

# Wildlife Program

Week of April 20-26, 2015

## **WOLF ACTIVITIES**

### **Region 1 Wolf Activities**

**Range Riders:** Biologist Shepherd met with a rancher and range rider in the Wedge, looked for wolf sign, and discussed Damage Prevention Contracts for Livestock.

**Sheep Killed East of Chewelah:** A dead ram was reported as a potential wolf kill. Injuries associated with the death did not indicate wolf, and neither did any other evidence, such as tracks. State and county personnel agreed the most probable predator to have caused the injuries was a single domestic dog.

**Smackout:** Biologist Shepherd received an evening call from a rancher in the Smackout area concerning a wolf near his cattle and house. A range rider and other equipment were dispatched the next day and a plan was discussed.

**Range Rider Discussion:** Biologist Shepherd discussed business issues with a person attempting to set up a range rider business.

**Huckleberry Area:** Biologist Shepherd discussed Huckleberry wolf and crop damage issues with Supervisor McCanna and Biologist Bennett.

**Wolf Deterrence Plans:** Biologist Shepherd worked on deterrence plans.

**Crop Damage Claim:** Biologist Shepherd discussed kill permits and a crop damage claim with Supervisor McCanna, Biologist Bennett, and a farmer/rancher in the Huckleberry Mountains.

**Moose Mortality:** Biologists Prince, Roussin, and Oyster investigated a mortality signal received from a radio-collared cow moose in the northern portion of the moose study area. It was determined the moose was killed by wolves. The moose was 14 years old when captured in December of 2014.

**Huckleberry Deterrence Plan:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist (WCS) Bennett submitted a copy of the draft Huckleberry Deterrence Plan to WCS Shepherd for review. Additions from other producers will be added to the plan.

**Wolf Sighting in Whitman County:** WCS Bennett spoke with a Reporting Party (RP) from the Pullman area of a recent wolf sighting. Information was provided to the RP about wolf recovery and future sightings.

**Columbia County Cattleman's Meeting:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley received several calls from livestock producers in Columbia County and all of them said they really appreciated the presentation Joey McCanna gave at their monthly meeting.

**Check Trail Cameras for Wolf Activity:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley and Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice road four wheelers into Cooper Canyon on the Asotin Creek WLA to check our cameras for wolf activity. One freshly killed deer was found, along with two other old elk kills. One black bear and several cougar pics were on the cameras and we deployed a total of three more cameras to give us better coverage of three separate old trails.



*Bob Dice putting out the last camera*

**DPCAL Contracts:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley continues to enter DPCALs into Novatus. All A-19s and livestock check lists were sent to Olympia this week.

### **Region 2 Wolf Activities**

**Okanogan Wolves:** Specialist Heilhecker talked with the owner of a dog attacked two weeks ago in Brewster. The owner contacted her with questions regarding the investigation. Specialist Heilhecker let the owner know that she and Sergeant Christensen went to the area but were not able to find any discernable tracks due to the tracking conditions and vehicle traffic. The only things Sergeant Christensen and Specialist Heilhecker could find were coyote scat and horse tracks. Specialist Heilhecker answered questions for regional office staff regarding the Lookout pack and related conflict items that are needed for a conference call in May.

### **Region 3 Wolf Activities**

**Wolf Feed Site Interaction Meeting:** Biologist Moore attended a meeting with numerous regional and statewide staff to discuss what we might expect once wolves find the feed sites. Plenty of good discussion came out of the meeting.

### **Region 4 Wolf Activities**

**Hozomeen Wolf Project:** Biologists DeBruyn and Yarborough retrieved the remaining trail cameras out of the back country east of Ross Lake in the North Cascades National Park. No more images of wolves were found. All equipment was cleaned up, organized, and put away for the year. Appropriate reports were submitted to the Carnivore Section and the National Park Service.

## **Region 5 Wolf Activities**

**Wolf Conflict Prevention:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald met with 5 Klickitat County ranchers to sign new Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements and to finalize billing for the previous contract period. The agreements are part of a pilot project in Klickitat County with the goal of providing ranchers proactive measures to reduce wolf-livestock conflict. Klickitat County does not have any known resident wolves, but their future presence is anticipated. McDonald emphasized the importance of range riding activities including monitoring cattle behavior, maintaining a human presence when possible, and alerting WDFW immediately to potential wolf sign or depredations. This is the third year of the project and it has received positive reviews by the participants.

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

**Western Pond Turtle Management:** Biologist Lisa Hallock assisted Region 5 and Fish and Wildlife Health Specialist Katie Haman, DVM, MSc, in this year's study of Western Pond Turtles at one of the Columbia River Gorge sites. Priorities for this year include collecting samples from turtles for studies being conducted by WDFW, collecting juvenile turtles (<5 years old) for a bone density study being conducted by Washington State University, and collecting young turtles for the head-starting program at Oregon Zoo. This effort involved checking 51 traps located in multiple ponds, identifying each turtle by its unique shell notches and PIT tag, collecting samples by swabbing the eyes, nose, and cloaca, and taking a tiny scrape from the shell of each turtle captured. These samples will be used to further our understanding about shell disease, specifically if there is a genetic component to the disease and if the turtles with the disease have a bacterium, virus, or fungus that does not occur in the healthy turtles.

**Sage Grouse:** Section Manager Cynthia Wilkerson led an all-day multi-agency/stakeholder work group meeting on the Sage Grouse Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) on April 22<sup>nd</sup> in Ellensburg. Landscape Conservationist Mark Teske, Lands Division Planner Janet Gorrell, and Private Lands Biologist Devon Comstock also participated for WDFW. Representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service/Sage Grouse Initiative, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington Cattlemen's Association, Washington State Grange, Cattle Producers of Washington, the Washington Farm Bureau, and several livestock operators participated.

## **REGION 1**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

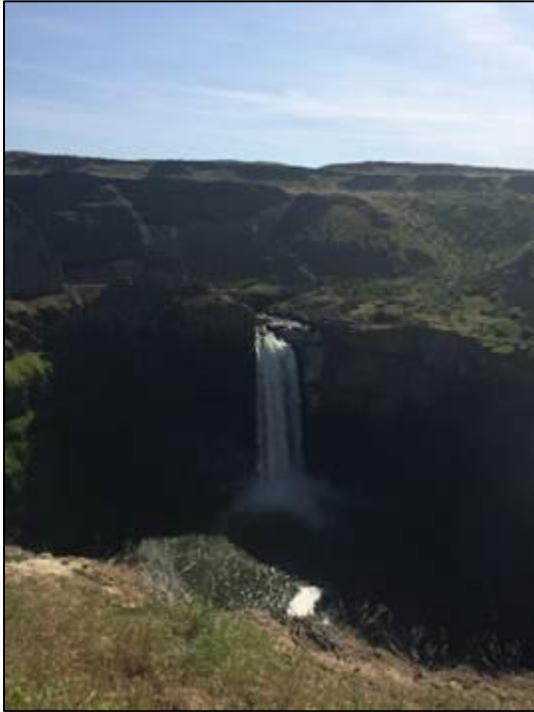
**Selkirk Grizzly Bear Monitoring:** Assistant District Wildlife Biologist (ADWB) Annemarie Prince and a Kalispel Tribal biologist deployed two hair-snagging corrals and wrapped one rub tree in barbed wire for DNA sampling within the Selkirk Mountains Grizzly Bear Recovery Ecosystem. Hair corrals consist of a single strand of barbed wire in a circle around trees, a camera, and a lure placed in the center of the corral. Rub trees are trees or posts already being used by bears for scratching, wrapped in barbed wire with no lure present. The hair left on the barbed wire is used to gather genetic information from the bear.

**Lincoln Cliffs Bighorn Sheep:** Biologists Lowe and Oyster continued ground telemetry on bighorn sheep in the Lincoln and Whitestone areas. Two of the radio-collared ewes in Whitestone are known to have lambs. Five lambs have been observed in that area so far. None of the collared ewes in Lincoln appeared to have lambled yet, though one lamb has been observed with non-collared ewe so far. Lowe also attended the Northwest Sportsmans Club board meeting to review protocol, equipment, scheduling, and other details with the members who will be assisting with lamb monitoring.



#### ***Radio-collared bighorn sheep observed in Lincoln***

**Palouse Falls Peregrine Territory:** Biologist Atamian checked for the Palouse Falls Peregrines. No nesting activity along the cliff face was detected and no falcons were seen flying in the area. Only swifts, swallows, ravens, pigeons, geese, harriers, and red-tailed hawks were seen.



*Palouse Falls (left) and the cliff face where peregrines have nested in past (right)*



*One of many white-throated swift (right) flying around the falls. One of a pair of ravens seen flying in the area perched above nest cliffs (left).*

**Bighorn sheep monitoring:** Biologist Vekasy and Technician Fortin spent the week at the National Bison Range, training with bighorn sheep researcher Jack Hogg on how to safely and successfully capture lambs. Hogg has refined a lamb capture technique over his 30 years of working on bighorn sheep at the Bison Range. We are planning a lamb capture effort for the Tucannon herd to determine causes of mortality and low survivorship in lambs observed in that herd.



*First of the year bison calf*



*Mature ram on the Bison Range*



*Preparing to weigh the lambs. They weighed just over 11 lbs.*



*Preparing to release lamb*



*This ewe has been through lamb captures before, and stayed very close*

**Wildlife Areas**

**Asotin Creek WA –Weed Control:** Techs Steveson and Bio Woodall spent a day in the upper Rockpile drainage spraying weeds. Techs Steveson, Heimgartner, and Meisner spent a day continuing to work and spray their way up George Creek.



*The vista from upper Rockpile looking down*

**Private Lands/Access**

**Stream Habitat Restoration Project:** Biologist Lewis completed a site visit and evaluation at a recently completed stream bank and riparian habitat restoration project site. Lewis and the NR Technician with the Palouse Conservation District (PCD) spent time assessing tree and shrub survival, bank grading, and grass germination at the site. The project is in partnership with PCD and used Department of Ecology funding to finish. The project includes 30’ Riparian buffers on both sides of the stream and covers approximately one mile of stream.



*Bank and riparian habitat restoration project site*

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Reardan Audubon WLA benches:** Staff installed the park benches along the south trail this week. Lincoln County Conservation District (LCCD) staff also stopped by to take a look. The bench project was funded through a grant written by the LCCD.



*Mike Finch on left, with LCCD staff, admiring a new bench at Reardan Audubon WLA*

**Private Lands/Access**

**Wildlife Conflict:** Natural Resource Technician (NRT) Wade checked the crops in the Peola area and spoke with several landowners about elk issues. NRT Wade also met with the owner of an orchard in Pomeroy to discuss deer damage and possible ways to reduce damage.



*Canola fields in Peola area that NRT Wade checked for elk damage*

**Highway 12 Fire:** While travelling, Biologist Earl and NRT Wade noticed a small fire burning along the highway. Wade contacted the local dispatch. Earl and Wade had the fire under control by the time dispatch arrived. The fire crew was very thankful for WDFW staff efforts.

*Biologist Earl helping to contain a fire along Highway 12 in Garfield County*



## **REGION 2**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

##### **Pygmy Rabbit Capture/Release**

**Activities:** The team went into full swing this week with capture and releases. On Wednesday we worked at Sagebrush Flat (SBF) with the assistance of TNC volunteers working toward hunting access on TNC properties, Jennifer Balmagia and Justin Chappelle, BLM employees, and Alan Adams. The team captured 31 rabbits, including 22 new kits and 9 adults (2 new and 7 recaps). Four of the kits were underweight (<125 grams) for releasing to the wild and were placed in the nursery, one escaped back into the enclosure, and the remaining 17 were released to the wild on SBF. All the adults were released back into the breeding enclosure. Any that did not have a PIT tag were given one prior to release.



On Friday we worked at the Beezley Hills enclosure. Again we were joined by TNC volunteers and would like to thank Lauren Miheli, TNC Volunteer Coordinator, for her assistance in recruiting all the help this week. We also had landowner Peter Lancaster, Tracy Barrett, Neal Hedges, Diana Sanford, Iliana Arellano (intern of Team Naturaleza from the Wenatchee River Institute), Alan Adams, and Dan Jackson and his granddaughters. We captured 33 rabbits, including 32 kits and 1 recap adult. Seven kits were retained in the nursery and 25 were released to the wild on SBF. The adult was returned to the breeding enclosure.



*Also on Friday the volunteers assisted in putting the netting up on the Beezley Hills nursery*

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Chesaw Wildlife Area Prescribed Burn:** Assistant Wehmeyer and Technician Boulger assisted Manager Jim Olson of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Complex and the Northcentral Washington Prescribed Burn Team with implementing a prescribed burn on the Chesaw Wildlife Area (see pictures below). The two burned most of the week and accomplished a significant amount of acreage. Plans to continue in the burning area are expected in the weeks to come.



*Hand line construction and prescribed burn implementation on the Chesaw Wildlife Area –  
Photos by Brandon Boulger*

**Carlton Fire Recovery Monitoring:** Manager Haug retook photo points on the Chiliwist Wildlife Area – see pictures below. Manager Haug also met with the crew from the Yakima Construction Shop to finish up work on the Buzzard Lake Wildlife Area. The crew also built and handed off numerous new gates for the wildlife to use. Thanks guys!



CWA\_PHO\_5 - NORTH

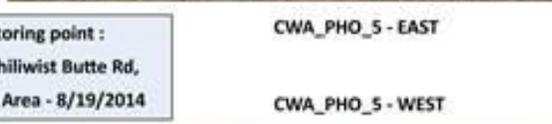


CWA\_PHO\_5 - EAST



CWA\_PHO\_5 - SOUTH

Photo monitoring point :  
CWA\_PHO\_5 - Chiliwist Butte Rd,  
Chiliwist Wildlife Area - 8/19/2014



CWA\_PHO\_5 - WEST





CWA\_PHO\_5 - NORTH



CWA\_PHO\_5 - EAST



CWA\_PHO\_5 - SOUTH



CWA\_PHO\_5 - WEST

Photo monitoring point :  
CWA\_PHO\_5 - Chiliwist Butte Rd,  
Chiliwist Wildlife Area - 4/24/2015



*Photosets of a photo point on the Chiliwist Wildlife Area. The before photos were taken on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014, and the after photos were taken on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – Photos by Justin Haug*

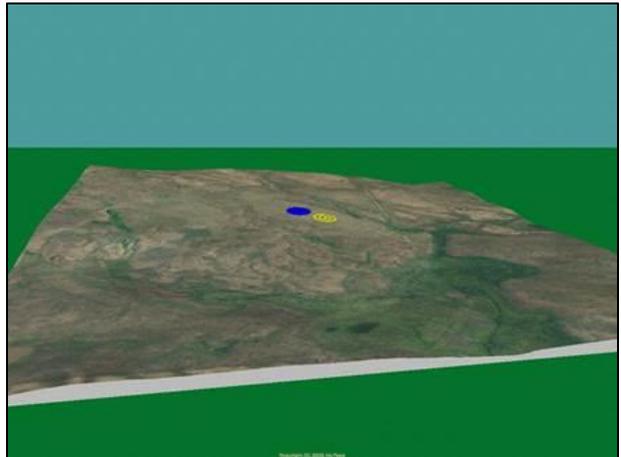
**First Fire of the Season – Columbia Basin Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Eidson received a report of a fire that was started over the weekend in the Goose Lakes area near Black Lake. Information had been obtained by responding fire crews about the person responsible for starting the fire. This information, along with evidence collected on site, was forwarded to enforcement to pursue. Good work by local fire fighters, as well as a crew from the adjacent Columbia National Refuge, contained the fire quickly and kept the affected acreage small.



*Black Lake Fire* – Photos by Chad Eidson

### Private Lands/Access

**Douglas County Grouse Surveys:** Private Lands Biologist Braaten spent most of this week monitoring and confirming new sharp-tailed grouse leks in NE Douglas County. Private Lands Biologist Braaten discovered another new lek this week, counting an additional three sharp-tailed grouse. Private Lands Biologist Braaten used 3-D mapping to select likely targets and located a new lek 50 yards from target.



*Predicted Target (yellow) New Lek (Blue)* – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

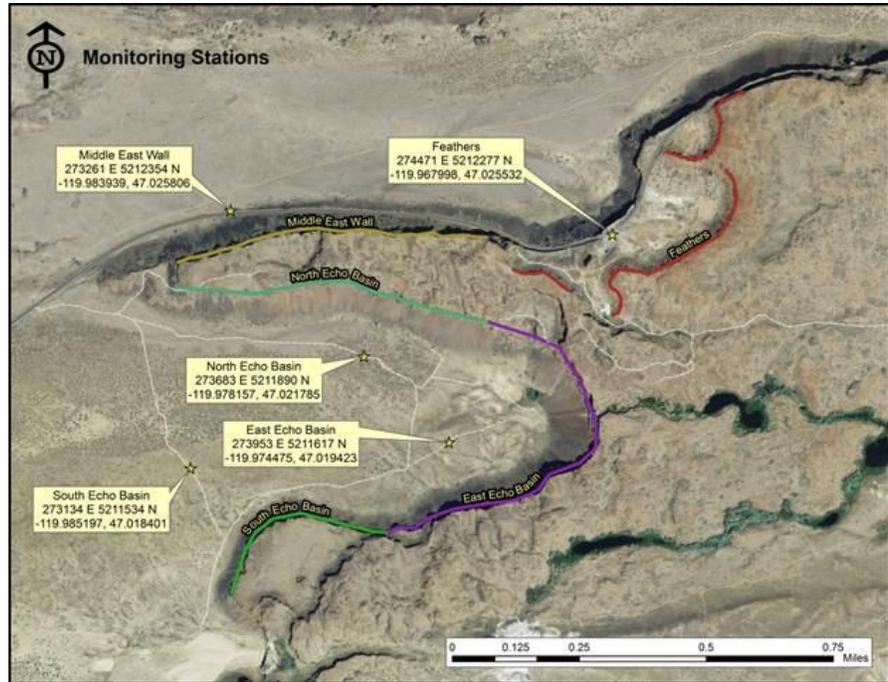
***GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE***

### Wildlife Management

**Washington Ground Squirrels:** Biologist Finger discussed Washington ground squirrel reintroduction site selection with USFWS Mid-Columbia Complex Biologist Lucas. USFWS is interested in getting more directly involved in Washington ground squirrel translocation and is considering all of its refuge lands in Washington and Oregon as potential sites to engage in reintroductions. Armed with numerous geospatial products predicting ground squirrel distribution and landscape porosity, Finger offered to provide some GIS assistance with scoping

out refuge parcels for consideration and may choose to engage on the ground depending on where the site selection occurs.

**Frenchmen Coulee Citizen Science:** Biologist Finger prepared materials for a trial lab exercise with Central Washington University to observe activity by cliff nesting birds of prey and document recreational use at Frenchmen Coulee. Students will be asked to observe and identify all birds of prey and document locations of perching/nesting activity, as well as the peak number of recreationists using specific climbing areas within their allotted survey window. We hope this information will help to better manage recreational and special use permit activities (such as Air Force Survival Training) within this area that is known to be used by prairie falcons and where seasonal closures are regularly established in response to observed activity. Students will be able to learn the challenges associated with protecting wildlife and wildlife habitats in areas with high recreational value. If successful, this project may be continued on an annual basis.



### Wildlife Areas

**Tonasket High School Field Trip to Chiliwist Wildlife Area:** Manager Haug met with Tonasket High School’s Agricultural Science class at the Chiliwist Wildlife Area to discuss the area’s recovery following the Carlton Complex Fire, the effects of wildfire and prescribed burning on the landscape and the flora of the wildlife area, and how they want to use native species as part of their Xeriscape project (see pictures below).

*Manager Haug discussing post-fire effects with Tonasket High School AG Science class on Chiliwist Wildlife Area*

– Photo by Andie Womack



*Tonasket GEAR UP coordinator Alex Eppel talks capturing the landscape on paper with the Tonasket group – Photo by Justin Haug*



**Methow Shooting Range Clean-up:** Maintenance Mechanic Wottlin coordinated and worked with the 4H Club on a clean-up project at the Methow’s Gun Range. Nearly 20 students came out last Sunday morning to spruce it up and the dumpster was overfull.



*4H Club’s clean-up effort at Gun Range – Photo by Sherry Furnari*

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

**Other**

*Now is an excellent time to view native cactus in bloom. This rare white-flowered *Pediocactus nigrispinus* was found on private lands in Beezley Hills. Members of the public can view *Pediocactus* at the The Nature Conservancy’s Beezley Hills Preserve.*





*This behemoth has 25 barrels in its cluster*

*Ancient Methow Valley ponderosa Pine –*  
Photo by Scott Fitkin



*A bullsnake crosses the roadway at Judd Ranch –* Photo by Sherry Furnari

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**2016 Ferruginous Hawk surveys:** District Biologist Fidorra contacted and coordinated with partners including USFWS and BLM to prepare for the 2016 ferruginous hawk surveys. USFWS and BLM have agreed to assist in surveying next year using our new intensive protocols on their respectively managed properties. Fidorra prepared a draft schedule for these surveys, which will require a significant amount of time in District 4 with 142 historic sites to survey.

**Elk Damage:** District Biologist Fidorra visited the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve with USFWS Biologists Newsome and Goldie to observe and discuss elk damage occurring to spring sites. Fidorra was impressed by the efforts taken to install cages and fences to protect springs and trees. Damage to trees and vegetation in areas where elk had recently destroyed fences was extensive. Fidorra plans to work closely with USFWS as both agencies continue to seek management options for the Rattlesnake Hills Elk Herd.



***Damage to spring in upper Snidely Canyon***



***Elk hair on broken branches from rubbing***

**Burrowing Owl WildWatch Cam:** District Biologist Fidorra ordered supplies for the Burrowing Owl WildWatch camera setup to resolve ongoing camera failure. The system is currently down but should be repaired once after parts arrive.

**Land Access Agreement for WildWatch Cam:** District Biologist Fidorra worked with Citizen Science Coordinator Connelly to draft a land access agreement for the Burrowing Owl WildWatch Camera site.

**Juniper Dunes Survey:** District Biologist Fidorra met with BLM biologist Jason Lowe to assist in BLM's Ferruginous Hawk Survey of Juniper Dunes. No nests were found but two FEHA were observed during the survey.

**Waterfowl Bands:** District Biologist Fidorra inventoried onsite waterfowl bands and provided this information to WDFW Waterfowl Specialist Wilson.

**District 4 Wildlife Projects:** District Biologist Fidorra met with RPM McCorquodale and R3 Director Livingston to discuss priorities, work plans, and project history for wildlife projects in District 4.

**Western Gray Squirrels:** Biologist Bernatowicz traveled to the Klickitat Wildlife Area to participate in the training session for western gray squirrel surveys. He assembled sampling tubes, glued in walnuts, and worked on route locations. The high density of roads and relatively small suitable stands has presented some challenges in finding good survey routes.

**Bighorn Sheep:** Biologist Bernatowicz corresponded with WSDOT biologist McAllister about the issue of bighorn sheep on highways. Biologist McAllister circled back to an old idea of pressure washing salt out of the divots. WDFW proposed the same idea over ten years ago, but it was nixed by WSDOT. The issue for WSDOT has always been one of highway safety. There have been very few bighorn sheep road kills, so WSDOT hasn't seen the need for temporarily closing the road so the divots can be washed. Dan, the owner of "Seadust," called with more questions on the current situation. Dan is still working on a potential system for applying "Seadust" to highways.

**Mountain Goats:** Biologist Bernatowicz continued working on organizing a ground survey of mountain goats between I-90 and Highway 2. The USFS was contacted regarding trail pass permits for volunteers. Hunter Education Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator Garcia posted the survey as a volunteer opportunity on the WDFW website. The Rocky Mountain Goat Alliance and other potential volunteers were notified of the posting and need to register online.

**Tribal Coordination:** Biologist Bernatowicz corresponded with Muckleshoot Biologist Vales about mountain goat, bighorn sheep and deer populations/permits/seasons. Biologist Bernatowicz also spoke with Yakama Nation (YN) Biologist Blodgett about bighorn sheep surveys and densities. Biologist Blodgett has some concerns about the current bighorn densities on YN and carrying capacities. Information on survey timing, District 8 bighorn densities, and a map of modeled sheep habitat on YN was forwarded to Biologist Blodgett.

**Osprey Nest Platform:** Biologist Bernatowicz followed up on a call regarding Pacific Power removing an osprey nest platform. Pacific Power had erected the platform to keep the birds off a power line, but had placed the pole on an irrigation district easement. The irrigation district

ordered that the pole be removed, which greatly upset a local resident who regularly watched the birds. Pacific Power is working on a solution and expected to have a new platform up soon.

**Bighorn Sheep Fieldtrip:** Biologist Moore ran a fieldtrip for Central Washington University students that focused on the 2009 Umtanum/Selah Butte pneumonia outbreak. Moore began with a presentation to build the students background on the issue and then we went to the field. In the field we discussed the proximity issues of domestic sheep, how to preform radio telemetry, and our lamb survival monitoring effort. Overall, the effort was a success and the students were able to use telemetry equipment to find collared ewes. Many ewes were observed with new born lambs.

**Western Gray Squirrel Training:** Biologists Moore and Bernatowicz traveled to the Klickitat Wildlife Area for training on the upcoming survey effort.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Wenas Wildlife Area:** Manager Confer Morris spent considerable time this week preparing materials for two public meetings next week on options for addressing target shooting issues on the Wenas Wildlife Area. The two evening (6 pm) meetings will be the 29<sup>th</sup> in Ellensburg and the 30<sup>th</sup> in Selah.

**Wenas WA Target Shooting:** Manager Confer Morris worked with HQ Lands Section Manager Posner, Lands Division Planner Demorest, RPM McCorquodale, and Public Affairs Manager Botka on a fact sheet regarding Wenas WA target shooting issues and proposals.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**LT Murray Wildlife Area:** Manager Winegeart gave two one-hour presentations at Lincoln Elementary School's Exploration Stations. Each student had an opportunity to use a radio telemetry receiver to find another student out of the group that was hiding a radio collar.

**Wildlife Management**

**Paterson Deer Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to monitor deer activity and damage issues at two large wine grape operations near Paterson. One day was spent instructing field workers on the set up and use of LP gas cannons, as well as techniques to improve hazing strategies. Overall, the extra hazing activity is showing positive results.

**Elk Fence Repair:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand inspected and repaired a small section of elk fence near Blackrock Orchards. Additional fencing will be needed in the near future as older, less valuable fruit trees are removed and replaced with younger, high density trees.

**Cold Creek Elk Activity:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with a wine grape producer in the Cold Creek area to discuss elk activity and possible damage impacts. Although several small groups of elk were observed outside Hanford in the general vicinity, no damage has occurred to his crops.

**Skunk Control:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand handled a call and provided advice to a landowner concerning skunk control and possible trapping techniques.

**Benton County Habitat Projects:** Private Lands Biologist Stutzman was in the field for parts of two days doing field visits with Benton County landowners and Technician Hightower from the Benton Conservation District. Both landowners are applying for BCD funds to do habitat projects of 10-15 acres with a mix of dryland and irrigated properties.

**BCD Habitat Planning:** Stutzman began writing the project plans for the BCD habitat projects. Plans must be completed by mid/late May. Stutzman and BCD staff will meet with one additional landowner this week.

**Hunt by Written Permission:** Stutzman contacted Hunt by Written Permission landowners about their 2014 permission slips. Stutzman also touched base with a local Boy Scout leader about the availability of the troop to help with projects.

**Elk Heights Elk Issue:** Conflict Specialist (CS) Wetzel discussed an ongoing elk issue with a landowner at Elk Heights. Herder Leuck monitored and hazed elk from this landowner's field several times this week. The elk that were using this area are starting to move west and numbers are decreasing.

**Teanaway Elk Issue:** CS Wetzel was contacted by a landowner in the Teanaway regarding elk in his hay fields. He entered into a DPCA and was given advice on hazing elk.

**Cle Elum Elk Issue:** CS Wetzel was contacted by a landowner in Cle Elum regarding elk in his hay fields. He entered into a DPCA and was given advice on hazing elk, as well as pyrotechnics (with agreement) to use.

**Elk Hazing:** Herder Leuck hazed elk from locations in Reecer and Caribou Creek.

**Deer Complaint:** CS Wetzel responded to a deer complaint by homeowners in Cle Elum. They inquired about fencing requirements for deer.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:** Manager Bjornstrom administered the monthly wildlife area staff meeting at the Pasco District Office. Topics discussed were the surplus of state owned equipment, continued cleanup efforts at the Sunnyside HQ facilities, the Ringold Hatchery restoration project, the Windmill Ranch Unit pivot replacement, the Sunnyside HQ Unit shop rebuild, I-Phone use for wildlife area staff, the Whitstran Unit access site relocation project, fire extinguisher maintenance needs, Department uniform requests, the wildlife area mapping project, service roads for pivots on Windmill Ranch, and the introduction of NRW2 Nnanabu to the staff.

**New Hire Paperwork and Expectations:** Manager Bjornstrom met with Assistant Manager Sak, NRT2 Medina, and newly hired temporary NRW2 Nnanabu at the Sunnyside HQ Unit for completion of hiring paperwork and new employee orientation. Staff discussed job expectations for NRW2 Nnanabu, covered safety protocol at the wildlife area, and confirmed a work schedule.

**LT Murray Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Hunt received a call from Mike Williams of DNR early Tuesday morning. A young man had trespassed into the winter closure area of the L.T. Murray on Monday night from the back side, using USFS and Wildlife Area roads. Ignoring all closure signage, he had then attempted to exit via Robinson Canyon Road, and come up to our locked gate in the elk fence. Undaunted, he cut the fence from top to bottom, drove around the gate, and kindly piecemealed it back together with zip ties. Little did he know that our impassable steel gate still lay ahead. So he left his truck that night and called DNR in the AM. Hunt forwarded the information to Enforcement, and Officer Scherzinger met our bold motorist for a visit and infraction information prior to letting him out the gate. Hunt repaired the fence on Wednesday.

**Grazing Management:** Grazing management is in full swing. Manager Winegeart completed 'pre-cow' forage monitoring on Vantage Highway pasture – cows are due to move into this pasture Monday. Tech Hill checked riparian hotwire exclosures on the Parke Creek rehab site, artisan well, and Little Parke Creek pond. The pond was working great, but the rehab and wellhead exclosures were both strung every which way where cows had pulled the wire through the brush to get to the streams. Hill restrung both fences and replaced a charger on the rehab site. As of noon Thursday, all exclosures were up with no cows in them.

**Parke Creek Boundary Fence:** Northwest Fence Co., the vendors hired to build the Parke Creek boundary fence, began construction on Monday. Manager Winegeart met on site with CAMP project manager Rusty Gigstead to discuss project details.

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

***Adult osprey at a local King County nest platform*** – Photo by Cecil Tyler

**Citizen Amphibian Breeding Site Documentation – Woodland Park Zoo and WDFW:** Biologist Anderson met with zoo staff regarding desired WDFW potential next steps in management of citizen efforts to document still-water amphibian breeding sites in King County. This includes providing baseline occurrence of Species of Greatest Conservation Need as well as species anecdotally considered common but with little formal documentation. Follow-up will occur within staff and project partners to move forward in streamlining and providing for project efforts.

***Adult western toads in amplexus with egg strands surrounding*** – Photo by C. Anderson, WDFW

**Lowland Pika Surveys:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra performed a survey of known sites and potential habitat within the project area in the lower Stillaguamish Valley. Trail cameras placed last week to capture pre-dawn activity captured images of pika. Further analysis is needed to see if it is possible to identify two separate individuals. Cameras were placed on one additional response location downslope to attempt to determine the number of individuals inhabiting this talus area.





*Pika observed by remote camera*

**Breeding Waterfowl Aerial Surveys:**

Assistant District Biologist Cyra prepped gear for the annual breeding waterfowl surveys beginning next week, and reviewed the survey SOP. This two to two and a half week survey transects across the entire state and involves numerous District, Assistant District, and Tribal Biologists as observers. It also depends on very generous staff support for flight following duties.

**San Juan Islands Species of Greatest Conservation Need Surveys:** Assistant District

Biologist Cyra visited cover boards placed in known Sharp-tailed snake habitat on Orcas Island. No Sharp-tailed snakes were located, but a young garter snake, two alligator lizards, and a sleepy mouse were found.



*Example of an asphalt roofing shingle cover board for Sharp-tailed snakes on Orcas Island*

**Island Marble Butterfly/Shaw Island Vole:** Biologist Milner joined researchers from UW and San Juan Islands National Historic Park staff at American Camp during the Park’s annual Bioblitz, a week long survey that records all species encountered in the Park. Traps were set for small mammals, especially the Shaw Island Vole, but none were caught. Island Marble Butterflies were seen flying at nearby Eagle Cove, and numerous garter snakes were caught and photographed for the Bioblitz. Park staff also provided a tour of their new native plant nursery, where various plants, including island marble host plants, are being reared, as well as a look at their butterfly rearing facilities, from which recently emerged butterflies will be released back into the wild.



*Individual Island Marble Butterfly chrysalises in the rearing facility at San Juan Island National Historic Park*

**Sharp-tailed Snake Citizen Science Surveys:** Biologist Milner launched a landowner-based survey for sharp-tailed snakes on San Juan Island. An evening presentation was followed by a field demonstration the next day. The star of the evening was Quercus, the snake used to train sniffer dogs that were trialed as a potential way to find the snakes. Attendees of the evening talks were able to see a real sharp-tail as part of their training. Partners in the project include the San Juan County Land Bank and San Juan Island National Historic Park.



*“Quercus” helps train citizen naturalists on San Juan Island*

**Loon Surveys:** Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn surveyed the loon territory at Hozomeen Lake where two adults were observed courting. DeBruyn also accompanied biologists from Puget Sound Energy on their monthly loon surveys of Baker Lake and Lake Shannon. Some time was spent repairing and refurbishing artificial nesting platforms. Two loons were observed but no reproductive activity was noted.



*Artificial nest platform for Common Loons at Baker Lake*

**Wildlife Permitting and Consultation - USFWS:** Biologist Anderson provided consultation related to state laws in response to an inquiry by local USFWS staff. They wanted to know how/what is required of property owners to meet state regulations to remove an inactive osprey nest. The state of Washington protects bird nests year-round and has internal protocols for providing requests to remove nests to meet state law.

## Wildlife Conflict Management

**Black-tailed Deer Damage Prevention and Education Meeting:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell, District Biologist Milner, and Law Enforcement personnel attended a black-tailed deer damage meeting in Coupeville, WA. The meeting was developed to inform members of the public about ways to live with wildlife (specifically deer) and prevent wildlife damage. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife staff provided a formal presentation, fielded questions from the public on how to handle different situations, and provided everyone in attendance with their contact information.

## Wildlife Areas

**Cherry Valley Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with staff from Sound Salmon Solutions to discuss restoration planting and maintenance plans for the Waterwheel Creek Project. New funding from King County will provide up to ten additional acres of riparian planting as a continuation of the project. Manager Boehm continues to work collaboratively with the Dike District on the repairs to the dike that breached in December 2014. Manager Boehm also met with two dog trainers who use the unit for training their pointing dogs. A demonstration of some of the techniques was provided as well as a discussion on the requirements and challenges of training this type of hunting dog. Manager Boehm also provided perspective on management of the unit, which includes agriculture, salmon recovery projects, invasive weed control, and changing and growing user groups who enjoy the unit for various activities.

**Ebey Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Sno-Valley Farms representatives to discuss planting plans for the new agricultural lease on the middle and west portions of the unit. Approximately 150 acres of various crops will be planted, with 30 acres retained for wildlife forage and cover.

*Ebey west loben being worked up for crop land*



**Lake Terrell Waterfowl Trapping:** Natural Resource Tech Deyo continued trapping waterfowl on the Lake Terrell Unit. Over 25 individual wood ducks have been trapped and banded. Several are using nest boxes on the area.

**Lake Terrell Barley Fields:** Natural Resource Tech Deyo continued working up the barley fields at Lake Terrell. All fields have now been disked once, and half of them have been disked twice.

**Scotch Broom Control:** Natural Resource Tech Deyo performed scotch broom control using herbicides on the Lake Terrell and Intalco Units.

***Aquatic Invasive Species wording at the Kenmore boat ramp***

**Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw presented updates on the project to the Stillaguamish Watershed Council at their monthly meeting and answered questions from the group. Brokaw also sent an update to the project's Stakeholder Advisory Committee and posted several new materials on the project webpage at: [http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/skagit/leque\\_island\\_project.php](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/skagit/leque_island_project.php).



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

**Wildlife Management**

**Forest Plan Revision:** Biologist Yarborough attended the US Forest Service listening session regarding the upcoming Forest Plan revisions. The Pacific Northwest Region is beginning a public conversation of the process for revising land management plans in the Northwest Forest Plan amendment area. The land management plans within the Northwest Forest Plan area guide how the resources will be managed for 15-20 years. Biologist Yarborough will continue to attend all meetings related to this to provide input on wildlife issues.

**Whidbey Island Deer Feeding Presentation:** Biologist Milner, backed by Enforcement Officer Ralph Downes and Biologist Caldwell, gave a talk in Coupeville discussing the reasons why WDFW discourages the public from feeding deer. Milner discussed the negative impacts to the deer themselves, the people, and the environment. Of particular note is deer predation on the threatened Golden Paintbrush plant, which is being reared for seed by a local NGO.

***Golden Paintbrush field on Whidbey Island. Flowering plants on the left are fenced from deer, plants on the right have been eaten by deer*** – Photo courtesy of Joe Sheldon



## **Wildlife Areas**

**Lake Terrell Pheasant Pen Repairs:** A Master Hunter volunteer continued repair work on the pheasant pens. Old poultry wire had broken down and was removed. Manager Kessler ordered in the new poultry wire, which will be installed this week.

**Samish River Unit Wetland Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit WLA Manager Rotton worked with the WDFW Lacey Construction Shop to get cost estimates for each of the tasks that the WDFW shop is interested in building. Brokaw and Rotton will review the cost estimates, and will likely need to amend the project budget accordingly.

**Skagit ESA Restoration and Waterfowl Management:** Program Manager Link convened a meeting with Regional Director Everitt, Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Habitat Planner Friebel, and Lands Agent Iris to discuss needs for WDFW to continue to provide waterfowl forage and upland hunting areas in light of ongoing habitat restoration efforts.

**Island Unit:** Cosgrove spent three days preparing fields on the Island Unit for agricultural and moist-soil enhancements. Low river levels and drier than normal conditions enabled disking and chisel plowing in lower areas that are typically too wet at this time of year.

**Samish Unit:** The contract farmer has started field preparations on the site for the agricultural enhancements.

## **Private Lands/Access Management**

**Diversity/Wildlife Viewing Site:** Natural Resource Technician Otto completed nest box and bat box installs on a private lands diversity site in Skagit County. Biologist Hans created comment cards for Region 4's new diversity site. Technician Otto installed these comment cards at the site. Separately, Technician Otto also worked on the Whidbey Island diversity site. Technician Otto was able to complete trail and vegetation maintenance, allowing improved access down to the beach.



*This week Natural Resource Technician Otto finished hanging several bat boxes and wood duck boxes at the Swan Road Wildlife Viewing/Diversity Site in Skagit County.*

**Spring Bear Hunt Management:** Biologist Hans and Natural Resource Technician Otto surveyed the Monroe and North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt areas. Technician Otto also fielded many calls from the spring bear hunters in the Skagit and Monroe Units. Topics were mainly about road systems, gate access, downed trees from recent wind events and recent bear activity. During the week, Technician Otto checked multiple gates, cleared downed trees, and checked for recent bear damage activity. Biologist Hans met with the final three hunters who were unable to attend the spring bear hunt meeting on 4/11/15.

*Areas tree damage is strategically targeted by spring bear hunters to reduce bear depredation on trees.*



**Private Land Access Management:**

Biologist Hans drafted contracts for new waterfowl and elk hunt sites in the Acme area. She is coordinating with the landowner to establish boundaries, parking lots, and other logistics. Biologist Hans contacted another landowner in the Acme area to set-up a meeting and discuss the landowner's property and its potential as a waterfowl hunt site. Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Biologist Hans met with Wildlife Area Manager Boehm to discuss coordination efforts around his managerial units. Many promising discussions took place. Private Land Access staff is looking forward to providing additional opportunity for public access around these areas.

**New Private Waterfowl Hunting Club Meeting:** Supervisory Biologist Caldwell briefly met with a new Skagit County waterfowl hunting outfit. The two representatives for the club expressed that they wanted to work with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Several aspects of their operation gained management interest. Biologist Caldwell will follow up on these interests throughout the summer.

### Hunter Education/Volunteer Work

**Volunteer Coordination:** Volunteer Coordinator Dazey continues to work with Master Hunter applicants to find volunteer service opportunities with DFW. Dazey also referred an Eagle Scout candidate who was looking to provide a service project to WDFW to Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm.

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

### Wildlife Management

**Vashon Coyote Working Group:** Biologist Anderson met with local sheep farm owners, USDA Wildlife Services staff, Vashon Land Trust, King County, and Vashon Nature Center staff regarding coyote activity and sheep depredations. The group discussed recent past happenings, management options, and working group collaboration.

### Wildlife Areas

**Volunteer Opportunities:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Bran Boehm continues to work with WDFW Volunteer Coordinator Steve Dazey to sign up community and Master Hunter volunteers for upcoming field work. Master Hunter volunteers are currently assisting with a parking lot monitoring project on the four pheasant release sites.

**Washington State High School Natural Resources Competition:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw hosted a station and served as a judge at the Washington State Future Farmers of America Natural Resources Competition. The theme of the WDFW station in the competition was “Environmental Analysis,” at which contestants identified plants and animals, analyzed food web dynamics, and assessed habitat. Winners of the competition advance to the National competition to represent Washington.

***Contestants from the Puyallup Future Farmers of America chapter participating at the WDFW station of the Natural Resources Competition.***



**Skagit Headquarters:** Manager Rotton and Meis reviewed variance reports and are working on the outstanding agricultural enhancement expenditures expected before the end of the biennium. Manager Rotton toured the site of proposed hazard tree removal for Skagit Headquarters. Manager Rotton continued to coordinate with the contracts group regarding the Island Barge and Boat agreement. Cosgrove picked up garbage, checked signs, and monitored public use at the Fir Island Farms, Jensen, and North Fork Units. Meis and Cosgrove mowed fields, dikes, and blackberries at the Headquarters Unit and the Moberg Road property. Cosgrove performed routine maintenance on the John Deere 5300 tractor and rotary cutter. NRT Cosgrove cleaned and removed the rotary cutter and attached the 100 gallon boom sprayer for use next week spraying poison hemlock at the Leque Island Unit.

**Fir Island Farms Unit:** Manager Rotton continues to work with Environmental Planner Jenna Friebel regarding construction and land management details for the Fir Island Farms projects. Manager Rotton drafted final language for the Fir Island Farms lease and is working on a contract planting agreement for the Fir Island Farms project.

**Samish Unit:** Meis sprayed poison hemlock, pruned back trees in the parking lot area, and picked up litter.

**Samish River Unit:** Manager Rotton toured the Samish River Unit to discuss post project planting with representatives of Skagit Audubon and Skagit Land Trust. The focus of the discussion was related to the success of other wetland restoration planting efforts, as well as species composition and the structure of plantings for bird use. Manager Rotton and Restoration Projects Coordinator Loren Brokaw attended a Dike District #5 meeting to coordinate permitting needs and construction windows for the Samish and Samish River Unit wetland enhancement projects proposed for this summer. Manager Rotton has been coordinating with CAMP staff and NRCS on construction and budget details for the Samish River Unit.

**Leque Island:** Meis sprayed poison hemlock, placed a No Unauthorized Vehicles Past This Point sign at the parking lot, and picked up trash in the parking area.

### **Private Lands/Access**

Access staff from Region 4 opened several sites region wide for the lowland lakes fishing season kickoff on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

*Staff fixed the boat ramp approach road at Lake Armstrong prior to opening day*





*Repairs to the boat ramp at Lake Stickney took place. Concrete planks were moved back into position and new anchor bolts were used to attach the planks back together.*



*Fish stocking at Lake Stickney prior to lowland lake fishing season*

### **Wildlife Conflict Management**

**Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with the owner of Mount Josephine Vineyards to discuss the finalization of a fence contract to eliminate elk damage to a grape vineyard. Specialist Witman also met with several agricultural land owners in Skagit County to discuss upcoming crop damage prevention strategies that would be implemented to mitigate elk damage. Specialist Witman, along with a tribal co-manager representative, met with a landowner in Darrington that has had historic elk damage and was concerned about the presence of elk during the upcoming crop season. The landowner was provided with a damage prevention agreement which he is currently reviewing. Further discussions are also in the work for co-managers to provide fencing assistance for the property.

## **Hunter Education/Volunteer Work**

**Instructor Applicant Support:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey conducted the final session of a pre-service training for hunter education instructor applicants in the South King County area. The PST was held at the Black Diamond Gun range. This session was the opportunity for the instructor applicants to teach an actual class of hunter education students. Ten new instructors were certified, along with 17 students who passed their hunter safety.

**Hunter Education Instructor Support:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey delivered supplies to instructor Ira Gross who is starting a new team in the Mountlake Terrace area. Dazey assisted Ira in getting a venue to teach and the supplies needed to conduct classes. Ira will be teaching one on-line evaluation a month until hunting season starts in October. Dazey assisted new Chief Instructor John Malek to post a class and also to close his class. Malek plans on holding field skills evaluations at the Black Diamond Gun Club during the fall months from August to November. Coordinator Dazey activated six hunter education classes for instructors in Region 4

**Teaching Team Evaluations:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey evaluated and assisted Chief Instructor Bill Vincent to hold a day time field skills evaluation at the Region 4 office in Mill Creek. Eighteen students passed their hunter education. The class was a day time weekday class starting at 8am Monday. Since it was well attended, Chief Instructor Vincent plans on holding another daytime weekday class at the Region 4 office in May

**Master Hunter Permit Program:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey continues to receive calls from master hunter applicants seeking volunteer opportunities, CORT training dates, and other questions about the master hunter program. Dazey attended the Master Hunter Advisory Group meeting in Ellensburg and spoke about master hunter service to the WDFW.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Professional Development Plans:** Biologist Yarborough and DeBruyn completed their yearly expectation and evaluation documents. Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with WDFW Region 4 Wildlife Program Manager Russell Link to discuss the 2015 Performance and Development Plan.

**Unit Tours:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Cole J. Caldwell, Private Lands & Wildlife Conflict Supervisory Biologist to tour the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Units. This was Cole's first visit to the units since he accepted his position. Management plans and strategies were discussed as well as sharing contact information for a number of neighbors who may be interested in the Private Lands program.



*Staff assisted the Fish Program with creel surveys at Region 4 lakes for Saturday's opening day of lowland lake trout season. The photographs show a young lady and dad catching the first fish of her life at Cottage Lake and a mom and son leaving the lake with a limit of large rainbow trout.*

**Volunteer Staff Meeting:** Volunteer Coordinator Dazey attended a hunter education/volunteer staff meeting working group in Ellensburg to cover volunteer efforts from the coordinators and how we can improve our service to the master hunters and also assist the department in volunteer coordination.

**Professional Development Training:** Biologist Hans attended a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife webinar, which discussed cougars in Washington and their management.

## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Western Gray Squirrel Training:** Biologists Anderson, Bergh, Doorly, Van Leuven, and Stephens participated in a western gray squirrel survey training conducted by Researcher Vander Haegen of the Science Division in Olympia. The training was held at the Klickitat Wildlife Area. Over the next three years, WDFW will be conducting a state-wide survey to better understand the current abundance and distribution of this state threatened species. Surveys will be conducted in Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat Counties during the months of May – September.

**Sandhill Crane Coordinated Survey:** Biologists Anderson and Bergh assisted the USFWS with two days of sandhill crane nesting surveys associated with Conboy National Wildlife Refuge and the Glenwood Valley. This survey is conducted every year to count the number of early season

nesting crane pairs that have initiated nesting. This year's water levels in the Glenwood Valley are below average for this time of the year and may have an impact on sandhill crane nesting success. Follow-up ground and air surveys will be conducted throughout the summer to determine the current status of the breeding population.



### ***Biologist Bergh Conducting Sandhill Crane Nest Survey***

#### **Western Pond Turtle Trapping:**

Biologists Bergh, Doorly, and Hallock, along with Veterinarian Haman, continued the trapping effort to catch western pond turtles at the Sondino population site this week. This spring's trapping effort has two goals: one is to find wild turtles that are between 1-5 years old for a study on how bone density and morphology might affect the turtle's susceptibility to shell disease, and the other is to perform a health assessment and collect samples that will help determine if there are genetic differences between healthy turtles and those with shell disease. Hatchling turtles will be captured opportunistically and brought to the Oregon Zoo as part of the headstarting program to grow them large enough to be less vulnerable to predation. This week a total of 54 turtles were captured, and 33 of those turtles were not recaptures from last week and were sampled for genetics. No wild turtles aged 1-5 were captured, and 11 hatchlings were captured and sent to the Oregon zoo.

**Mount St. Helens Elk Herd Population Survey:** Biologists Stephens and Holman generated the population estimates from the Mount St. Helens elk herd survey conducted in March. The annual survey consists of flying survey units with a helicopter, locating, counting, and classifying elk. The survey takes place of a sub-set of the Mount St. Helens elk herd area and includes portions of Game Management Units 520 (Winston), 522 (Loo-Wit), 524 (Margaret), 550 (Coweeman), and 556 (Toutle). The raw counts of the animals are then mathematically corrected to account for animals that aren't seen during the survey.

This year's survey resulted in a total estimate of 2,856 elk within the surveyed area. This indicates an increase in the population from the 2014 estimate of 2,368. It's likely that the observed increase in the estimate is reflective of the mild 2014-15 winter and reduced antlerless hunting opportunities during 2014.

**Elk Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys:** Biologists George and Stephens conducted a hoof disease prevalence survey in the Randle and Packwood area located primarily on private land. There were 118 elk observed during the survey and three were observed limping. To date, 135 hoof disease surveys have been completed by volunteers and another 25 have been completed by WDFW staff. 150 observations have been submitted online. Additional surveys will be completed through May 2nd. Data from this extensive effort will be analyzed over the coming months and results will be presented in the future.

## **Cowlitz Wildlife Area**

**Kosmos Flats Vehicular Vandalism:** The Kosmos flats were checked earlier in the month and it was noted that someone had driven out onto the exposed lakebed, past our gate closure, performing cookies and mudding. The vehicle had entered off the old Glenoma Road on the left (south side) about 25 yards before the gate. Due to higher than expected water levels in Riffe Lake during the summer of 2014, the large woody debris field that usually protects the Wildlife Area during low water moved further east. The shift in the woody debris had left openings in the grass just off the shoulder of the road for the vehicle to meander around onto the flat and access back onto the road past the gate. Wildlife Area staff had large woody debris moved along the road and concrete ecology blocks were situated for better security by the gate if this situation arises again. The Wildlife Area does open this gate for summer recreation when the water level rises over sensitive sites that are being protected from human disturbance.

**Peterman / Kosmos/ Trout Hatchery Unit Vegetation Management:** With a nice break in the weather, Wildlife Area staff were able to continue spring vegetation control. On the Peterman Unit, staff completed eight miles of roadside spraying on the 1000, 1300, and 1700 line systems. The roadsides and parking lots around the Kosmos Unit were also finished, as well as scotch broom control on the Trout Hatchery Unit.

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

## **Wildlife Management**

**2015 Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations Pamphlet:** Regional Wildlife Biologists and Customer Service Staff fielded many contacts from the hunting public following the release of the 2015 Big Game Pamphlet. Changes in the Regulations that are particularly relevant on a local level include the significant increase in opportunities for muzzleloader elk, the later dates for archery elk, the changing of most of GMU 524 (Margaret) over to general season elk hunting, increased opportunities for youth hunters and those with disabilities, as well as the ongoing challenges related to private industrial forestland owners limiting access to their lands. Prospective special permit applicants are reminded that the application deadline is May 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **Private Lands/Access**

**Turkey Hunters:** Private Lands/Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald fielded phone calls and emails about turkey hunting in Klickitat County. For more information about private farmland and timberlands open to public hunting, visit the WDFW public hunting access webpage at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting\\_access/private\\_lands/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/).

**Public Access:** Private Lands/Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald gave a hunter access point on Western Pacific Timberland (WPT) in Klickitat County a spring cleaning. A great deal of trash was removed from the parking area and a reader board was repainted.



*WPT reader board before and after*

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

**Cowlitz Wildlife Area**

**Hunter Education Class:** Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Vanderlip helped conduct a two day traditional hunter education class in the Randle / Packwood area for students. The students are educated on a variety of subjects including firearms safety, conservation issues and values, ethics, and what constitutes sportsmanlike behavior. They are also introduced to the topics of first aid and survival. At the completion of the instructional portion of the class, the students take a 75 question multiple choice true/false test, and must complete it with a score of no less than 80 percent. The written test is followed by skills evaluation, which is conducted on a simulated field course.

**D-10 Wildlife Conflict**

**Bear Damage:** Conflict Specialist Conklin spent a day with a hound hunter that hunts for Weyerhaeuser Company. They traveled along Weyerhaeuser roads in Cowlitz County looking for fresh bear damage on Conifers. Conklin was impressed with the hunter's ability to determine old damage from new. She also talked to him about changing hunt boundaries for next year's bear damage hunts. He was able to provide some insight from a hunter's point of view.

**Cougar:** Conflict Specialist Conklin was notified by Enforcement of two cougar depredations on goats in the Randle area. The cougar had taken two goats and cached them near the small hobby farm. Enforcement called a hound hunter who treed the cougar very near the kill sites. The adult female cougar was dispatched and biological samples were taken. This is the fourth cougar that has been taken in a one month period in this same general area. All had depredated on livestock.



**Treed cougar** – Photo by Officer Schroeder

**Elk:** Conflict Specialist Conklin visited a farm that was transplanting Swiss chard. This Boistfort Valley farm incurs considerable damage from elk each year. Due to the high value crops and the labor intensive manner in which the plants are transplanted, Conklin wanted to understand the whole process in order to assist this farmer more effectively in the future. A total of six individuals work to feed the machine that plants the chard.



*Swiss chard transplants are placed between the forks that rotate down and push the plants into the ground*



*Steel wheels then tamp the chard into the dirt*



*This secures the Swiss chard into the substrate where it continues to grow. The plant is left to go to seed. The seeds are then harvested for seed markets.*

### **D-9 Wildlife Conflict**

**Turkey:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald was able to connect a hunter with a landowner in Klickitat County who has over 100 turkeys visiting his property. The turkeys wreak havoc on the landowner's garden and leave messes on his deck, and he was happy to accommodate the hunter. The hunter harvested a 25-pound tom with a nine-inch beard and inch long spurs that were well worn out.

### *Turkey hunter in Klickitat*

**Deer and Elk:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald continues to work with a Skamania County vineyard sustaining deer damage to their vines. The vineyard will net the grapes as soon as their spring vine work is done. The vineyard owner will try a test of the spray repellent PlantSkydd this week. Elk are an ongoing issue for Trout Lake farmers in Klickitat County. One dairy reported elk on a field at 2pm in 70 degree weather.



*Elk on dairy farm fields*

### **REGION 6**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

#### **Taylor's Checkerspot Reintroduction:**

Biologists Linders, Randolph, and Hynson

completed three additional surveys of Range 76 (population source and only extant site), two of which occurred on days when Range 50 was also surveyed. On 20 April, Range 76 had an estimated count of 663 checkerspots, the highest count so far. Counts on 25 (225) and 27 (314) April however, were considerably lower than those reported from Range 50 (410, 617, respectively). The main survey area at Range 76 is twice as large as that at Range 50. Four additional lines were surveyed at the north end of the Range 76 survey grid on 27 April, where 187 adults were counted. Counts in this area in 2014 were nearly twice as large. Training is allowed off-road in the northern portion of Range 76, and while restricted to roads in the middle portion, the expansive road network supports the majority of the host plant (Plantain) that sits in close association with high quality nectar resources, which are attractive to males and females alike. Little Plantain is evident in many areas heavily used in the past, and on the north end of the site, females were observed searching for oviposition sites where recent off-road driving had flattened the plants.

A survey at Scatter Creek on 21 April turned in a count of 141 adults, the highest count for any reintroduction site other than Range 50. Counts at Glacial Heritage and TA7S on 22 April were

47 and 52, respectively. The count at Glacial Heritage was lower than the previous count, which was also the case at TA7S, where 28 checkerspots were counted on 27 April. Two checkerspots were observed in the area where larvae from the Oregon Zoo were released in mid-March. No checkerspots were observed at Pacemaker on JBLM on 21 April.

One Mardon skipper was observed on 27 April at Range 50 and another one the same day at Range 76.

**Taylor's Checkerspot Captive Rearing:** Twenty adult females were collected from Range 76 on 25 April. Ten were sent to each of the two rearing facilities (the Oregon Zoo and Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women). Three breeding introductions have been successful so far at Mission Creek.

### **Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Surveys – Clallam County**

#### **West of Port Angeles, Southern Extant Site**

**April 20, 2015:** Biologist McMillan conducted a TCB survey on April 20, 2015 with excellent weather conditions, 66 degrees F, B-0 conditions and 0% Cloud cover; Segments 25 meter lengths.

Central DK Area:

Tie-Through 9 habitat segments – 24 TCBs

#### **West of Port Angeles, Northern Extant Site**

**April 22, 2015:** District Biologist McMillan conducted a TCB survey at the farthest west TCB site. The weather conditions were good although less than 55 degrees F at the beginning (13:00) and end (16:00) of the survey effort. There was full sunshine and shadows present for the entire survey. Biologist McMillan counted a total of 213 Taylor's checkerspot butterflies during the survey. Upper Route – 127, U2 area – 51, E Series – 0, Lower – 35.

#### **West of Port Angeles, Searching areas**

**April 19, 2015:** Biologist McMillan conducted searching surveys at Ocean View Cemetery & along the north side of the Port Angeles Airport. Searching also extended into the Little River Valley and the Elwha Valley south of Hwy 101. No Taylor's checkerspots were observed.

**Sequim Site:** Biologist Ament conducted her fourth survey of the season at this known TCB site on April 20, 2015. The survey met protocol with full sunshine and prominent shadows for the entire survey. The temperature was > 55 degrees with less wind than usual for the site. A total of 470 TCBs were observed during the survey. The landowners have decided to no longer have WDFW conduct surveys on the property this season. However, the biologist working on the property will be continuing to survey every week.

**Dead Ravens:** Biologist Ament took a call on April 21<sup>st</sup> from a vet assistant at Greywolf Vet Clinic. A woman had brought in a sick raven that she collected from her pasture located in

eastern Jefferson County (near Gardiner). The raven was having a hard time standing up. It later died and Dr. Tyler reported that the raven seemed to be in good condition and he could find no obvious injuries. The woman who brought it in said she was told there was another dead raven (and maybe two) in the same pasture. Biologist Ament called and spoke with the RP. They have a 50-acre pasture where they have some longhorn cattle. They sometimes feed the steers some cob corn. Apparently there are up to 30 ravens in the area at times. The RP wondered if they could have consumed molding corn or was even more concerned that they may have consumed some type of poison. A neighbor had told her yesterday that there were at least two dead ravens in the pasture. The RP did collect two more dead ravens and brought them to Greywolf. Some predation has occurred on these birds. She reported that they have a burn/slash pile on the property that contained some wood molding that was brightly painted with red and purple paint. It was obvious to her and her husband that some birds had been pecking aggressively at the molding. They did not actually see any ravens at the molding but wondered if they may have consumed the paint. Biologist Ament contacted WDFW vet staff and then contacted the NWHC regarding the incident. NWHC staff requested that the dead intact raven be sent in to determine the cause of death and wanted Biologist Ament to keep the other dead ravens frozen at this time.

**Harbor Seals:** Biologist Murphie travelled to Courtenay, B.C. with Steve Jeffries and the DFW Marine Mammal Unit to provide harbor seal capture support to researchers from the University of British Columbia and the Vancouver Aquarium. Their principal objectives center on the foraging ecology of harbor seals. A new instrument is being tested that has the ability to read PIT tags present in salmon consumed. Additional data on location and dive behavior will be recorded. Eight of a desired twenty seals were fitted with instruments last week. Capture efforts continue this week.



*A partially sedated seal in a restraint while instruments are glued into place*

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Sustainability in Prisons Project Summit at the Evergreen State College:** Biologist Linders participated in a panel discussion regarding conservation programs in correctional facilities. Over 100 people were in attendance at the two day conference, most representing correctional facilities from across Washington, but a few were also in attendance from Oregon and from other organizations engaged with corrections.

**Taylor's Checkerspot Reintroduction in the News:** An article in the online newsletter for The Wildlife Society was reposted after several inaccuracies were corrected by Biologist Linders.  
<http://wildlife.org/zoo-reared-endangered-butterfly-released-into-the-wild/>

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**USFWS contract award:** Biologist Linders was awarded USFWS funding to continue Taylor's checkerspot rearing and reintroductions in 2016. The project was funded at the requested amount.