

Wildlife Program

Week of October 6-12, 2014

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

WDFW Whale-Watching Webpage for Killer Whales: Biologist Wiles revised the text for this webpage, which was last updated about two years ago. Law Enforcement Sergeant Mullins and IT Specialist Ushakoff assisted with this task. The revised webpage can be found at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/orca/>.

SEPA Documentation for Species Listing Changes: Biologist Wiles completed draft SEPA checklists for two status reports (Steller sea lions and tufted puffins) that will be submitted to the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission for action in early 2015. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) will be recommending that the Commission approve the delisting of Steller sea lions and the listing of tufted puffins as endangered.

State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Outreach: Lynn Helbrecht presented an overview of the State Wildlife Action Plan approach work to date and a timeline to the Cascadia Partner Forum Leadership Team (a Partner Forum associated with both the North Pacific and Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperatives). The work was well received, and staff of the LCCs in particular are interested in engaging with the SWAP.

Biologist Wiles completed draft species fact sheets and an accompanying threats spreadsheet for 20 species for inclusion in the next SWAP. Conservation Biologist Ann Potter continued developing materials for the State Wildlife Action Plan. Single-page fact sheets that summarize the conservation status, biology and life history, distribution and abundance, and habitat for species of greatest conservation need are required for each species. Ann completed fact sheets for Subarctic Bluet (damselfly) and Hatch's Click Beetle, two rare bog obligate species, and has so far completed 18 insect SGCN fact sheets.

Species of Greatest Conservation Need: Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan worked with Prince William Sound Science and Technology Institute and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to produce a proposal for funding to investigate aspects of the migration of Red Knots that stopover at Copper River and Yukon-Kuskokwim River deltas in Alaska.

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

Citizen Science: Wendy Connally coordinated within the Department (Science, Public Affairs, Game, Habitat, Diversity, HR-Volunteer Program) to determine nexus, tools, resources, and relationships to inform Diversity Citizen Science Project Statement Development, technology and tool requests, communications strategy, and activity development.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Black Butte Bighorn Sheep capture. District Biologist Wik, Asst DB Vekasy, and Scientific Technician Fortin, along with numerous other agency, Idaho Fish and Game, Washington State University Veterinary Hospital, and Washington Wild Sheep Foundation (WaWSF) personnel conducted a helicopter capture operation of the eight remaining bighorn sheep ewes at the mouth of the Grande Ronde River. These eight ewes had recently contracted a new strain of the Mycoplasma ovipneumonia bacteria, which resulted in the death of four of twelve ewes during the summer. All eight animals were safely captured by Leading Edge Aviation of Clarkston and were transported to South Dakota State University for research. ADB Vekasy along with a WaWSF volunteer drove the sheep through the night to reach the destination in a timely fashion. Hopefully we prevented this strain of the bacteria from spreading to other members of the Black Butte herd and adjacent herds. Idaho Fish and Game has a short video of the effort here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwhcubgEKOE&list=UUUdRx_nZUNlfrGVsc2cj9Gg Thanks go out to all who assisted in the planning of this capture for it to have been successfully implemented in under a week.



Ewes loaded in the trailer



Dr. Mansfield examining a sheep prior to loading in the trailer

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

Wildlife Management

Deer Park Check Station: Biologists Base and Prince held the first of five check station days for modern firearm deer season Sunday at Deer Park alongside Highway 395. Everything went quite well with a super crew teamed together. Numbers were down from last year. We had 81 deer hunters pass through with nine harvested deer (eight white-tails and one mule deer) as compared to 91 hunters and 12 deer checked on this comparable date in 2013. Other game

checked included one black bear, a few ruffed grouse, and some waterfowl (Canada geese and a few Am. Wigeon). In spite of the slow day, it was highly positive overall with friendly hunters and a well-seasoned staff.

Wildlife Areas

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Trail Kiosks: Technician Christensen coordinated with a Boy Scout and his crew to install two information kiosks along the trail system at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area (WLA). These kiosks were constructed as an Eagle Scout Project and will house historical information concerning points of interest along the trail. Additional kiosks will be constructed as future Eagle Scout Projects.

This information kiosk is located at a point overlooking the mouth of Sherman Creek



WT Wooten WA – Campground Relocation:

The WDFW construction crew is making progress on the construction of New Campgrounds 9 & 10 at the WT Wooten Wildlife Area. The outhouses in Old Campground 9 were removed this week. The new outhouses are scheduled to arrive next Tuesday to begin installation. A power line is also being laid down next Tuesday to allow for several trees in the New Campground 6 to be taken down and removed. The crew moved equipment down to the New Campground 6 towards the end of this week to begin construction of the driveway.



Driveway and work being done in New Campground 10



The outhouses in Old Campground 9 were removed this week

Private Lands/Access

Opening Weekend Southeast Washington: Biologist Earl worked the opening weekend of general deer season. Earl talked to several hunters. He worked Saturday in Garfield County and Sunday in Asotin County.

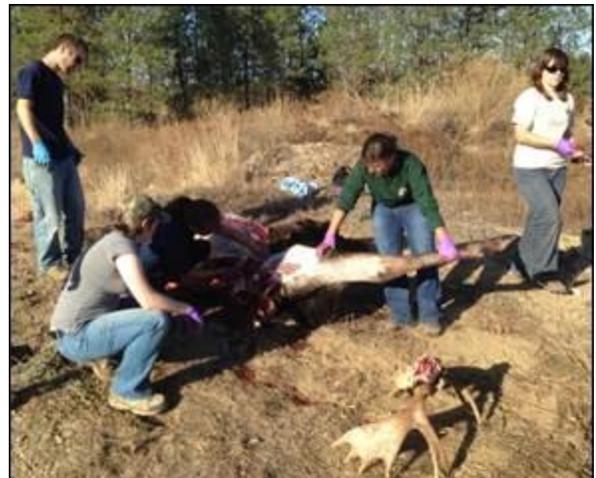
Happy youth hunter from Hunting Only by Written Permission property in Asotin County

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



Wildlife Management

Necropsy Training: Biologists Lowe, Hansen, Rowan, and Oyster participated in an opportunistic field necropsy training session with Department Veterinarian Mansfield after a bull moose was lethally removed by Enforcement in the Seven Mile area north of Spokane. The training helped prepare more staff to respond to future events where field examination and sample collection are needed.



REGION 2

NO REPORT SUBMITTED

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Buser worked on irrigating upland shrub plots one last time before available water is shut off for the summer, assisted District staff with storage of duck traps at the Windmill Ranch facility, mowed road edges at Windmill Ranch, and continued adding water to wildlife area wetlands – Serpent Wetland, East and West Pigeon Ponds, and Phase 1 and 3 Wetlands.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Hunt traveled to Addy, WA with Wenas Assistant Manager Jody Taylor on Tuesday to help with the moisture checking of some hay slated to come to our Region 3 feed sites. They met with Northwest Alloys staff and the sharecrop farmers who put up the hay donated for winter elk feeding. All participated in a thorough check of approximately 300 bales (roughly 90 tons). About 65 bales were rejected as being baled with too high a moisture content. The remainder will come to the feed sites soon. It seemed a satisfactory solution/compromise, although we can still expect to have some brown hay and bad spots in the bales that we receive. These bales weigh 1,250 to 1,500 lbs. each, making it impossible to determine the overall quality without opening them up. The farmers and Northwest Alloys are in agreement that more care needs to be taken with future hay production.

Wildlife Management

Teaway Wolves: Biologist Moore responded to a depredation of a Martinez lamb. The sheep herd was just east of Cle Elum and less than 10 miles from a known rendezvous site of the Teaway Pack. The lamb died on Thursday October 2nd but was not reported to WDFW until Monday Oct. 6th. Moore investigated and the herder suggested it was a cougar kill. The herder allowed guard and herding dogs to clean up the carcass. Only rumen contents and some wool remained, but Moore checked the area for wolf tracks or evidence of a predator. No evidence was found at the scene. Numerous dog and sheep tracks covered the area. Control Specialist Wetzel followed up with a discussion of proper procedures for livestock depredations.

Colockum Cow Elk Body Condition Sampling: Biologist Moore began preparations to sample elk hearts and kidneys to assess body condition in the Colockum herd. Samples will be collected from hunter harvested elk during the upcoming modern firearm antlerless season. This will give insight on herd health and allow managers to compare these data to data taken in the Colockum during the early 2000's.

Colockum Bull Elk Study: Moore worked with Yakama Nation Tribal Police to attempt to collect two collars that were found on the Yakama Reservation. One collar was successfully retrieved, but the other was not. The collar that was not retrieved appeared to have a non-functional VHF beacon. Moore and the Tribal Officer searched the area where the GPS data suggested the collar was, but they could not find it. Another attempt will need to be made.

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Managers Lopushinsky and Winegeart met with Scott McCorquodale, Clay Sprague, and Melinda Posner to discuss the implementation of the Naneum Ridge to Columbia River Recreation Plan.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Access Manager Garcia, Lands Agent Hendrix, and Wenas WA Manager Confer Morris met with City of Granger staff to discuss maintaining access to our boat ramp while the City is doing construction work at the site. They agreed to fence and gate their construction area so that the access to the boat ramp will be maintained through waterfowl season. The access can then be temporarily shut down until May 1 when fishing seasons begin. Access staff installed parking signs and a reader board at the site with information on hours of operation for waterfowl season and the upcoming closure.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman practiced for the RCO NOVA presentation and then on Tuesday went to Olympia to deliver the final presentation for the Rock Creek NOVA Motorized Trails Project. The presentation went well and seemed pretty well received with good questions from the ranking panel.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Sak came in on Saturday during the waterfowl opener. Sak talked with a few hunters and even caught two individuals in the Snipes reserve that drove past three non-authorized vehicle signs and two reserve signs. They left without any problems, but Sak still took their vehicle information and passed it on to enforcement.

Wildlife Management

Private lands Biologist Stutzman worked mostly on hunting access issues this week. Stutzman met with the regional office administration/customer service staff and provided a refresher on the different types of private lands access programs. Most of the time was spent on the Hunt by Reservation system, which is new in Region 3.

Biologist Stutzman was in Franklin County for the opening day of deer season, checking on private lands access sites, talking with hunters, and checking in with landowners. Hunter numbers seemed to be way down from past years and, with one exception, no one had successfully filled their tag. Fewer hunters hunting the general season may point to a high volume of late-season muzzleloader hunters.

Access Technician Kaelber finished posting private lands access properties in Franklin County in advance of the modern firearm season. Kaelber has had to replace signs on a number of properties where someone had removed the originally posted signs. Kaelber also contacted a number of landowners to assist with their sign needs and clear up boundary questions.

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

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman attended the monthly Oak Creek Wildlife Education Corp (WEC) meeting. The group selected new officers for the year and completed some training. Turnout was fairly low and the group needs additional volunteers. Huffman will get information in the paper about the program and the need so that potential new volunteers can attend the next meeting.

Manager Huffman provided additional information on hunting units and hunter numbers to Rebecca Connolly with JLARC for the study on economic impact of state lands.

Manager Huffman met with about 30 4th grade students and parents from St. Paul Cathedral School in Yakima. Huffman talked to them about the wildlife area and winter feeding. The students then looked through the visitor's center and asked questions. Everyone seemed to have a great time, the students then went on to Rimrock Dam to get a tour. This is the second year that the teacher has brought his students out to Oak Creek.

Wildlife Management

Elk have been reported by landowners at Springwood, Thorp, Badger Pocket, Park Creek, Manastash, Robinson Creek, and generally all areas except Reecer Creek. Deer complaints were also received from Riverbottom Road, Thorp, and Bristol. These landowners were contacted and given advice, hazing options, DPCA contracts, and in some cases depredation permits. Elk were reported in an orchard near Naches by the landowner. The landowner has an active DPCA and was issued permits for this year.

Wolf Activities

Biologist Moore, Specialist Wetzell, and Range Rider McBride again spent several days this week trying to establish wolf and sheep locations and determine how close the Teanaway pups and breeding adults were to sheep grazing areas. A large sheep dog was missing for three days this week. It was found Saturday and appeared fine, but hungry. The sheep band at Cle Elum ridge relocated lower in the valley to the Masterson Ranch. Monitoring will continue.

Range Rider McBride reported that the technical problem with the RAG box is resolved. The box is in place and operational.

Range Rider Johnson patrolled areas of the Teanaway Cattle lease. Cattle are already drifting in to the roundup areas.

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 worked on the timber sale contract of the Oak Creek Forest Restoration Project. Huffman talked to Forester Kuehn to get additional information on the bid process and contract specs. Huffman also worked with Ecologist Tveten on how to advertise the timber sale. It was confirmed that it would be announced through the statewide WEBS system. Huffman also worked with TNC Forester Dahlgreen on the contract. Dahlgreen will redirect some of his time to completing a project summary and maps this coming week.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Taylor continued working with the fencing contractor to complete the rebuild by September 30 on the elk fence burned in the Cottonwood #2 fire. Assistant Manager Taylor picked up metal posts from Scout Lake Construction that were left over from the Cabin Lane/Bufalo fence rebuild.



View of burned area from BPA power line road, looking west



Buffalo road, Twin Canyons; Poison Ivy coming back nicely



Gully-washer in Cottonwood #2 Fire: Lower end photo of elk fence near Cabin Lane; Upper end photo adjacent to BPA power line road

Lucky Acres, the contractor awarded the bid for rebuilding elk fence in Kelley Hollow and Mellotte, brought in supplies and equipment and started staging materials for Priority 1 of the project (from Kelley Hollow south). They started drilling on the rock bluff above Kelley Hollow drainage. This was the most difficult section and now that the bluff is done they should make good head way. So far they are doing a good job and minimizing impact to the ground by keeping trips to a minimum. Assistant Manager Taylor will be conducting site inspections two or three times a week.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Colockum staff worked with Olympia Wildlife Program staff to make progress on the removal of hazard trees along green dot roads and around camping areas. Manager Lopushinsky contacted one forestry consultant that is willing to do the hazard tree assessment work.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Biologist Milner completed the Species of Greatest Need Fact Sheet for Bald Eagles – Photo by Russ Link

Judson Lake Swan Exclusion:

Biologist DeBruyn organized a work party to install mylar bird scare ribbon on thousands of bamboo poles in Judson Lake on the Canadian border to dissuade swans from using areas of the lake with high concentrations of old lead shot. The team included a representative from Environment Canada and an airboat crew from the noxious weed program. About half of the exclusion zone got covered as well as the entire perimeter. Another day on the lake will be required to complete the task for the year.





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Snow Goose Monitoring: Biologist DeBruyn did the first age ratio survey of lesser snow geese arriving in the Skagit Valley. A flock of 900 was counted and found to have about 19% juvenile recruits.

Low Elevation Pika Surveys: Biologists Milner and Cyra continued pika latrine and haystack surveys in areas where pikas have been documented at Jim Creek. No pikas were seen, but we found the first latrines we've encountered on the project. Very few piles of gathered vegetation were seen, but many places with clipped vegetation were located among the rocks.

Pika food cache of clipped blackberry in a talus slope crevice

Monitoring projects in Port Susan Bay: Biologist Milner participated in a conference call led by USGS staff in California to talk about potential monitoring projects in Port Susan Bay relative to restoration plans for Leque Island.

Everett Naval Base Annual INRMP Review: Biologist

Milner worked with the environmental officer for Everett and Jim Creek Naval Installations to provide WDFW input into their annual review of the Navy's Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan, as required by the Sikes Act.

San Juan Island Species of Greatest Conservation Need: Assistant District Biologist Cyra surveyed the Sharp-tailed Snake coverboards that were placed last year on Orcas Island. No



snakes were observed, and the continued warm dry weather may be causing the snakes to burrow deeper into moister conditions.

Several Alligator Lizards were located using the cover boards in place for Sharp-tailed Snakes



Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Baseline

Monitoring: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and District Biologist Milner participated in a conference call with U.S. Geologic Services (USGS) staff, Ecostudies Institute, Western WA University, and Ducks Unlimited to discuss a grant application to fund waterbird monitoring at Leque Island and vicinity. All groups are interested in the response by bird species to the project that will eventually be implemented on Leque Island, regardless of the project design. Additionally, Projects Coordinator Brokaw worked with Ducks Unlimited and Pacific Groundwater Group to schedule drilling of two groundwater monitoring wells on an adjacent property this week.

Fir Island Farm Monitoring and Adaptive Management: Projects Coordinator Brokaw completed a budget and worked on a grant application to the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) to fund post project monitoring and adaptive management at the Fir Island Farm Restoration site. WDFW is seeking funding to monitor surface and groundwater quality and drainage, invasive plants, native marsh vegetation, sediment accretion and erosion, channel establishment, and dike settlement and erosion. The application is due on October 17th.

Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP): A public comment period on PNSERP associated with National Environmental Policy Act requirements opened on October 10th and will close on November 24th. More information on this process, the documents under review, and how to comment is available at: <http://pugetsoundnearshore.org/outreach.html>. Additionally, a Public Open House is scheduled for November 5th from 5:00-8:00 pm at the City of Burlington City Hall, where attendees will be able learn more about PSNERP and provide comments.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Werkhoven Dairy to complete the corn harvest for the Unit. A series of staggered corn rows were retained in each of the fields for wildlife forage and cover.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Sno-Valley Farms to finalize the corn harvest for the east lobe of the Unit. Additional staggered corn rows were left throughout the field for wildlife forage and cover. Manager Boehm also refilled one large pond near the corn to attract waterfowl. Most of the ponds dried up over the past summer but are gradually holding water as the rains continue.

Corson Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Kye Iris from Real Estate Services to discuss an access path from the southern boundary of the Unit. The location could provide parking for vehicles, as well as a short path constructed that would intersect with the existing trail system. This would provide access for WDFW and potentially the public without going through private property.

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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Management Consultation/Permitting Requests; Municipal, Private Utilities, other: Biologist Anderson continued work and review for requests of assistance regarding species or habitat management consultation for urban wildlife given construction or land-use alteration work; per local municipal code requirements to work with WDFW. Most involve eagle nest location/activity status, osprey nest removal, heron management, biodiversity areas and corridors, and big game use areas adjacent to the rural/exurban fringe of King Co. More on WDFW Priority Habitat and Species Recommendations and how WDFW provides assistance at the local and broader planning levels can be found here:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/>

Mountain Goat Checks: Biologist DeBruyn measured and collected samples from two male mountain goats taken in the Mt. Baker area. Only one of seven permits remains to be filled from the area, and all six taken so far have been sampled.

Region 4 2014 Hunts – Modern Season start and pilot hunt on Vashon Island Center

Forest: Biologist Anderson conducted a dashboard “opening day” outreach assistance and index of use survey, along with King County, for Island Center Forest.

Island Center Forest is the only public space on Vashon Maury Island open for hunting. It is a limited deer only hunt during the Modern season only. 200 acres of the overall park is available for hunting, while the remaining acreage is closed to hunting but open to non-consumptive recreation. The area open is a working forest with occasional harvest and habitat management efforts. The areas closed are not under the same management regime. More on this hunt here:

<http://www.vashonbeachcomber.com/news/278418461.html#>

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/recreation/parks/trails/backcountry/islandcenterforest.aspx>

In 2 hours, driving approximately 14 miles, Anderson observed 13 antlerless deer in and around the vicinity of Island Center Forest. Anderson interacted with ten hunters, one of whom was attempting his first deer harvest. That party was from Sultan, WA! Anderson had a maximum of seven cars parked to use the hunt area earlier in the morning. The natural area, closed to hunting, increased in use as hunter activity decreased throughout the morning, totaling four separate cars throughout the index of use survey period. From first light through late morning,

no hunters approached had taken an animal, but all expressed gratitude for use of the area and intent to come back throughout the modern season for multiple attempts.

Anderson spoke with one jogger about to use the “hunt only” area, with two unleashed dogs, and directed them to the Island Center Forest Natural Area for their intended recreational use. They had not noted the signage.

In other hunting news, Biologist Anderson 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 in District 12. Anderson and Private Lands Biologist Caldwell spoke with one particular hunter needing clarification of public areas versus what appeared to them as opportunity for private access, register to hunt areas in King County. There are currently no such areas of Private Land access in District 12.

Biologist Milner checked Leque Island and other areas of the Stillaguamish/Skagit Delta during opening weekend.

Most answers to many common hunt questions are clearly outlined in the WDFW Big Game Hunting Season Pamphlet. <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>



Youth hunt in GMU 485 from years past

Wildlife Areas

Lake Terrell: Opening day of waterfowl hunting season was very busy on several of the Wildlife Area units. 6-8 of the hunting blinds at Lake Terrell were occupied for the Saturday opener. All three hunting blinds at Tennant Lake were also being used for the opening day hunt, with all three groups of hunters being successful. The Nooksack unit had good use from both

the north and south parking areas.

Pheasant Hunting Season: Manager Kessler and volunteers released a total of 420 pheasants throughout the week. Manager Kessler replaced Safety Zone signs that were missing on the Intalco unit. It is unknown who took the signs down. Due to the missing signs, a hunter came too close to the Intalco plant and caused concerns from the Intalco managers. Manager Kessler will monitor the property boundary signs closely throughout the rest of the hunting season.

Lake Terrell and Intalco Units Tour: Manager Kessler toured the Lake Terrell and Intalco units with the Environmental Manager from the British Petroleum refinery. He was able to see how WDFW manages the two sites for wildlife and wildlife recreation.

Disabled Hunter Hunting Access: Manager Kessler coordinated with our ADA Program Manager on access for a disabled hunter on the Lake Terrell unit. The hunter will be allowed to use an ATV to pheasant hunt on the unit. Manager Kessler finished the map of what areas the ADA hunter will be allowed to hunt. He was sent the permit at the end of the week.

Samish Unit: Staff installed the hunter survey kiosk and posted Property Boundary signs on the southeastern boundary of the property.

Headquarters Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area: Staff posted safety zone buoys, property boundaries, and closed area signs on the Headquarters Unit. Staff completed spreading of the ditch spoil piles in front of the field and shop area. Manager Rotton notified the Department of Ecology about the completion of spoil removal for work to be reviewed. Manager Rotton prepared hunter survey cards and materials for the survey kiosk. Waterfowl hunter turnout for opening weekend was good. Fifty-four vehicles were counted on the Headquarters site for opening morning.

DeBay Slough: Staff assisted a WWA member with the repair of a hunting blind and the treatment of blackberries at the DeBay's Slough Hunt Unit. The corn harvest has been completed on the site. Staff posted the safety zone signs at DeBay's Hunt Unit.

Island Unit: Staff prepared a barge and with the assistance of volunteers and other wildlife area staff completed two ferry operations to transport dike and field mowers on and off the Island unit, as well as removal of tractors and fuel tanks off the Island unit in preparation for the waterfowl season opener this weekend. Staff mowed dike tops and field areas in preparation for waterfowl season, and with assistance of volunteers, placed two footbridges across ditches to increase hunter access.

Manager Rotton worked to resolve some other permitting questions related to fish presence on the site. Rotton coordinated with Habitat Biologist Wendy Cole and Permit Biologist Chris Gourley to develop a sampling and exclusion plan for the site. Sampling was completed last week with the assistance of staff. No fish were observed in the segment proposed for work this season. Additional sampling will be necessary for work to be completed next year.

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 and Whatcom Counties. They also posted parking lot posts, signs, and survey boxes (see below), and surveyed all enrolled sites in Whatcom, Snohomish, and Skagit Counties for access and harvest conditions.

A newly set up Waterfowl Quality Hunt site in Skagit County. All quality hunt site in Region 4 are now equipped with white survey boxes to gather hunter use and success data.



Waterfowl Blind and Unit Set-up: Staff continued to set up hunting units in Whatcom and Skagit counties, constructed blinds, posted boundary signs, and mowed fields. Deyo and Otto monitored crop harvest status on multiple units.

Whidbey Island Private Lands: Staff checked on multiple private land sites on Whidbey Island. The Diversity site once again received much use over the last month. Otto checked with the Whidbey Land Trust about the upcoming deer hunt on their land and found everything to be ready for the opener. Otto also checked on the Arnold Farm pheasant release site with everything being in order.

Units Open: Staff worked on many units in Whatcom and Skagit County, preparing them for the waterfowl season opener. There were 14 units opened for the weekend.

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

Wildlife Management

Elk Conflict and Damage issues: Biologist DeBruyn, Manager Link, and Technician Cogdal represented WDFW at a monthly meeting with biologists from the Point Elliot Tribes to discuss elk damage issues in the Skagit Valley.

Wildlife Areas

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Manager Brian Boehm responded to a number of phone calls and email messages from local hunters. Most of the calls were messages from hunters expressing the great hunting conditions at each of the pheasant release sites. An abundance of mowed grass, grain, and corn for forage and cover, as well as well-maintained access roads provide the ability for hunters to reach most portions of the units. Other callers expressed their frustration with the continued low number of pheasant that are released each week. Manager Boehm explained to them that we are actually receiving about 10 more birds per week compared to last year, but it will take time and funding to return the pheasant numbers to the levels of the past. Manager Boehm also reports that after three full weeks of pheasant release, there have been only four mortalities, and zero escaped birds between the two net pens. Diligent repairs to the Cherry Valley net pen and an improved unloading process on delivery day have had a positive effect on reducing injured and dead birds in the facility.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl and Snow Goose Quality Hunt Preseason Meeting: Private Lands Access staff met with La Conner Law Enforcement staff to discuss the 2014-15 waterfowl and snow goose quality hunt season. The focus of this meeting was to update Law Enforcement about new and changing quality hunt sites in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties.

GMU 407 Elk Quality Hunt Meeting: Biologist Caldwell met with a private landowner to discuss a GMU 407 elk quality hunt on their lands. Biologist Caldwell provided different hunt options to the landowners. The landowner is interested in the Hunt by Reservation option and a one year contract. A follow up meeting will be held in the upcoming weeks to discuss enrollment/contract details.

GMU 418 Special Permit Hunter Meetings: Biologist Caldwell met with several GMU 418 special permit hunters to exchange biological samples and key information.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination

Presentation of Service Awards. Hunter education coordinator Steven Dazey attended the Field Skills Evaluation held at the Renton Fish and Game Club to present volunteer hunter education instructor Andrew Dean his 15 year service award. After the presentation HE Coordinator Dazey assisted the team in presenting the skills portion of the evaluation. The team at the Renton Fish and Game Club has conducted ten classes this year with a mix of traditional and field skill evaluations. They have certified 139 students this year.

Public Outreach and Volunteer Recruitment. Hunter Education/Volunteer coordinator Steven Dazey attended the Aurora District Boy Scout roundtable and made a presentation to the group about the availability of volunteer service opportunities for Eagle Scout service projects, Hornaday award projects, and group volunteer service projects that assist WDFW in meeting our mission to the wildlife of Washington State. Pictures of completed volunteer projects at the Snoqualmie Wildlife area supplied by Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm helped to show the adults and youth in attendance at the roundtable meeting some of the things that they can do to assist us. The adult leadership in attendance at the meeting also expressed an interest in a district wide day of service to WDFW to be scheduled in 2015 and promoted amongst the troops in the Aurora district.

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

Radio Communications: Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued to provide radio support to Program staff.

Data QA/QC and training: Biologist Anderson continues work to QA/QC amphibian citizen science survey data as it comes in and in comparison to the pilot “WDFW Citizen Observation Reporting website and phone application” that launched in January of this year on the WDFW website. There are some discrepancies both with user reporting and software/phone compatibility issues. Anderson will be removing erroneous data and examining remaining to correct or confirm proper entry while compiling all of this. Anderson is conducting initial data scrubbing on acoustic bat data to remove bunk files and initiate first-round analysis of the remaining files.



Residence Energy Upgrade: The Energy Upgrade project on the wildlife area manager's residence continued. Seven of the new windows have been replaced this week. The work continues with more windows to be replaced this week.

Master Hunters: 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.

Hunter Education Staff Meeting. Hunter Education Coordinator Steven Dazey attended a hunter education division staff meeting at the NRB in Olympia. He also met with division lead Dave Whipple and Volunteer Program Manager Christine Redmond to start to plan for the volunteer program presentation at the upcoming lands division meeting in December. After this planning meeting hunter education/volunteer coordinator and Volunteer program Manager Christine Redmond coordinated plans for a presentation to the Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group to discuss the CERVIS program and how CERVIS can benefit the group in their tracking of volunteer efforts on the behalf of DFW.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Fire Fuels Reduction Project: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis surveyed Phase I of the fuels reduction project area on the Soda Springs Unit, documenting western gray squirrel nests present and transferring the location data to mapping software. Staff found 53 nests within the project boundary.

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

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Opening Weekend: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis conducted hunter success surveys on the general deer season opening weekend. Hunter turnout was very

light, with many good camping spots still available on the Wildlife Area on Saturday. On opening day, of 45 hunters, three harvested deer. On Sunday, staff documented two deer for 53 hunters. Weather was mostly sunny and very warm, with a short-lived rain shower Saturday afternoon. Van Leuven received a report of a hermaphrodite deer being harvested in GMU 382. According to the hunter who dressed it, the animal had peculiar antlers and had both male and female primary sex characteristics.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Fisher Project: Hex 513 - First of Three Checks: Biologist McMillan, Biologist Ament, and Biologist Cullinan (Pt No Pt Wildlife Biologist) checked Hex 513 on October 1st. Station 3 had an operational camera that had taken a series of photos of a very large black bear which fortunately did not remove the bait. Unidentified Hair Samples - Hair samples were collected at Stations 2 and 3. It is unknown what species may have entered the cubby and consumed meat from the bait since the cameras both failed to trigger and photograph the activity associated with the cubby bait consumption.



Hex 513, Station 3, photographing a black bear inspecting the station



Biologist Michaelis made check # 2 on three camera stations in Hex # 84. A cougar of unknown sex and age was photographed. Camera's within Hex # 84 will be checked and removed later this week. So far there have been no fisher detections within sampling Hexes in Grays Harbor County.

Western Pond Turtle: District 11 biologists excavated ten Western pond turtle nests to assess hatching success and to retain hatchlings and/or eggs to be head-started at Woodland Park Zoo. Live hatchlings were found at two nests. The effort resulted in seven hatchlings plus 61

eggs being transferred to the zoo. One egg was rotten and discarded and one hatchling escaped from under the predator exclusion cage and is on its own to recruit into the population.

2014 is the first year that the Pierce County recovery site will be providing only a percentage (70%) of its nests to the zoo for captive rearing with the remainder being left in the ground to naturally hatch. In 2015, 50% are planned for captive rearing. This gradual reduction is part of reducing the captive rearing portion of this 23rd-year recovery effort.

Cedar Creek Corrections Center staff and two offender technicians released two adult female pond turtles into a recovery site in Pierce County. The turtles were captured in July and treated for Ulcerative Shell Disease. They had been convalescing at Cedar Creek under the care of the offenders since mid-September in preparation for release.



Western Pond Turtle nest excavation 2014, Pierce County recovery site



Western Pond Turtle nest excavation 2014 showing hatching in nest



Western Pond Turtle nest excavation 2014 showing nest with eggs only



Western pond turtle hatchling emerging from the egg

Harbor Seal Contaminants: Biologist Murphie assisted the DFW Marine Mammal Investigations Unit in the capture of 10 seal in South Puget Sound. Samples were collected from 6 of the 10 seals to screen for chemical contaminants as part of a study being conducted by staff from Simon Fraser University and the Vancouver Aquarium.

Harbor seal pup being measured and tagged prior to release

Wildlife Areas

Union River: A safety concern at the Union River Unit of the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area has presented an opportunity to improve estuarine habitat for Hood Canal summer chum and other species. In 2013, an estuary restoration project was completed in Lynch Cove that involved breaching a dike to re-establish tidal influences to a 32-acre former marsh. The dike also serves as a very popular walking trail for the Belfair community, and this asset was retained with the placement of walking bridges at each of the breach locations. Early in 2014, Douglas fir growing on the dike began dying due to altered hydrology and salinity and would ultimately pose a safety risk to recreational users. Biologist Small and Manager Belson determined that the most cost-effective and beneficial approach would be to fell the dead trees directly into the restoration area to supplement existing large woody material (LWM) that was placed there during earthwork. A hydraulic project approval (#2014-6-172+01) was obtained that permits the felling of up to 15 trees into the restoration area over a 5-year period. During the last week of September, Biologist Small and Manager Belson temporarily closed the trail and felled eight 12-24” DBH firs into the restoration area. The trees will serve as a valuable supplement to the existing LWM by creating woody structure along the high water line.



Private Lands/Access

Biologist Sundstrom began October by making contact with several landowners in the Brady area to reaffirm permission to begin the placement of 'Feel Free to Hunt' signs on private lands. Sundstrom installed 46 signs of various verbiages throughout the Brady flats area, and also installed the hunter blind at one of the 'Reservation Hunt Only' locations.

While working the area, Sundstrom noted approximately 5,000 white-fronted and cackling geese (nearly a 50/50 mix) foraging at several newly harvested fields.

The following week, Biologist Sundstrom completed signing all 'Feel Free to Hunt' and 'Reservation Hunt' locations throughout the Brady flats area. A 6' tall white PVC post with surveyor ribbon was installed at the WDFW provided hunting blind at the Willis Road location to assist hunters in locating the blind as it was not visible to the naked eye. The post is tagged with a note for hunters to remove the post while hunting but reinstall after their hunt so other hunters can locate the blind.



Willis Road Hunt by Reservation blind. Note geese in field.



A Feel Free to Hunt field near Brady

New Pheasant Release Site: After three years of searching for a site to replace the overgrown Grapeview release area, District 15 wildlife biologists were able to open the Sgt. Mak site at the east end of Mason Lake. The area was located thanks to a tip from retired Enforcement Sergeant Duane Makoviney and Sergeant Ted Jackson. Mak now works as the Head of Security for Green Diamond Timber Company and coordinated the access agreement. So far, the new site is attracting hunters from Olympia, Shelton, Bremerton, Tacoma, and Port Townsend.

The Peninsula Birdhunters Association manages the bird releases and gate operations. The site is open seven days a week but the gate is only open on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Hunters must walk in from the county road on the other days. Directions and information are available at wdfw.wa.gov or on the Peninsula Birdhunters webpage.

Waterfowl Hunting Opportunities in District 15:

Despite budget cuts for access leases, District 15 biologists were able to secure 14 waterfowl hunting sites, including the district's first duck blind for hunters in wheelchairs. Locations include fields and/or blinds in the Skokomish Valley, saltwater blinds at Lynch Cove on Hood Canal, and five units on the Short Farm south of Chimacum. Local hunters and members of the Washington Waterfowl Association worked with the biologist to perform blind maintenance and build the wheelchair blind on the Short Farm. Kennedy Creek Quarry by Shelton donated the black, fine crushed gravel, and Olympic Equipment Rentals in Chimacum provided the compactor for building a firm bed for the wheelchairs. At this site, the wheelchair hunter can be dropped off right next to the blind and their partner can then park the vehicle at the assigned parking spot. All units at the Short Farm and Skokomish are on a first come/first served basis. The first vehicle at the sign reserves the entire unit. The only exception is at the wheelchair blind, where wheelchair hunters get the first chance at the blind. If they have not occupied it by 7:00 AM, any hunter may use the blind. The wire and burlap in the front of the blind can be raised or lowered to accommodate the hunter.



A yellow lab and his hunting companion Ed Huess enjoyed a successful mid-morning hunt at the new Sgt. Mak pheasant release site



The Short Farm is only open to hunting on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Check the WDFW website at wdfw.wa.gov for more information.

Compacting the gravel base for the wheelchair blind

Completed wheelchair blind at the Short Farm

Citizen Science Elk Surveys and Elk Damage monitoring: Biologist Tirhi spent an afternoon visiting elk observation locations that will be used by volunteers assisting with elk surveys in the Buckley/Enumclaw plateau. This area has increasing reports of elk damage on private property in response to a growing elk herd. Consistent elk population monitoring will aid the district biologist (Tirhi) and damage



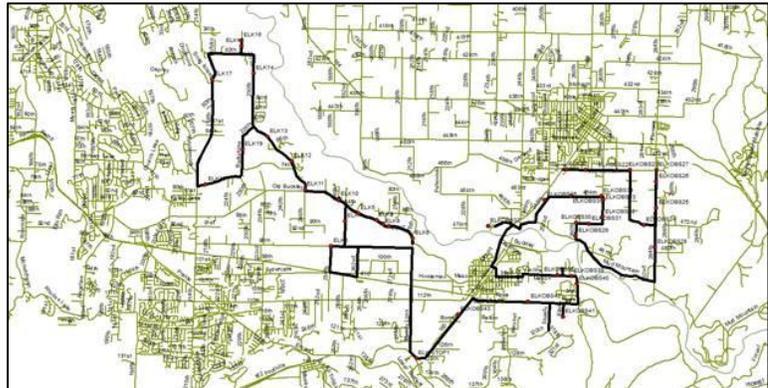
specialist (Novak) to manage both the herd and damage complaints along with other tools. Tirhi worked with staff from Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and NW Trek to develop a draft driving route with observation locations that trained volunteers would use to conduct monthly driving surveys. Tirhi must now revisit each of the observation points to review for volunteer safety and obtain a written description of the point. Tirhi plans to complete the route for review this week and is in contact with NW Trek regarding enlisting volunteers and setting a training day with hopes of initiating the survey by November.

Draft citizen science elk monitoring route for Buckley/Enumclaw (GMU 652)

Private Lands /Conflict

Long Beach Wildlife Conflict:

Biologist Harris issued damage prevention permits to two cranberry growers with elk problems. While



master hunters are deployed they have not been able to connect. One grower gave a permit to his 14 year old grandson. He set up a bench and gave him instructions on where the shooting lanes are. Under adult supervision the young hunter set up and waited.

Later in the evening a small group of elk started entering the bogs. The first one only made it a few steps, resulting in this 14 year old's first elk! The other elk have not been seen since. According to the growers they have other youngsters that are willing to help them out.

