequate. It is a site past the McNeill buildings and away from any of the fields where the 4-O Ranch staff will be working. We want to avoid any herbicide spray drift onto the bacteria site. The site is also away from WDFW’s herbicide control efforts.

***A herd of elk at the McNeill Place (4-O Ranch Wildlife Area)***

***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**

**Pomeroy Deer:** Conflict Specialist Rasley and Natural Resource Worker (NRW) Wade were able to assist six hunters in Pomeroy with the harvesting of six problem deer. Staff met with the Mayor and he said “everyone is happy with our hard work”.

**Cultural Resource Check:** Biologist Lewis and the Whitman County Conservation District Manager assisted a Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Archeologist with a cultural resource investigation at a project site in the Hooper area of Whitman County. The site is a project that is in an area where there have been a significant amount of deer and vehicle collisions along HWY 27. There was also a fatality this past summer due to a driver swerving to dodge a deer.

The deer are coming out of the highlands to a water source and having to cross the highway to get to the water in the hot, dry summer months. Lewis is working with landowners and the Whitman CD to come up with watering options in the highlands to reduce the amount of deer coming down and crossing the highway.

The area also has a documented Native American bison kill site, where natives would process harvested bison and deer. During the investigation a hunt site was discovered with many flint chips and bone fragments. The Archeologist figured the area, which was up on a high ridge overlooking a very large area, was a site used to prep for the hunts and observe animals.

***WDFW partners looking for cultural resources***



## **REGION 2**

**WOLVES:** Nothing to report.

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Bighorn Sheep Management:** Due to a hunter reporting hearing coughing coming from Bighorn sheep within the Mt Hull herd biologist Heinlen continued to monitor the herd. No coughing, lethargic animals, or carcasses were seen among the 40-50 sheep observed in close proximity this week, and all sheep observed were found to be acting normally. Bighorn sheep from the Mt Hull herd were also reported on State Highway 97 just south of Oroville during this period. The sheep had not previously come down to the highway this year, but the mild fall weather has produced abundant green-up at lower elevations which is succulent forage for the animals. Monitoring efforts of both herd health and highway proximity will continue.

***Mt Hull Bighorn sheep herd*** – Photo by J. Heinlen



#### **Wildlife Areas**

##### **Carlton Complex Fire - Post-fire**

##### **Restoration and FEMA:** Ops Manager

Swedberg continues to spend time on post-fire and FEMA issues. All preliminary information has been submitted so Emergency Management Division can begin writing the Project Work Sheets, which FEMA will review

and 1) deny, 2) ask for more information, or 3) approve. Projects are divided into large, i.e., costs >\$120,000, and small, i.e., costs < \$120,000. If approved, the next phase is to begin the process of purchasing and/or contract developing to implement projects.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Mule Deer Surveys:** Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei conducted the aerial mule deer survey over the Desert unit (GMU 290). 280 deer were classified resulting in a preliminary herd composition ratio of 43B:100D:46F. 56% of bucks observed were classified as mature. Data will be double-checked for accuracy next week.



*Desert Mule Deer buck* – Photo by O. Duvuvuei



*Desert Mule Deer buck in velvet during our November survey* – Photo by R. Finger

**Recreational Opportunities (Weekender):** Fall migration is underway, making for some of the most exciting mallard hunts on the Columbia Plateau. Newly arriving mallards typically decoy well and in large groups. Large numbers of mallards were observed in the Desert and Potholes units of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area during the Desert unit deer survey. Numbers will steadily increase until around Thanksgiving, at which time migrant mallards typically reach their peak numbers. The mild, wet conditions are thus far conducive to a great waterfowl season.

*Ducks lifting off of North Potholes Reserve during Desert Mule Deer Survey* – Photo by R. Finger



**REGION 3**

NO HIGHLIGHTS THIS WEEK

**REGION 4**

**GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE**

**Wildlife Management**

**Common Loons:** Biologists Anderson and Smith winterized all the loon platforms that WDFW manages in District 12. More on the management of this State Sensitive species can be found here: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/00341/> and <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/loons/>

*Bio Chris Anderson getting ready to put a platform up on shore so it doesn't get destroyed with winter ice and winds*



**Lowland Pika Project Report:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra and District Biologist Milner surveyed all three known activity sites for Pika. They also collected vegetation samples and documented vegetation presence and cover. Additionally, they surveyed a talus slope at a higher elevation near the ridge top. No pikas were observed but portions of the talus appeared to provide appropriate habitat.

*Biologist Milner negotiating a slope after assessing talus for pika presence and habitat suitability*



### **Winter Aerial Surveys**

**Detection Study:** Discussions continue with Marine Waterfowl Specialist Evenson and Asst. District Biologist Murphie concerning timing and scheduling of USFWS funded detectability surveys this winter. These surveys would be an extension of our earlier detectability surveys, this time utilizing the USFWS Kodiak aircraft. This turbine aircraft is used by the USFWS for winter waterfowl surveys, similar to the WDFW surveys performed utilizing a piston-powered DeHavilland Beaver. These surveys, utilizing photographic methods pioneered by Specialist Evenson, will be used to create a correction factor for the type of aircraft used, as the noise footprint of the turbine is much less than a comparable piston aircraft and detectability of waterfowl would likely be significantly different. Additional staff time was spent reviewing online training courses required to fly in the USFWS aircraft.



*DeHavilland Beaver used for WDFW winter marine waterfowl surveys*



*Quest amphibious Kodiak used by the USFWS for aerial wildlife surveys*

*Biologists DeBruyn and Yarborough and a biologist from the National Park Service put up 13 motion sensitive cameras in The Ross lake Recreation Area in northeast Whatcom County to monitor trails for the presence of wolves. This is the fourth year of the project and so far four images of single wolves have been recorded.*



### Wildlife Areas

**Terrell Creek Stream School Tour:** Manager Kessler met onsite with the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association, which led a day of school tours of Terrell Creek and the Lake Terrell dam. The school kids performed water flow and water quality measurements in the creek.

**Terrell Creek Water Flows:** Manager Kessler worked to keep water flowing in Terrell Creek for coho salmon. He opened the dam bypass water valve and allowed water to get adequate flow into the creek. After the heavy rains, the water levels of Lake Terrell rose enough that water was flowing out to keep Terrell Creek charged without using the bypass valve.

*Manager Kessler worked with Dave Heimer, our statewide weed coordinator, on a Dept. of Ecology invasive weed grant to begin work on controlling Eurasian milfoil that has become established in Lake Terrell. The grant will be used to write a vegetation management plan for Lake Terrell which will help secure further grant money for milfoil control efforts.*



**Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project:** Regional Wildlife and Habitat Program staff attended a meeting where Pacific Northwest National Laboratories (PNNL) presented results of the hydrodynamic model run for the six design alternatives at Leque Island and two design alternatives at the adjacent Stillaguamish Tribe site. PNNL is currently compiling the results in a report that will be completed by mid-December. Once completed, the report will be posted on the project webpage and WDFW will meet with the Stakeholder Committee in January to discuss the results.

**Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP):** Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, and RD Everitt attended a Public Open House on November 5<sup>th</sup> at Burlington City Hall, along with staff from Olympia and the Army Corps of Engineers. Approximately 75 people attended the event and several took advantage of the opportunity to discuss PSNERP with staff and provided public comments on the project. A public comment period associated with National Environmental Policy Act requirements is currently open and will close on November 24<sup>th</sup>. More information on this process, the documents under review, and how to comment is available at: <http://pugetsoundnearshore.org/outreach.html>.

*Approximately 75 people attended a public open house hosted by the Army Corps of Engineers and WDFW to learn about and provide comments on the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP)*



### **Barnaby Slough Floodplain**

#### **Reconnection Project:**

Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, and staff from the Fish and Habitat Programs met with Skagit River Systems Cooperative (SRSC) and Seattle City Light to discuss modeling

results for several design options under consideration that involve improving floodplain habitat in the Barnaby Slough vicinity on the Skagit River. Each design option involves a varying degree of reconnecting the floodplain with the river. WDFW and adjacent landowners will select the preferred alternative design within the next few months.

**Nooksack Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw, PSNERP Manager Theresa Mitchell, Wildlife Area Manager Kessler, and Habitat Biologist Ingram met with Whatcom County and Nooksack Tribe staff to discuss planning efforts for habitat restoration along the lower Nooksack River. One of the eleven PSNERP projects involves restoration in the area, and the County and other local restoration groups are also considering several projects. This meeting was a chance to coordinate the PSNERP and County efforts.

**Cherry Valley Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that much of the unit is under water from the recent rains we received. Some of the pheasants that would normally be released at the unit are going to the Stillwater and Crescent Lake units where drier conditions exist. Manager Boehm also responded to a request from Washington State DOT to have a number of tall trees near State HWY 203 removed, as they are concerned that the trees will fall onto the highway. Arborists from two local tree removal services visited the site to prepare estimates.

***Cherry Valley Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area, November 11, 2006***

**Spencer Island Unit:** The Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager met with two master hunter volunteers and a local Boy Scout to discuss an Eagle Scout project on the unit. The project will dismantle an existing duck blind that has been used as a homeless shelter, dumpster, and honey-bucket over the past few years. Usable lumber will be used to repair a nearby boardwalk and construct benches that duck hunters can use while hunting. Garbage and debris will be removed from the site as well.



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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Waterfowl Program:** Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resource Tech Cosgrove checked and posted Game Reserve signs on the bayfront dike at the Fir Island Farms Reserve, posted Game Reserve signs along Francis Road at the Johnson/Debay's Slough Reserve, and placed three orange buoys across the channel of Deepwater Slough to better mark the boundary of the Skagit Estuary Game Reserve. Cosgrove checked the hunt field at the Johnson/Debay's Slough Reserve. Ducks have not begun to feed on barley or corn. Cosgrove monitored field conditions at the Leque Island unit. Small areas of barley and millet appear to have been fed on by ducks. Cosgrove monitored water levels and field conditions on the Samish unit. Ducks have been feeding at night for at least the past week. An evening observation on Wednesday showed tens of thousands of ducks coming in to the unit to feed. Cosgrove also observed a large flight of snow geese moving from the Samish Flats to Padilla Bay to roost for the night. Cosgrove monitored water conditions on the Island unit. Rain, increased river levels, and high tides have inundated all lower field areas on the Island. Ducks have yet to begin feeding at night in any great numbers.

*Snow Geese continue to arrive in large numbers on Fir Island* – Photo by Kim Chandler



**Pheasant Hunting Season:** Manager Kessler and volunteers released a total of 420 pheasants throughout the week. Volunteers performed the releases on the Lake Terrell and Intalco release sites, while Manager Kessler performed the releases on the British Petroleum unit using an ATV.

**Tennant Lake Boardwalk Renovation Project:** We have now secured the last permit for the Tennant Lake boardwalk renovation project. This RCO funded project will renovate the Tennant Lake raised wood boardwalk to make one section wheelchair accessible, and raise sections of the loop trail to keep it from flooding in the winter and spring. Our CAMP workers would like to start the project now, but due to the recent rising water levels, this may not be possible. The work may need to be postponed until next spring.

**Intalco Unit Oil Pipeline Repair Work:** Manager Kessler met onsite and coordinated with oil pipeline workers repairing a section of oil pipeline that runs through the Intalco unit. Kessler made and posted signs to warn hunters of the work, and to avoid the pipeline repair area. No problems occurred.

### **Private Lands/Access Management**

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site Preparation and Establishment:** Technicians Otto and Deyo built, staged, and set up hunting blinds at sites across Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom Counties. They also posted parking lot posts/signs/survey boxes and surveyed all enrolled sites in Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom Counties for access/harvest conditions. Biologist Caldwell also submitted several Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites for approval. These sites should be huntable in the upcoming weeks. Biologist Caldwell met with a landowner to sign a Waterfowl Quality Hunt contract. This landowner contacted Biologist Caldwell about 20 acres of unharvested corn in the Conway area. Two Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites will be established at this location. Each hunting site will be enrolled in the Hunt by Reservation system. These sites should provide excellent hunting opportunities in 2014-2015.

**Pheasant Management:** Technicians Otto and Deyo checked parking lot conditions on Private Lands Access pheasant release sites. Biologist Caldwell received a message from concerned hunters about hunting issues at pheasant release sites on Whidbey Island. Biologist Caldwell coordinated with District Law Enforcement staff to monitor particular areas where hunting concerns were reported.

*Access staff removed a dumped boat from the Fazon Lake access site in Whatcom County*

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



### **Wildlife Management**

**Region 4 2014 Hunts:** Biologists continued to respond to multiple members of the hunting community inquiring about prospective hunting areas, regulations, GoHunt interactive mapping, and prospects for the upcoming hunting seasons. Answers to many common hunt questions are found at the WDFW Hunting website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Island Unit:** Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resource Tech Cosgrove compiles information to update the farm plan for the Island unit to include material costs and staff time associated with planting process. Meis and Cosgrove assisted with a ferry operation to remove an excavator off the Island unit.

**Skagit Headquarters:** Manager Rotton performed administrative duties, including lease renewal planning, updated budget tracking and planning, vendor payment, and monthly administrative reports.

Cosgrove graded the entrance road and parking area at the Headquarters unit. Meis and Cosgrove fashioned a new sheer log (trash rack) out of a cedar log and placed it at the Wiley Slough tide gates. Meis and Cosgrove removed additional tree debris on the spur dike trail at the Headquarters unit following the last wind storm. Meis cut down alder seedlings around the boat launch parking lot area to maintain the dike structure.

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area:** Manager Brian Boehm continues to coordinate with WDFW Master Hunters and citizen volunteers to provide a pheasant release team. Manager Boehm states that coordinating efforts with Steve Dazey, the Region 4 Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordinator, has been a huge success. Manager Boehm also reports that the new John Deere tractor is scheduled for delivery this coming week.

### **Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination**

**Hunter Education support:** Hunter Education Coordinator Steven Dazey sent out new applicant packets to six hunter education instructor applicants and forwarded two new applications to Olympia. Coordinator Dazey also arranged for an instructor to return a surplus set

of orange training firearms so that they can be issued to a team needing them. The Chief Instructor teaching in Burlington was in need of instructors to assist him on an upcoming class. Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey helped him find other instructors in the Burlington area that could assist him at his upcoming class.

**Master Hunter Permit Program:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey forwarded the News Release announcing the recruiting process for the Master Hunter Advisory Group to Region 4 active master hunters. This should insure that the Department receives a number of applications from qualified master hunters who would add to the advisory group.

**Boy Scout Troop Seeks an Opportunity to Provide Service to WDFW:** Volunteer coordinator Dazey assisted a Boy Scout troop that had expressed interest in doing a service project for WDFW to find service work that will benefit WDFW. Word was put out to department personnel and the troop was presented with two options that fit their abilities and desires.

**Instructor Questions on Effects of Recent Legislation on Hunter Education:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey fielded questions on the effects that recent legislation may have on hunter education. As the possible effects are still being researched, coordinator Dazey advised the instructors to check the hunter education website regularly for information as it becomes available.

**Inactive Instructor Notifications:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey arranged to have notices sent to instructors that have not taught a class in 2014 informing them that they were in danger of being decertified as hunter education instructors. The decertification process requires that notices are sent to inactive instructors in April and again at the end of October for the instructors who still have not been active in 2014 advising them of their possible decertification.

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

**Safety Equipment:** Biologist Caldwell met with a local Department of Transportation (DOT) certified helmet dealer in Skagit County to purchase and pick up staff approved helmets for field use.

**Wildlife Conflict Training:** Biologist Caldwell attended Wildlife Conflict training in Ellensburg, WA.

**Swan Technician Interviews:** Biologist Caldwell and Debruyn interviewed candidates for the Swan Technician position out of Region 4.

**Private Lands Biologist Position Description and Submission to HR:** Biologist Caldwell submitted paperwork to the Human Resources Department for a Private Lands Biologist position out of the La Conner, WA Field Office.

**Aerial Survey Safety Module:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra audited an aircraft emergency egress and emergency breathing device training in Langley, BC. Marine Waterfowl Specialist Evenson and Assistant District Biologist Murphie participated in the class. After the class, we met with the trainers to discuss options for utilizing their training facilities and instructors as a core part of an upcoming safety training module for staff on overwater survey safety, ditching, and emergency egress training. Biologists Evenson and Cyra continue to work on the format and outline of the training.

***Biologists Murphie and Evenson is cockpit simulator during emergency egress training***

Region 4 Access staff also attended a three day Weed Conference in Wenatchee to get information on new herbicides and receive recertification credits for their state applicator licenses.



Access staff spent the first days of the week closing down the seasonal lowland lake sites in Region 4.

## **REGION 5**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Wild Horse Update - Klickitat County:** District Biologist Anderson and Conflict Specialist McDonald have been investigating reports of wild horses from the Yakama Reservation being seen by hunters and local residents in eastern Klickitat County. Conflict Specialist McDonald verified horse presence in an area northwest of Bickleton on private lands adjacent to state DNR and the Yakama Reservation ownership. District Biologist Anderson researched landownership and was able to talk to two different landowners in the area that provided additional information on wild horse use. Interviews with one landowner indicated that wild horses first started to show up in that area in 2012 and again in 2013, using meadows and springs. This summer, up to four different groups of wild horses totaling 15-20 animals were seen in the same area. Reports are that fences are not being maintained on the boundary of private land and the Yakama Reservation, and that areas where horses are being seen are severely degraded from

overgrazing. This is a disturbing trend as we are concerned about potential impacts to local deer herds from lack of forage.

**Pikas and Climate:** Biologist Bergh and Habitat Program Biologist Fornes replaced the temperature and relative humidity sensors at four talus slope sites near Stevenson/Beacon Rock. These sensors are part of a research project by USGS staff Beever to learn more about pikas in the Columbia River gorge. He is looking at potential pika habitat (talus) to determine occupancy, factors that affect occupancy, density of pikas, relatedness of pikas throughout the gorge, and also variation in temperature and relative humidity spatially throughout the gorge and throughout the year. More on his research can be found here:

<http://www.nrmssc.usgs.gov/staff/beever/research>. The weather was rainy and no pikas were observed, however several haypiles (pika food stores for the winter) were found in the talus.

*Haypiles (pika food stores for the winter)*

### Wildlife Areas

#### Klickitat Wildlife Area

**Seasonal Road Closures:** Four road gates on the Soda Springs Unit were closed this week to implement seasonal road closures. The gates are located on Old Headquarters Road, Anderson Road, South Breaks Road, and Sheep Canyon Road. These closures protect primitive roads from damage while soil conditions are soft, help limit disturbance to wildlife during the winter, and support better public safety by restricting vehicle access to very steep, often icy-surfaced roads. Three of the gates will be re-opened April 14, 2015. One gate will be opened when soil in that area has firmed up in spring 2015.



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

### Wildlife Management

**Elk Season:** District Biologist Anderson reports elk harvest in the Trout Lake area to be up from the previous year. A total of 22 elk have been reported, of which 16 were harvested in 560 (Lewis River), 1 in 578 (West Klickitat), 4 in 572 (Siouxon), and 1 in 574 (Wind River), with several days left in the season. Of the 22 reports, three were six-point bulls and the rest were evenly distributed between three-points and five-points. All reports were of bulls with no cow harvest reported. Hunting conditions have been favorable most of the week, although snow levels remain high, with elk widely distributed.

**Goose Management Area 2A Goose Season Training:** Training was held this week for staff involved in Goose Management Area 2A. Presentations and training exercises were given by Waterfowl Section Manager Kraege and Officer Moats, as well as by Biologists Bergh, Holman, and Doorly. The training featured sections on goose management within the Pacific Flyway, regulations, check station procedures, law enforcement, and goose identification, and ended with a practicum on check station procedures and goose identification. In addition, the training was attended by various other WDFW biologists and technicians, as well as a volunteer from Ridgefield NWR. The special regulations and check station requirements for Area 2A (and 2B) are in place cooperatively with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the states of Washington, Oregon, and Alaska, as well as British Columbia, Canada, and are designed to protect populations of the Dusky Canada goose.

**Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt:** The 2014-2015 SW Washington goose hunting season began this past weekend, November 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. During the weekend, a total of 136 geese were harvested by 60 hunters, at a ratio of about 2.3 geese per hunter. At the moment, all zones remain open for Management Area 2A. A total of 80 duskies are distributed amongst five zones in Management Area 2A and 2B. Zones may close to hunting geese if dusky quotas are exceeded. For information regarding up-to-date zone closures, hunters can call the WDFW Region 5 office at (360) 696-6211 and follow the menu options for hunting and waterfowl. Hunters interested in participating in this season can refer to pages 3, 6-7 and 9-10 of the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons pamphlet for further details regarding requirements for participation. The pamphlet is available online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>.

As a reminder for those planning on participating, Management Area 2A hunts take place on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The season will extend from November 8<sup>th</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup> and December 10<sup>th</sup> through January 25<sup>th</sup>. Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge differs in season lengths and authorized hunt days. It will also require a reservation to participate. Please refer to the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge website for more information.

Hunters should record their harvest on harvest cards in the field and bring all geese, fully feathered and intact, to a check station between the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Hunters are required to bring all harvested geese to a check station. Locations for these stations can be found on page 9 of the waterfowl pamphlet. WDFW is aware of the difficulties associated with this season and is grateful to hunters for their continued cooperation while we attempt to recover a declining subspecies. WDFW would like to say thank you and acknowledge the hard work of the technicians, volunteers, biologists, officers, and hunters who participated in this year's season opener and strived to get it off to a successful start.

## Wildlife Areas

### Klickitat Wildlife Area

**Pheasant Release:** Pheasants were released at all three sites in Klickitat County this week. Manager Van Leuven, Assistant District Biologist Bergh, and volunteers D. and R. Wheelhouse participated in transporting the birds to the release sites. Fifty birds were placed at the Hatchery Unit site, thirty-two were released at the Gun Club property, and fourteen were released at the Finn Ridge Road site.



### *Biologist Bergh at the Finn Ridge Road Release*

## Private Lands/Access

### **Public Access:** Wildlife Conflict

Specialist McDonald patrolled Hancock Timberlands in GMU 578 for the opening of modern firearm elk season. Hancock Timberlands has a Feel Free to Hunt agreement with WDFW. Fifty -seven vehicles were observed on their property. Handouts with maps and rules for hunting on the private property were passed out to hunters and left on vehicle windshields. WDFW thanks Hancock Timberlands for their continued participation with private lands hunting access.

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

## Wildlife Areas

### Klickitat Wildlife Area

**Road Repair:** Two road repair jobs were undertaken this week. Old Headquarters Road, one of the major roads on the Soda Springs Unit, had developed very deep ruts due to erosion and vehicle use while soils are soft. Fill material (dirt and rocks cleaned from ditches along the Glenwood Highway and dumped by County Road Maintenance crews near the KWA Office) was loaded into the flatbed truck and hauled out to the site, to be distributed using one of the KWA tractors. The repaired section of road also now has a water diversion dip to stop further erosion. Next spring, road rock will be placed on this spot by the WDFW Road Maintenance crew to improve the surface. A road used for farming access also needed fill material added to deep ruts. This road is for management use only, however the soil is soft there during the time access is needed; therefore, dirt and rock fill were added to the worst problem spots.



*Old Headquarters Road Before*



*Old Headquarters Road After*

### **Wildlife Conflict**

**Access to Hunt:** Conflict Specialist Conklin assisted hunters seeking more information on both the Boistfort and Grays River hunts. She provided specific property owner contact information for the hunters.

***GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.***



*Ag Lease Road*

### **Wildlife Management**

**ArcGIS Training:** Biologists Stephens and George attended an intermediate ArcGIS training this week. The three day class was conducted through the King County Information and Technology Services Department and addressed many functions of the ArcGIS mapping software. Topics included data management through GIS, geoprocessing of information, editing map data, and building a geodatabase. The knowledge gained during this training will be very useful in the development of current and future regional wildlife program projects and in creating map products useful to the public.

## **REGION 6**

***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE***

### **Wildlife Management**

**Streaked Horned Lark Working Group Meeting:** Biologists Linders and Tirhi attended the two day SHLA working group meeting in Portland along with headquarters staff. Similar to the gopher meeting, status updates were provided on a variety of research and conservation projects,

as well as other efforts. The meeting was attended by a broad group of stakeholders, managers, and researchers from both Oregon and Washington. One full day was dedicated to updates and a second day to action planning. This is needed because of the larger geographic range and the greater complexity of conditions in which larks occur between the various regions. Biologist Linders collated the 2014 data and graphed raw numbers from 2010-2014 as part of the 2014 survey update.

**Streaked Horned Larks and Airport Management:** Biologist Tirhi met with USFWS, FAA, and Olympia Airport to discuss this past lark season and surveys, future management of District 11 airports containing larks, specific management of airshows taking place on lark breeding grounds, and the 5-year Olympia Airport Plan. Tirhi suggested all requests for WDFW to engage in surveys be made thru Wildlife Program management. Tirhi felt progress was made on discussing impacts of airshows on larks and mitigation measures, including moving airshows to outside the nesting season. Tirhi is in email discussion with the FAA Airshows Manager to determine if there are other PNW airshows in late August/September that are successful and can provide information. The parties also came to an understanding that airport projects should mitigate direct habitat impacts (e.g. conversion) as well as indirect impacts (staging equipment, human/noise presence and proximity, etc) and that these would more quickly get approval thru all agencies. The next step is for Tirhi to set the date for the next Airports Federal Lands and Streaked Horned Larks Working Group meeting, likely in December.

**Mazama Pocket Gopher Working Group Meeting:** Biologists Linders, Tirhi, and Schmidt attended the annual MPG working group meeting last week. The working group is comprised of state and federal agencies, NGOs, city and county jurisdictions, and survey consultants. The morning session was devoted to providing status updates on a variety of research and conservation projects as well as other efforts that will contribute to recovery. The afternoon session was attended by a smaller contingent and was focused on updating and prioritizing the action plan. Tirhi made a presentation on a current SWGs project focused on working with landowners to enhance the habitat for gophers in set asides they currently have on their property.

***Example of Mazama pocket gopher set aside on private property (McKenna Meadows)***



**Fisher Survey Project:** Biologist McMillan processed the survey form & data (photos and hair samples) so they can to be submitted to Olympic National Park Biologist Dr. Patti Happe.



***H513 Station 1 Raven & Buck***

District 15 biologists pulled the last trail cams and hair traps from three fisher hexagons for 2014. The survey involved a total of nine sites with three visits each to re-bait and download the trail cam photos. While no fishers were detected, the cameras were triggered hundreds of times by various species of wildlife at these sites in west Mason and east Grays Harbor Counties. By far, the most common visitor was the opossum, followed by the spotted skunk. Other species included cougars, bears,

coyotes, raccoons, flying squirrels, deer, elk, chipmunks, turkey vultures, ravens, ruffed grouse, Steller's jays, varied thrushes, and, of course, loggers. Finding suitable patches of older conifer stands proved to be quite a challenge on industrial timberlands; however, it should be noted that both Green Diamond and Port Blakely staff, as well as WDNR biologists, were extremely supportive and provided much helpful information and access.



***H513 Station 3 Skunk & Salamander***



*Turkey vulture*



*Black bears*



*Cougar*



*Coyote*

**Western Snowy Plovers:** Biologist Sundstrom attended the annual two day Recovery Unit 1 Western Snowy Plover Working Team meeting in Salem, Oregon last week. This season the unit, consisting of Oregon and Washington, is meeting and exceeding the 1.1 chicks fledged per male needed to indicate an increase in the population. Oregon had a phenomenal number of fledged chicks this past season. Preliminary data for Washington also shows that ~1.8 chicks per adult male fledged from the three (3) nesting locations. Although fledging success was very good this season, Washington State is still below its recovery goals. Habitat restoration efforts at Long Beach (both on Federal and State Parks land) combined with predator management suggests a positive effect for plover fledging success over the past two years.

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

**Willapa Bay Waterfowl Flights:** On October 16<sup>th</sup>, Biologists Murphie and Michaelis conducted the first of four scheduled waterfowl flights. Flights are being conducted to document locations and record species composition of large dabbling duck groups. This is partly in response to an issue raised by the potential spraying of an invasive eel grass (*Zostera japonica*) and to continue to survey five traditional cells historically flown by the USFWS. Surveys are also being conducted to document a long-term index of waterfowl populations using Willapa Bay. Willapa Bay is the second largest bay on the west coast in the lower 48 states. Survey results from flight 1 are below.

Cell	Mallards	Wigeon	Teal	N. Pintail	Gadwall	Unkown puddle	Totals
1	353	1538	5485	3863	0	4615	15,854
2	437	236	0	2046	0	3305	6,024
3	932	1279	2070	4960	4	4050	13,295
4	2606	3513	725	9277	0	5095	21,216
PL	10	0	0	0	0	0	10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,338</b>	<b>6,566</b>	<b>8,280</b>	<b>20,146</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17,065</b>	<b>56,399</b>

Biologists Michaelis and Sundstrom just completed the second of three aerial waterfowl surveys scheduled in Willapa Bay for the 2014 season. Weather conditions have hampered efforts to get off the ground for the past week and it was no exception on Friday. Low fog was an issue at multiple locations, but Sundstrom and Michaelis were able to depart via a private dock at Summit Lake. Survey numbers have not been tallied yet, but clearly fewer ducks and geese were observed during this survey compared to the previous survey. The remaining survey is scheduled for mid-to late November.

**Goose Check Station:** Biologist Sundstrom worked the Raymond check station. So far, no Dusky geese have been checked, although red collared birds are now present in Area 2B. Several blue collared Aleutian geese have been harvested. Additional data is being collected on the Aleutian this season at check stations throughout southwest Washington goose management areas as well as in Oregon.

Date	Species																Totals					
	# Hunters	Cackler	# Banded	Aleutian	# Banded	Taverner	# Banded	Lesser	# Banded	Dusky	# Banded	Western	# Banded	Vancouver	# Banded	GWFP		# Banded	Snow	# Banded	Other	# Banded
11/01	8	7		1		12		2		0		1		0		0		1		1		25
11/05	7	5		3	2	6		0		0		2	1	0		0		0		1		17
11/08	2	1		0		0		0		0		1	1	0		0		0		0		2
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>44</b>

**Goose Area 2B:** On Wednesday, November 5<sup>th</sup> Scientific Technician Capelli checked a total of seven hunters with a total of 20 geese (15 Taverners, 2 Cackling, 1 Lesser, and 2 Westerns).

On Saturday, November 8<sup>th</sup> Scientific Technician Capelli checked a total of seven hunters with a total of 24 geese (14 Taverners, 3 Cackling, and 7 Lesser). No Dusky Canada geese were reported as being harvested in goose management Area 2B.