

# Wildlife Program

Week of August 17 – August 23, 2015

## **WOLF ACTIVITIES**

### **Region 1 Wolf Activities**

**Chronology Updates:** Supervisor McCanna coordinated with Wildlife Conflict Specialists Shepherd and Bennett to update the Dirty Shirt and Huckleberry chronology of events.

**Huckleberry Conference Call:** Region 1 staff participated in a Huckleberry wolf conference call with Olympia staff regarding the next steps.

**Coordination with Spokane Tribe of Indians:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett was contacted by a section manager from the Spokane Tribe about a recent monthly report regarding wolf activity in the Huckleberry pack area. A photo and additional information on locations were provided to the section manager and their big game research biologist.

**Communication with Producer in the Huckleberry Area:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett made contact with three producers in the Huckleberry pack territory regarding a damage claim payment, collar locations, and a data sharing agreement.

**Communication with Producer in Whitman County:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett made contact with a producer in Whitman County about a 2014 Damage Claim and to see how things were going. There have been no sheep losses or depredations by any predators to their flock.

**Huckleberry Chronology Creation:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett created a Huckleberry chronology surrounding the recent guard dog depredation. All communications with producers in the area have been compiled in a spreadsheet for Olympia and others. Supervisor McCanna and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Shepherd will add other pertinent information as needed.

### **Region 3 Wolf Activities**

**Teardown Timeline:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel logged entries into the timeline. An investigation of a dead sheep in the Middle Creek drainage was conducted this week. The sheep had been killed by a cougar and consumed. Wolves had investigated the leftover carcass parts and appeared to have left the area.

**Livestock Producer Contacts:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel talked with both producers this week regarding range conditions and watering areas. Sheep are moving long distances every other day to water.

***Some guard dogs on duty near Red Top Lookout***

**Wolf Activity:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel and Range Riders McBride and Johnson monitored wolf activity near cattle and sheep this week. McBride was not available two days this week, and Biologist Parks checked some heavy cattle concentration areas in Indian Creek. Radio-collared wolves were frequenting the east side of the valley. Separate wolf tracks were located on Cle Elum Ridge and along the main Teanaway River.



**District 8 Wolf Observations:** Biologist Moore has continued to monitor WDFW's online wolf observations and hunter online reports for new wolf activity in District 8. The number of reports within the district has been extremely low over the summer. Moore will continue to check these sources during the hunting season to look for new leads on potential wolf packs within the district.

**SCIENCE DIVISION**

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

**Grouse:** Michael Schroeder (WDFW Research Scientist) provided the following update on sharp-tailed grouse in north-central Washington. The Okanogan Complex wildfire has had a major impact on sharp-tailed grouse, at least in the short term. The Tunk Valley population had five active leks with an estimated population of about 100 grouse. All of the leks and the nearby nesting and wintering habitat were within the burn perimeter. The Scotch Creek population had four active leks with an estimated population of about 100 grouse. Three of the four leks were within the burn perimeter, but the fire appeared to miss the major winter habitat along Scotch Creek. The fire also burned an active lek area in the northern portion of the Colville Indian Reservation (population estimate of about 60 grouse). It is not clear how many grouse survived the fire and where they are residing. It also is not clear how long the areas will take to recover, particularly the winter habitat. The bottom line on the grouse situation is that the wildfires have burned habitat supporting about 70% of the known sharp-tailed grouse population in the northern two thirds of Okanogan County or at least 25% of the population statewide.

Implications are negative in the short term and maybe in the long term. In the past we have had discussions about how portions of the Tunk Valley might have benefitted from some controlled burning to increase the ratio of grass to shrub cover. However, with a fire of this extent, the population may not survive long enough to 'benefit' from potential long-term improvements in habitat.

Incidentally, a website

(<http://gacc.nifc.gov/nwcc/interactivemap/index.html?webmap=ed0a7dad32fe4848b20c6f91c74c79ea>) provides relatively recent maps of the burned areas, as well as fire perimeters for the major fires back through 2000. Two of the most interesting observations are: (1) the massive extent of the fires from 2000 through 2015, and (2) the relatively small amount of overlap among the fires. The large fires in 1994 and 1998 are consistent with the previous observations. Almost all of north-central Washington has burned in the last 20 years.

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

**Shrub-steppe Conservation:** Wildlife Diversity Division hosted a WDFW cross-program shrub-steppe workshop on July 28-29 in Ellensburg. District Biologists, Assistant District Biologists, Habitat Program Biologists, Private Lands Biologists, Wildlife Area Managers, and both Wildlife and Habitat Program Managers from Regions 1, 2, 3, and 5, as well as HQ Wildlife and Habitat program staff, attended (~60 attendees). The group discussed conservation actions, successes, information gaps, and needs. Sonia Hall of the Arid Lands Initiative (ALI), a multi-partner landscapes effort, presented an overview of the ALI prioritization process and assessment. All participants engaged in several regional and multi-regional breakouts which will inform a two-year action plan and associated workplans for shrub-steppe conservation.

**Nongame Technical Committee:** Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan attended the Pacific Flyway Council meeting in Reno, Nevada. Joe represents WDFW on the Nongame Technical Committee, one of the council's two technical committees. The Nongame Technical Committee developed several products – some of them jointly with the (Waterfowl) Study Committee – and presented them to council for approval. Products submitted to the council included recommendations relating to the following issues: 1) regulations for subsistence harvest in Alaska, 2) collaborate process for the Southern Wings Program, 3) process for developing and submitting proposals of “National Conservation Needs” to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 4) Pacific Flyway participation on the Avian Knowledge Network steering committee (Joe will represent the flyway on this committee), and 5) authorization of incidental take under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (this recommendation included a comment letter that was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Joe also helped present an update, with Waterfowl Section Manager Don Kraege, on a North American waterfowl and wetland conservation survey under development by a team of scientists and a Human Dimensions Working Group in which Joe and Don are members.

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

**eBird Northwest – Interactions with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife:** Citizen Science Coordinator Wendy Connally worked with Bill Tweit, John Alexander, and Ann Kreager (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife) to create and deliver an eBird Northwest

presentation for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and several other bird and bird habitat conservation partners in Salem, Oregon. The presentation was well-received, and there were approximately 17 attendees in person and a dozen via webinar. The connections we made at the presentation have started the conversation to bring ODFW and a few more Oregon-focused partners into portal steering, funding, and content development. Wendy subsequently followed up on contacts made at the Oregon presentation, including an article for Salem Audubon which will help their chapter engage in the regional portal Citizen Science activities and encourage new bird survey project design around Oregon Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Several of the Oregon SGCN bird species are also on the Washington list, so projects could be designed to collect information that would benefit both states' shared priorities.

## **REGION 1**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Pre-Season Deer Surveys:** Biologist Lowe conducted four ground deer surveys, including two in GMU 136, one in GMU 127, and one in GMU 130. Biologist Atamian conducted two ground surveys, one in GMU 127 and one in GMU 124. Fewer deer than usual were observed on most of the survey routes, but plenty of turkeys. Conditions have been smoky due to wildfires.



*Yearling white-tailed buck in GMU 127*



*A group of mule deer near Spangle in GMU 127*

**Eloika Lake Townshend's Big-eared Bat Colony:** Biologist Atamian checked the Townshend's colony that Ferguson worked to protect in the early 2000s. The colony was active, with ~400 individuals clustered in two groups on the north and south side of the main roof beam.



*Two clusters (red circles) of  
Townshend's Big-eared Bats*



*Close up of individual Townshend's Big-eared  
Bat*

*Close up of south side cluster*

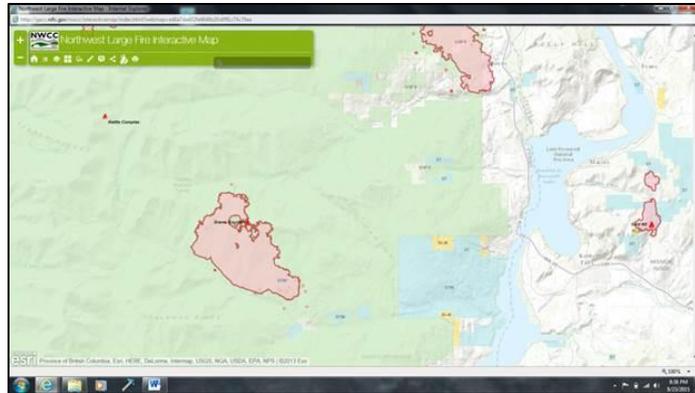
**GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY  
ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY  
CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN  
OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE,  
AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY  
CUSTOMER SERVICE**

**Wildlife Areas/Water Access Sites**



**SCWA Headquarters Fire Camp:** WAAM Palmer was contacted over the weekend by Fire Logistics Coordinator Scott Sergeant with a request to set up a fire camp in the old fields in front of the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area headquarters as part of efforts associated with the Kettle Complex fires. Natural Resource Technician Christensen spent the first two days of the week mowing the eight acres of old fields in preparation for the fire camp set up, and communicating with Mr. Sergeant. By the end of the week the decision was made to set up the fire camp with the incident command center, displaced from the Republic School, to a larger location a few miles north of the wildlife area. The Sherman Creek Wildlife Area headquarters is considered an alternate location for a fire camp if the need arises. According to the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center website, the Graves Mountain Fire has burned across a 65 acre satellite parcel, the westernmost portion of Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. Below is a screen shot from

the NWCC website, showing the Graves Mountain Fire. Sherman Creek Wildlife Area properties are shown in blue and labeled with STW. Other nearby fires include the Gold Hill Fire to the east near Kettle Falls, the Renner Fire to the northeast, and the much larger Stickpin Fire to the north (not shown on the map).



**Chief Joseph Wildlife Area – Grizzly Bear Complex Fire:** The Grizzly Bear Fire which began in the Wenaha-Tucannon wilderness on August 13, roared out of the wilderness into the Grouse Flats and Troy areas on Thursday. The fire is currently 62,000 acres in size and is 0% contained. Several structures on private property burned at Grouse Flats and across the border in Oregon. Flame fronts are approximately a mile away from WDFW’s Grouse Flats wildlife area. Line building and firefighting efforts were holding fire away from the wildlife area so far. 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area lands have not burned but are still threatened. On Friday, at the Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) request, Dice drove a wildlife area water truck from Clarkston to the fire and provided water to engine crews fighting the blaze. The majority of Dice’s time this weekend was spent on the fire.



*WDFW truck with water on Friday along Kessler-Mill Road*



*Smoke from fires visible from the south gate at Grouse Flats WLA on Saturday*

## **REGION 2**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Western Grebes:** Biologist O. Duvuvuei checked on the Western Grebe colony on Banks Lake. On July 28, Technician Annanie delineated the colony and observed 33 nesting Western Grebes, including one Clark's Grebe. On August 18, Duvuvuei observed nine Western Grebes still incubating and another grebe with a newly hatched chick on its back.



***Western Grebe with newly hatched chick on Bank's Lake*** – Photo by O. Duvuvuei

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Dove Banding:** Biologist E. Duvuvuei completed banding efforts for mourning doves this week. A total of 475 birds were banded in Grant County this year. In preparation for this year's extended dove season (September 1 – October 30, with a 15 bird daily limit), trapping started in June in hopes of deploying more bands than in recent years. Approximately 39% of the birds banded were adults, with 69% of these adult birds banded in June. Very few adults were captured after mid-July. Thank you to volunteers Pascal Bolduc and Marc Helms, Private Lands Biologist Dougherty, and Access Technician McAlavy for assistance with scouting, baiting, and trapping efforts! Your help is much appreciated and was crucial to the success of this year's banding effort!

**North Cascades Wolverine Research:** Biologist Fitkin and USFS Biologist Rohrer completed the mid-season check on our wolverine remote camera monitoring stations. We documented a lot of interesting activity, including photos of our target species (see photos below). The wolverine photos appear to be of an unmarked male, possibly the same animal we have picked up on cameras at our winter trap sites. Unfortunately we did not get any hair or scat samples for DNA on this round, but perhaps we will next time. This effort is part of a broader three year effort to develop a reliable summertime wolverine monitoring strategy using known occupied home ranges headed up by Dr. Robert Long from the Woodland Park Zoo.





*Wolverine, lynx, black bear cubs, moose, mule deer* – Photos by Remote cameras

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

**Private Lands/Access**

**Reach Wildfire Outreach – Douglas County:** Private Lands Biologist Braaten was contacted by a landowner who lost his entire CRP and wildlife habitat to the Reach wildfire and wanted advice on what to do. Private Lands Biologist Braaten met with the landowner and toured damage for several hours. Most of the shrub-steppe habitat was lost, and there was significant damage to riparian areas. The landowner is also interested in pursuing wildlife habitat restoration projects. The landowner appreciated the time Private Lands Biologist Braaten was able to spend with him assessing damage.



***Riparian Area scorched in wildfire*** – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW



***Reach Wildfire Damage, Douglas County*** – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW



***Shrub-steppe native..the Hera Buckmoth (Hemileuca hera) hangs onto a remaining burnt sagebrush branch*** – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

**Noteworthy or Alerts (Okanogan County Fires):** A staggering percentage of the landscape in Okanogan County has recently burned or is still burning. Fires have burned hundreds of thousands of acres of vegetation, destroyed many structures, and tragically took the lives of three brave fire fighters from the Methow Ranger District. This situation is still dire, with many evacuation notices still in place. The homes of both Biologist Fitkin and Biologist Heinlen have been on Evacuation 3 status. As time and conditions allow, Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen will begin assessing conditions on the ground and consider possible emergency changes to fall hunting seasons



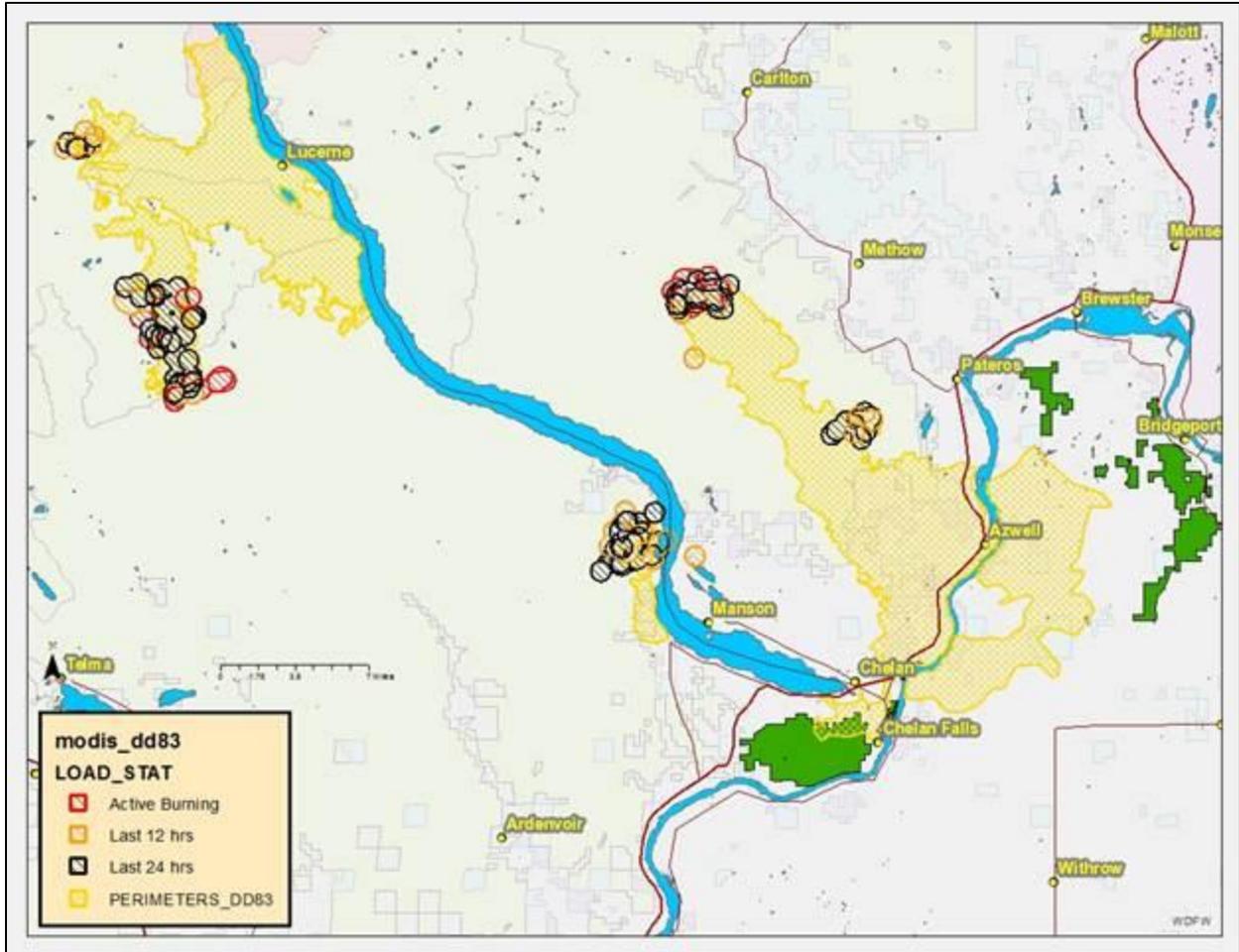
**Chelan County Wildfire:** Active fires continue to expand in Chelan County, with three major events under various levels of containment. The fires are actively burning within a zone of the county that has seen significant wildfires since 2000.

The Chelan Complex Fire is burning along the ridge between Lake Chelan and the Methow River, with its most active portion in Okanogan County NW of Black Canyon. The Original Reach, Black Canyon, and McFarland fires combined to form the Chelan Complex. The original Reach Fire burned into a small portion of the Chelan Butte Wildlife Management Area Unit and the BeeBe Springs Wildlife Management Area Unit. That portion of the Reach Fire that crossed the Columbia River into Douglas County is mostly contained and does not appear to be expanding.

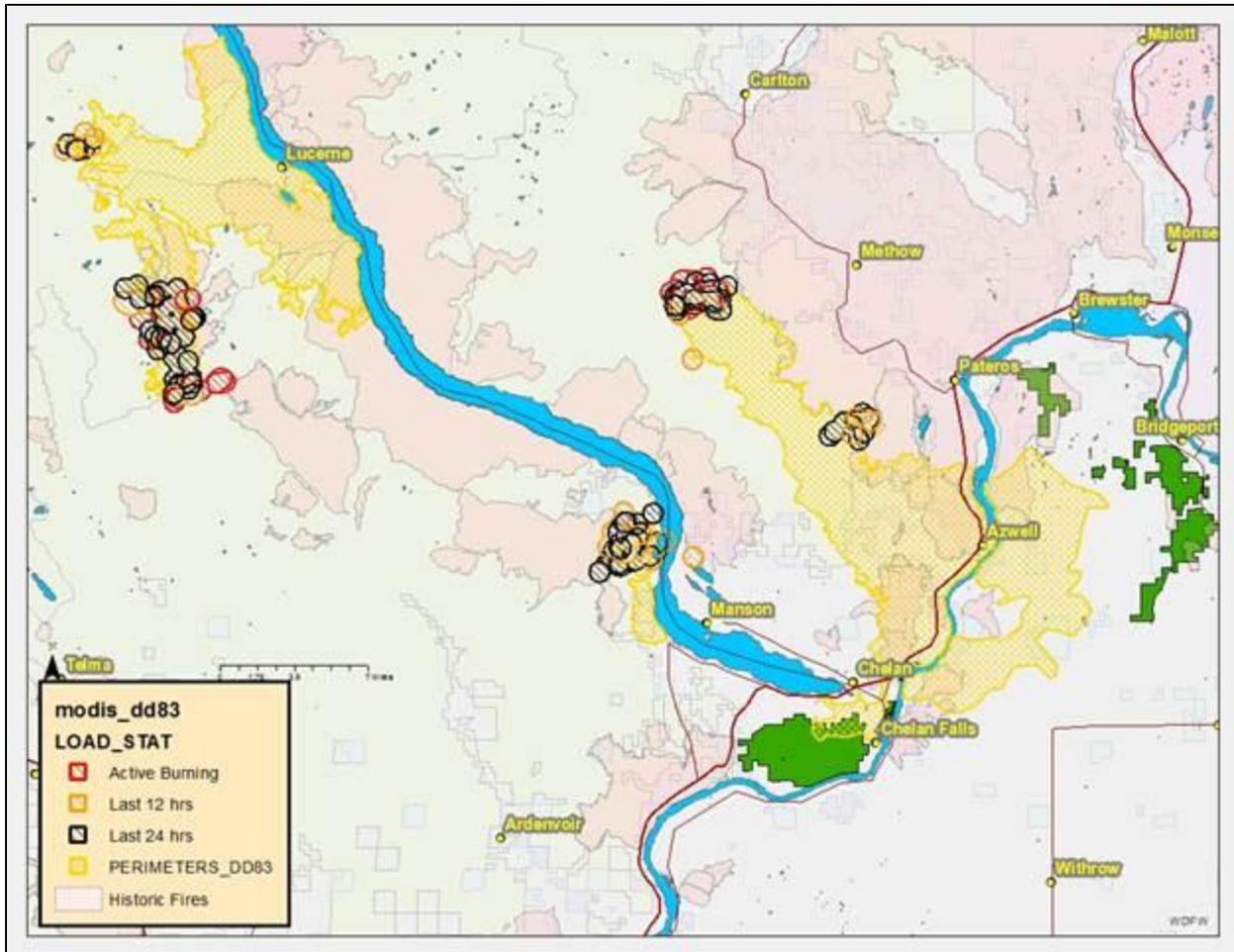
The First Creek Fire moving Northwest along Lake Chelan and continues to threaten residences in the area.

The Wolverine Fire has expanded over the ridge between Lake Chelan interior drainages of the upper county. The fire is moving rapidly down the Entiat Valley and will soon meet with the 2014 Duncan Fire perimeter, where it may lose some momentum. Some spotting has occurred along the ridges north of Rock Creek and the Chikamin Creek but the fire has not yet dropped into those drainages.

Fire	Acres	% Contained
Wolverine	52,019	30%
Chelan Complex	87,321	40%
First Creek	3,541	<10%



*A map of the active fire perimeters in District 7 in relation to WDFW Wildlife Management Areas*



*Active District 7 fires relative to historic fire perimeters (2000-2014)*

### **REGION 3**

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

##### **Wildlife Management**

**Duck Trapping:** Private Lands Bio Stutzman and Access Tech Kaelber trapped ducks at the Windmill Ranch and Baillie Youth Ranch on Thursday. Stutzman and Kaelber banded 49 mallards, including 28 at Baillie, 21 at Windmill, 11 wood ducks, and two green wing teal.

**Waterfowl Traps:** Stutzman baited the Franklin County waterfowl traps Sunday, Monday, and Wednesday. Stutzman also closed the Baillie traps in preparation for banding on Thursday.

**New Duck Trap:** Stutzman and Kaelber built and installed a new duck trap at the Windmill Ranch. Trapping at the new site will begin this week.

**Avian Influenza:** Stutzman spent time getting refreshed on the Avian Influenza sampling protocol. Waterfowl specialist Wilson is out the upcoming week and Stutzman will be taking samples at the Barker Ranch later in the week.

**Dove Banding:** Biologist Bernatowicz baited the trap site and attempted trapping one evening around a recently cut wheat. Few doves and numerous hawks were observed so banding is now done for the year.

**Western Gray Squirrel:** Biologist Bernatowicz checked tubes on two transects. No western gray squirrel hair was found. This was the last check of the two transects and tubes were pulled.

**Waterfowl Banding:** Biologist Bernatowicz worked with Yakama Nation (YN) Biologist Blodgett, Waterfowl Specialist Wilson, and Washington Waterfowl Association (WWA) volunteers to band ducks and test for Avian Influenza (AI) on the Yakama Reservation. Approximately 250 new ducks were banded this week. Capture rates were high. It's been an unusual year in the diversity of ducks captured. Mallard, wood ducks, teal (blue and green-winged), northern pintail, and northern shoveler have been banded. The annual average is one teal per year. Fifteen teal have been banded this year. Captures included a blonde (leucistic) drake mallard. Over 6,000 mallards have been banded locally between YN and WDFW since 2009 and the leucistic bird was a first. Interestingly, two WWA volunteers have harvested leucistic birds in recent years.



*A blonde drake mallard*



*Ducks in the trap*

**Aerial Surveys:** Moore ran the modeling software for the aerial survey flights performed during the previous week. Modeling estimates the Blazed Ridge, Naches Pass and Bumping River at:  $102 \pm 14$ ,  $192 \pm 18$ , and  $147 \pm 13$  respectively.

**Western Gray Squirrels:** Biologist Moore completed the second round of checks on the western gray squirrel transects. Overall, three tubes collected hair but none were from western gray squirrel. The tubes will remain out one more month and be removed during September.

**Colockum Bull Study:** Biologist Moore has continued to monitor our GPS collared bulls. The study's sample size will be lower for this coming fall. The study's low sample size results from continued collar malfunctions and the decision to postpone the summer 2015 capture session due to the dry conditions. We will have 15 collared bulls online for the upcoming fall. WDFW will make plans to increase the sample size after the 2015 hunting season is complete.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman was contacted by RCO Grants Manager Cole about doing a site visit for the Rock Creek Motorized Trails NOVA project that was recently funded. Huffman contacted Ron Rutherford, a local jeeper and member of the Oak Creek WAAC, about coming along on the tour and driving the trails. Friday morning, Huffman and Cole drove to the Milk Creek Motorcycle trail and hiked in the first 1.5 miles looking at the two bridge replacements and other trail work. They then met up with Rutherford and Jim Hall, who drove them along the jeep trails in the Milk Lake area where the trail work is planned. Cole really appreciated being in the field and getting the experience of riding in a jeep along the trails.

***Volunteers Ron Rutherford and Jim Hall, along with Adam Cole from RCO, enjoying the sunshine and cool (60 degree) temps during a lunch break while driving roads and trails in the Milk Lake area of the Rock Creek Unit***



**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 and Assistant Manager Berry worked with volunteers from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) to remove a section of old elk fence that had been replaced last year. The old wire and burned posts were removed and staged along the road to be picked up later. The crew worked hard and got most of the work done before lunch. The RMEF volunteers are a great help multiple times each year on projects. Everyone worked hard and had a great time.



*RMEF volunteers being hauled into the work site to avoid driving vehicles on the dry grassy road*



*Three loads of wire removed from Mt. Clemans fence project*

*RMEF volunteers hard at work removing old elk fence on Mt. Clemans of Oak Creek Wildlife Area*



## **Wildlife Management**

**Rattlesnake Mountain Elk Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to monitor elk activity and damage impacts at a newly planted high density apple planting near Rattlesnake Mountain. Two LP gas cannons are deployed and continue to provide hazing benefit. Although elk have continued to use areas of the farm during nightly raids, activity near the apple blocks have subsided.

**Damaged Water Tank:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with a landowner in the Silver Dollar area to discuss repair of a damaged water tank near the Arid Lands Ecology Reserve. This is an important water source for not only livestock management on the ranch, but also wildlife. Plans were made to make repairs to the damaged tank and associated spring this next week.

**Coyote Conflict:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and responded to a complaint from a homeowner in the Kennewick area concerning coyotes preying on domestic cats. Advice was given on coyote biology and reference to “Living with Wildlife” publication was provided.

**Wheat Damage Claim:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand downloaded and organized photographic damage documents for a wheat damage claim on Rattlesnake Mountain. Contact was made with the crop adjuster handling the claim to discuss claim valuation and timelines.

**Hanford Elk Hunts:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to assist LHP cooperators with coordinating and scheduling elk hunts near Hanford. At least one hunt was postponed due to the elevated fire danger from the continued hot and dry weather.

**Park Creek Elk Monitoring:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel monitored elk in the Park Creek damage area. Elk use of the area has decreased after hunting started August 1, but one small group is traveling to agriculture areas from outside the 3911 unit.

**Master Hunter Hazing:** Two master hunters were activated to haze deer from a Thorp commercial vegetable garden. After hazing for several weeks, the hunters have been instructed to use their permits if safe to do so.

**Turkey Conflict:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by a landowner near Thomas Road in Ellensburg called to complain about turkeys in the neighborhood. After reviewing the issue of turkey feeding and living with wildlife, Captain Mann was contacted about possible trapping and relocation with NWTF help. Transport boxes and trapping materials will be gathered for a possible relocation effort in this area.

**Deer Damage:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel talked to a landowner in the lower Yakima Canyon regarding deer damage. The landowner will use SeaDust to try to deter deer use.

**Elk Damage:** An orchardist in Tampico called to report 30 elk in his new cherries. The elk appeared this week during daylight hours and revisit the area each day. The area is inside the 3912 Elk Area and master hunters, as well as landowner permits, will be used at this location.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Hagan documented trespass livestock near the headquarters this week. We suspect they came through the section of north boundary fence that was not completed by the contractors who recently “completed” post-fire construction of the fence. Neighboring landowners are starting to complain about problems with the fence and manager Lopushinsky is attempting to work with Engineering to resolve the issues.

**Fire Suppression Fund:** Manager Lopushinsky joined Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Eidson in a meeting with Grant County PUD to discuss future projects and spending for the fire suppression fund related to Grant PUD’s Wildlife Habitat Management Plan.

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:** Manager Bjornstrom spoke at length with Coast Machinery, manufacturer of the Marsh Master, about operational details, available implements, and costs associated with operation and maintenance of the machine due to arrive in the spring of 2016. Coast Machinery shipped an additional implement to test out with the Marsh Master rental, at no cost. Wildlife area staff will evaluate the utility of the implement and make a decision as to include that implement in the inventory.

**Wenas Wildlife Area:** Manager Confer Morris was contacted by WSDA Investigator Sutherland regarding a complaint made by a neighbor on an herbicide application done Wednesday morning at the Wright Place restoration site. The application included 2,4-D, and the neighbor felt it was affecting her health. Investigator Sutherland followed up with a records request, and Wenas staff worked to pull together the spray information and maps, which were e-mailed to Sutherland on August 24.

**Access Program**

Natural Resource Worker 2 Barbosa placed a barrier rock next to the Wapato Dam gate to prevent vehicle passage around the gate.



*Before and after barrier rock placement*

**Fallen Trees:** Access Manager Garcia received a complaint of fallen trees across Vernita boat launch. Manager Garcia and Natural Resource Worker 2 Barbosa responded the same day and removed them.



*Before and after fallen trees removed at Vernita boat launch*

**King Horn Slough:** Access Manager Garcia has received several bids to remove the hazard tree King Horn Slough. The lowest bid so far is \$6,156.00. Staff may have to consider other options, as that cost would bust the budget.

**LT Murray Wildlife Area:** Manager Winegeart attended a coordination meeting between WDFW and Grant County PUD regarding the fire funds account. The group discussed maintaining a base level of funds in the account for post-fire habitat restoration projects. Any income above baseline could be used for proactive habitat improvements that could reduce fire risk, such as cheatgrass control.

**Sheep Grazing:** Manager Winegeart, Technician Leuck, and Range Biologist Burnham toured the Gnat Flat Unit to begin monitoring the LT Murray sheep grazing permit. The sheep had not moved far onto WDFW lands yet, so only one bed ground was surveyed. Technician Leuck will return in a few weeks to monitor the other sites.

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Forester Mackey was with Statewide Forester Rod Pfeifle marking timber to assist Jamie Bass, Forester on the Methow Wildlife Area. They marked approximately 30 acres in two and a half days, but it was cut short when Winthrop was evacuated in the afternoon of Wednesday, August 19, due to the Twisp River Fire, which is now part of the Okanogan Complex. The picture with the buildings in the foreground was from the motel where we were staying in Winthrop.



*Picture from Forester Mackey's hotel the morning of evacuation*

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Waterfowl Trapping/Avian Influenza sampling:** Biologist DeBruyn and staff from the private lands program continued live trapping local mallards. Banding is being done to provide data for nationwide harvest modeling and some ducks are being sampled for the presence of High Path Avian Influenza. Twenty-two ducks were trapped and banded, of which 12 were sampled for HPAI. A total of 57 samples have been submitted for analysis.



*Biologist Paul DeBruyn removing a duck from a trap at Whatcom Wildlife Area's Marietta Unit*

**Marine Waterfowl Molting Surveys:** District 13 staff began surveying summer molting scoter transects in northern Puget Sound. Surveys of potential habitat throughout the Sound, Strait of Georgia, Straits of Juan de Fuca, and the outer coast are being surveyed to identify molting areas for the three scoter species in Washington. High density areas will be revisited to obtain more precise information on species/sex distribution and potential prey species, and for locating potential sites for use in molting captures and banding in the coming years.



*A late summer common occurrence on the marine waters of northern Puget Sound is a feeding flock of red-necked Phalaropes*



*Large numbers of both adult and juvenile Common Murres have been seen on transects*

**North Cascades Elk Herd Plan:** Biologist Yarborough completed the North Cascades Elk Herd Plan and sent it out for internal WDFW revision. The plan will be circulated for internal revision for a month before going out for external review.

**Black Bear Depredation Management:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell attended the Bear Depredation Sub-Committee Meeting in Issaquah, Washington to discuss many topics related to black bear management. During this meeting, the committee developed several resolutions that will be pushed forward for stakeholder review.

**Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP):** Projects Coordinator Brokaw attended a meeting with PSNERP staff and local Skagit restoration partners to provide and update on PSNERP. The group discussed the next steps in using PSNERP as a future funding source for large scale restoration projects. PSNERP staff will work over the next several months on outreach to local groups.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Nooksack Unit Dike Flood Damage Repair:** Manager Kessler coordinated with Whatcom County River and Flood managers on the Nooksack Unit flood damaged dike repairs. It has been decided that the repairs will not occur this year. The repairs will instead be performed next spring when there is a better chance of seeding erosion controlling vegetation along with the scour filling repairs.

**Ebey Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm discussed harvest plans with Sno-Valley Farms. The organic beans are due for harvest soon, and harvest has begun on the 60 acres of wheat.

**Stillwater Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued seasonal mowing at the unit this past week. Manager Boehm reports that Sound Salmon Solutions continued weed-control efforts along Harris Creek in preparation for riparian planting next spring.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Estuary Restoration Bird Monitoring:** Biologist Milner met with staff from Ecostudies Institute and toured the Fir Island Farms restoration site and Leque Island to assess the size and condition of the sites in preparation for implementing avian monitoring activities. This was the kick-off day for staff to get together and plan for upcoming surveys, discuss staffing needs, and familiarize everyone with the greater Skagit/Stillaguamish estuary systems.



*Avian ecologists from Ecostudies Institute walking the old dike at Fir Island Farms and making plans for upcoming surveys*

**Wildlife Areas**

**Trail Life USA Service Project:** Connor Morton, a Trail Life USA scout working on his service project, set up and managed a trail building project on the east side of Lake Terrell. Seven scouts, along with four adults, used loppers, rakes, weed whackers, and hand saws to clear a half mile meandering trail through the woods from one parking lot to another. The project went off very well, with Connor doing a great job managing the work. This trail will be used by recreational walkers and runners, along with pheasant, deer, and small game hunters.

*Trail Life USA Service Project at the Lake Terrell Unit. A half mile long meandering trail through the woods on the east side of Lake Terrell now connects two parking areas.*



**British Petroleum and Alcoa Hunting Access Coordination:**

Manager Kessler contacted the land managers at both British Petroleum and Alcoa to coordinate on this year's hunting season information. Big game, waterfowl, and pheasant season dates and times were discussed. The new hunting season information will also be posted on the reader boards this week.

**Samish River Unit Wetland**

**Restoration Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw worked with the Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) to get a construction crew scheduled to begin the construction next week. After scheduling the crew, he set up a pre-construction meeting, arranged all of the final permitting details, and facilitated final signatures on the project budget amendment and spending plans. Construction is anticipated to be underway from August 24 through September 30, 2015.

**Samish Unit Enhancement Project:** The Right of Entry permit needed for the contractor hired by Ducks Unlimited to begin construction was finalized and signed. Construction is anticipated to begin next week and will be completed prior to pheasant and duck hunting season this fall.

**Ebey Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with a Commissioner from Drainage District 1 to discuss knotweed control efforts along the dike.

**Corson Wildlife Preserve:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm provided a load of gravel for volunteer landowner Dye in preparation for the use of their net pen facility later this month. Manager Boehm will be using their net pen to contain pheasants which will be released at the Ebey Island Unit later this fall.

**Private Lands/Access Management**

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program (WQHP) Preparation:** Natural Resource Technician Otto showed Biologist Wingard waterfowl hunting sites in Skagit County. While at the sites they were able to spray three units with herbicide. Otto and Deyo completed construction on a permanent waterfowl blind in Skagit County. This hunting location typically floods each year with minimal drainage. Due to the draining issues, the crew constructed a raised wooden floor that will help with the overall quality hunt experience.

*Newly constructed Waterfowl Quality  
Hunt blind in Skagit County*

**418 Elk Hunt:** Natural Resource Technician Otto organized hunter information and distributed to the private lands access program and law enforcement team. He also met with a hunter who was unable to attend the pre-hunt coordination meeting this past weekend, and explained hunting regulations in addition to providing the hunter with a contact list, general hunt information, and his key for gate access. Biologist Hans is also following up with other hunters who were not able to attend the scheduled meeting.



*Lake Serene boat ramp with two missing  
concrete planks*



*Moving the second ramp plank into position  
at Lake Serene*



*John Evans packing gravel under the plank and in between the launch planks*



*Finished ramp at Lake Serene with two newly installed ramp planks. Job completed on August 18, 2015.*

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Wildlife Conflict Management:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman surveyed elk damage to a corn crop in the Acme area. Two Master Hunters have been assigned to the area to address elk damage on the agricultural lands. Witman also responded to an elk damage complaint in the Birdview area of Skagit County. The landowner stated that elk are passing through his property on a regular basis and requested a damage permit to harvest an elk. After discussing the situation further with the landowner, it was determined that the field the elk are utilizing is not currently being used for agricultural purposes and the damage permit was denied. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell responded to a deer damage complaint on Camano Island. Supervisor Caldwell assessed the damage claim and referred the landowner to several different non-lethal methods to reduce erosion damage on her property. Supervisor Caldwell will be following up with this landowner shortly to assist with implementing non-lethal methods on her property.

Biologist Smith monitored and maintained three electrified fladry fences in an effort to exclude elk from damaging south King County crops. Smith also coordinated South Sound Master Hunter elk permit holders on properties with ongoing crop damage in the Snoqualmie Valley.

## Wildlife Areas

*Department of Ecology crew assisted with a litter clean-up at the WDFW Ebey Island Unit*

**Public Information:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm posted informational signage at the four pheasant release sites reminding users that hunting season is coming soon. Multiple signs were posted at each of the access points in the units.



## Private Lands/Access Management

**Whidbey Island Deer Hunt:** Natural Resource Technician Otto and Biologist Wingard performed a property check on the Whidbey Island diversity site. A total of 52 users recorded using the trailhead. While at the site, they conducted trail maintenance and also met with the landowner to have a contract amendment signed.

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

### Wildlife Management

**Hunter Education Instructor Support:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey activated one new hunter education class in Region 4. Dazey delivered supplies to the teaching team that teaches at Marysville Rifle Club, Casey Green, who teaches at MC-1, the team that teaches at Seattle Rifle and Pistol, and Roger Dahl range in West Seattle. Dazey assisted Chief Instructor Lance Chaar to hold an online field skills evaluation at the Region 4 office. Dazey answered questions from several chief instructors on setting class size, closing classes in Kalkomey, how to order supplies from the Olympia warehouse (for a new instructor), how to handle military exemptions, use of inert firearms for the Washington Outdoor Women program, and students who show up at field skills evaluations without the required course completion certificate.

**Co-Managers Support:** Coordinator Dazey assisted the team at the Upper Skagit to conduct a two day traditional Hunter Education class. This was the Upper Skagit team's first solo class and it went very well, with all students passing the 75 question test and also the skills handling. Dazey also sent out one new instructor packet to a resource officer with the Muckleshoot tribe who will be conducting classes for Muckleshoot students.

**Pre Service Training:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey conducted the first session of training for six new instructor candidates. The practical session will be held at Camp Pigott August 29 when the six instructor candidates will assist in conducting an actual hunter education class.

**Volunteer Coordination:** Coordinator Dazey continues to assist WDFW personnel to find volunteers for their projects. A few of the projects that volunteers were recruited for include the upcoming pheasant release program at WDFW sites, gate monitoring for access partners, the backyard wildlife program, and several others.

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

**New Class Venues:** Coordinator Dazey met with Licensing to discuss strategies to find new venues for Hunter Education classes in areas where they may be needed. It was suggested that when the representatives visit their vendors they ask if the vendor has a classroom space and if they would be interested in making the space available to a hunter education team for teaching. This would provide a venue for hunter education, as well as provide traffic to the vendors.

### **REGION 5**

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

##### **Wildlife Management**

**Resident Dark Canada Goose Collar Mark-Resight Survey:** Biologists Doorly and Stephens, as well as emeritus Biologist Miller completed the second and final round of the resident dark Canada goose mark-resight surveys. The purpose of the survey is to estimate abundance and distribution of resident dark geese in southwest Washington and northwest Oregon. In July, geese from this population of birds were marked with an individually-coded neck collar for the purposes of resighting them during this survey and so that hunters can distinguish these birds from the Dusky Canada goose. During the two day effort surveying around islands in the Lower Columbia River, Grays Bay, and Grays River, 610 resident dark geese were seen, of which 28 had neck collars and of those, 13 complete codes were read. Other efforts were conducted by WDFW Region 6 staff, ODFW, and USFWS. A special thank you to Pat Miller for his continued help with the surveys and superior boat operating skills.

**Treponeme-associated Hoof Disease Survival Study:** Biologists Stephens and George, along with Elk Specialist Hoenes and Veterinarian Haman, followed up on three elk mortalities this week. The elk were radio collared as part of an ongoing study on the survival of cow elk affected by treponeme-associated hoof disease. All three elk were affected by hoof disease and were pregnant at the time of capture. Two elk appear to have died from secondary infections, although an official cause of death is unknown. At least one elk successfully produced a calf. Extensive necropsies were conducted and samples including the hooves and organ tissues will be sent to Colorado State University for further analysis.



### ***TAHD study elk mortalities***

**Calf-at-heel Surveys:** Biologists Anderson, Bergh, Stephens, Doorly, and George, along with Elk Specialist Hoenes, attempted calf-at-heel surveys this week. These surveys are an effort to gain information on the reproduction of cows affected by hoof disease. Twenty-five collared elk were located and monitored for the presence of a calf. This effort proved to be very challenging with only five confirmations made through the entire survey period. The feasibility of this methodology will be addressed in consideration of future efforts. See the video Biologist Bergh took while hiding and waiting at [https://youtu.be/Jaa\\_nka1IfE](https://youtu.be/Jaa_nka1IfE)

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

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

**Hunt by Reservation:** Conflict Specialist Conklin is working with a volunteer who is assisting her with the Grays River hunt and working with one of the larger land owners who is a partner with a hunt by reservation agreement with WDFW.

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

#### **District 10 Wildlife Conflict**

**Elk:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin delivered two rolls of fencing to a farmer to protect his stored hay bales from elk damage. In addition, Conklin continues to gather signatures on Pyrotechnic waivers in order for land owners to continue to use pyrotechnic equipment.

#### **District 9 Wildlife Conflict**

**Elk:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin verified elk damage last week and sent a DPCA to a farmer with 500 acres of hay and oats that have been damaged by elk.

**Deer:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin sent a master hunter to a vineyard in Underwood experiencing heavy deer damage to grapes. She also sent an additional master hunter to a farmer in Goldendale experiencing deer damage to his alfalfa and barley crops.

## **REGION 6**

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

#### **Wildlife Management:**

**Bat Acoustic Study:** Biologist McMillan purchased some more supplies for the microphone pole setup and prepared the equipment for redeployment. Previous efforts were less than successful due to 1) microphone & pole fell into the pond, and 2) placement of microphone was too close to either vegetation or water or both, causing recordings to become undecipherable. A revised approach was pursued. A review of several of the sampling cells was done to determine which sites to retain and which ones needed new sampling sites to be established.

Cell 4177 - The Deep Creek site was only slightly shifted, to an area just east of the same wetland beaver pond. On August 21 the equipment was redeployed. The microphone was set up on a stump greater than 10 meters away from open water and clear of most all vegetation in the same span. The sampling site is on DNR land, within Merrill & Ring ownership, where the roads are closed to access due to the fire hazard, making the risk of vandalism very low at this site.

Cell 81 - Biologist McMillan contacted Olympic National Park Biologist Patti Happe about the study and a submitted Scientific Permit application to sample Cell 81. Olympic National Park needs more information about WDFW's bat study to process the Scientific Permit. The permit application is on hold until more paperwork is completed.

Other Cells - Deployment at other locations has been complicated with the high risk of vandalism due to a high public use of the targeted DNR and other public lands.

**Molting Scoter Survey Project:** Biologist Murphie reports that while he began surveys this week, they were hindered by boat mechanical issues and delays in part delivery. Additional survey work will continue next week. Biologist Murphie did shuttle Biologist Evenson and his boat down to Ilwaco, where he will begin a multi-day survey effort up the outer coast of Washington.

**Black-tailed Deer Study:** Biologist Ament and Point No Point Biologist Tim Cullinan conducted an investigation for a 2015 collared fawn after receiving a separation event text earlier that morning from Researcher Rice. The fawn was a pie bald coloration which was almost entirely white. The fawn was found dead at the base of a large root wad from a cedar tree fully intact with no sign of any predation. There were two small healed puncture wounds on the inside of the upper back right leg. There was some consideration that they could have been from a predator but knife incisions were made and the punctures did not even penetrate the skin. Ament

did collect a few small insects from the lower abdomen, ear, and back leg of the fawn. They did not appear to be ticks and will be provided to Department of Health staff for identification. The fawn appeared healthy and had the normal expected body weight for her age. All measurements taken when the fawn was collared (except for weight) were taken again. This fawn had no teeth when she was collared but had since developed teeth that were slightly abnormal. The fawn was not cached but was in a hidden area with downed trees above. The collar was retrieved and the fawn was placed in a more open location so that it was more visible for both aerial and ground predators.



*Dead pie-bald fawn*



*Abnormal teeth*



*Small wounds (found not to be punctures)*

**Fisher Project:** Biologist Ament spent time last week conducting various tasks associated with the fisher monitoring project.

**Hex 563:** Biologist Ament and Point No Point Biologist Tim Cullinan conducted the third and final check of all stations for Hex 563.

Biologist Ament had inquired with the project lead from Olympic National Park to see if the stations should be left for one more 14-day period since a pair of dogs had moved the cubby out of view of the camera prior to the second scheduled check. The direction was to go ahead and remove the stations per protocol. This hex had been monitored during the 2013 season and the same fisher had been detected at two of the stations. All cameras and other items were found to be secure at each station during the check. There were no detections of fishers at any of the stations. All cameras were working properly. (A curious bear did investigate Station 1.) The bear did not consume any of the bait and did not displace the cubby. It was likely the same bear that had been at the station two weeks prior. Several deer were seen in the vicinity of this station. There was no activity observed at Station 2. A few Douglas squirrels and a bobcat were observed at Station 3.



***Black bear smelling the bait at Station 1***

**Hex 565:** Biologist Ament and Point No Point Biologist Tim Cullinan conducted the second check of all stations for Hex 565. This hex had been monitored during the 2013 season and had no fisher detections. All cameras and other items were found to be secure at each station during the check. No fishers were known to investigate the site during the past two weeks. A Douglas squirrel and a lone coyote visited Station 1. The coyote was at the station a long period of time and had a total of 119 photos taken.

What is believed to be a barred or spotted owl investigated the station on August 12. The only other species to visit Station 2 was a raccoon. The only animal to explore Station 3 was a black lab dog wearing a collar.



***Very inquisitive coyote at Station 1 (Hex 565) – total of 119 photos***



***Owl (likely barred) perched on top of cubby***

**District 15 Fisher Surveys:** In a multi-agency collaborative effort to document fisher presence on the Olympic Peninsula, Biologist Murphie established three new camera stations within a survey block located near the town of Matlock, WA. Biologist Murphie conducted his first check of these camera stations this week and reports taking photos of only opossum and a rabbit. Camera sets were refreshed and left in place.

**Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly Habitat Improvements:** Biologist Ament spent some time last week working on habitat improvements at a Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly (TCB) site located west of Port Angeles. She and Regina Johnson worked for several days last fall to treat a major infestation of spotted knapweed at the site. The noxious weed had significantly expanded its distribution at a landing site in recent years. Efforts were made to pull the weeds the past few seasons. Last year, the plan was to remove the seed heads and spray the plants. Biologist Ament cut every seed head off each plant and Regina followed closely behind and sprayed each plant with Milestone. This treatment proved to be highly effective. When Biologist Ament was on site last week there was minimal knapweed to be pulled compared to previous years. She only had to pull knapweed for a few hours and, when finished, had just one pile to be removed. In past years she left with numerous large bags full of knapweed. During her time at the site on August 20, she also reviewed the work completed by the DNR staff last fall. She took some notes about the scotch broom locations along the road and noted the invasion of bull thistle and blackberry in areas of habitat units that were cleared last year. She and Biologist Hays will be working with DNR staff to outline fall projects that need to be completed at the sites.



*Piles of knapweed cut in fall of 2014*



*Only one pile of knapweed in 2015!*



*Young scotch broom plants in landing area at TCB site*

**Avian Protection Plan:** Biologist Ament completed review of an Avian Protection Plan that was drafted by Clallam County PUD staff. The document outlines the District’s Avian Protection Plan to reduce avian injuries and mortality and improve electrical reliability to customers. She also secured comments from

Martha Jordan, Director of the Northwest Swan Conservation Association, and Mel Walters, biologist with Puget Sound Energy. She met with PUD staff on August 12 to provide comments and continue with review of the draft document. She will work closely with PUD staff in the next few weeks to produce a finalized plan.

## **Snowy Plover**

**Midway Beach:** Biologist Sundstrom was joined by Science Tech Raby and USFWS Biologist Ritchie for a brood sweep of Midway Beach. The sweep covered all the posted nesting habitat areas south to Warrenton-Cannery Road. Results from the sweep were not as expected. Only two broods with chicks (three total) not yet able to fly were found. The youngest and most recently hatched brood that Sundstrom observed last week at two to three days old was not located during the sweep. However, Biologist Ritchie found a single unhatched egg from a previously undiscovered nest. Sundstrom had suspected a nest in the vicinity where Ritchie had found the egg and had observed a young two chick brood in the area several weeks ago. This nest was the twenty-sixth found at Midway this season.

### ***Single unhatched egg from an undiscovered nest***

**Graveyard Spit:** Sundstrom and Natural Resources Specialist Pfleeger-Ritzman visited Graveyard Spit this week, following up on the remaining yet fledged broods. Six chicks (two broods), four juveniles/fledglings, and two adult males were observed.



**Leadbetter:** Technician Raby conducted nest and brood searching this week at Leadbetter. There are currently no active nests, no new nests were discovered, and no nests were determined to have failed this week. There are three broods currently being attended by adults on the outer beach and in the hummock and swale. Two of the broods are around 18-23 days and the other brood is approximately 23-25 days old. The total number of juveniles at Leadbetter is undetermined at this time, as fully-fledged juveniles and females can appear very similar at this time of year.

**Streaked Horned Lark:** Three larks were observed during the plover sweep at Midway Beach this week. This observation is the highest count at any one time of larks this season.

**Common Murre Dieoff:** Biologist Sundstrom followed up on a report of a perceived excessive die off of Common Murres at Midway Beach. Forty-one carcasses of varying degrees of decomposition were counted over a 2.2 mile drive of the beach. This number falls within the 'normal' range of die off and did not meet excessive standards.

**Status and Trend Reports:** Biologist Novack contacted various tribal counterparts regarding elk survey data in Region 6. Novack finalized a draft and submitted the 2015 Region 6 Elk Status and Trends report for RPM review.

## Access Areas

**Haven Lake Wier, Mason County:** The Region 6 Access Team has been working with the Habitat Program and volunteers to replace old rotten Weir boards that hold the lake level, allow the lake level to be adjusted, and permit fish passage. Six sections will be replaced in August and September during the no flow period. A step by step photo essay of the project is below.



*Before construction (removal & replacement)*



*Volunteers start removing the lowest section of weir boards. After removing the boards on both sides, the concrete footing under water must be cleaned of any debris to ensure a good seal on the starter boards.*



*Cleaning the footing*



*Both lower and middle sections complete*

The last step (scheduled for September 1) of the project, is to build up the height of the middle weir section to lake level and slowly remove the lake facing boards, allowing the middle section to hold the lake level while the front facing boards are replaced.

*Volunteers Rande Williams, Rocky Criss, Brent Williams, and Rob Campbell*

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



### **Wildlife Management**

**Resident Dark Geese:** Biologist Michaelis and Sundstrom, assisted by USFWS biologist Ritchie and Technician Nunez conducted a land and boat survey for resident dark geese. The boat survey observed 100 resident dark geese, including 14 collared geese. Sundstrom covered the land route in the northern extent of Pacific County. Roughly 550 geese were counted altogether on the land route. All but three of the geese observed were westerns. The three not classed as westerns were within the criteria to be classed as resident dark geese, but no bands or collars were observed on them.

**Raptor Rendezvous benefit for the NW Raptor Center:** Biologist Ament held the twentieth annual Raptor Rendezvous party for the Northwest Raptor Center at her property on August 15. The event was attended by close to 200 people. There was great music, food, and fine weather for the event. The benefit was a wonderful success. All proceeds from the benefit go to the center. A total of \$6030 was raised during the event. Biologist Ament appreciated the fact that District Biologist McMillan and her husband Mike served up fabulous hot drinks from their espresso bar and that Officer Davidson (& family) and Biologist Murphie (& family) attended the event.

*Jaye Moore (Director, Northwest Raptor Center) and Swainson's Hawk*



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

**Wildlife Management**

**Hunter Contacts:** Biologists responded to numerous inquiries regarding hunting opportunities, regulation questions, and general wildlife inquiries. Many are concerned about fire closures and even more are confused about all the various timber company fee access programs. A few of the contacts were from news reporters.

**Private Lands /Conflict**

**Deer and Elk Conflicts:** Conflict Specialist Blankenship has deployed Master Hunters in Orting, Olympia, and Buckley. All of which have been working diligently on a daily basis to prevent further elk and deer damage to crops in these areas. Blankenship also met with landowners in Eatonville and Buckley that have been dealing with elk damage. DPCA contracts have now been signed with all of these landowners. Blankenship is currently working with these landowners on alternative strategies to mitigate elk damage in areas where hunting is not conducive.

**Grayland Cranberries:** A bachelor group of bulls has been making themselves unwelcome in the bogs. One morning, they tripped one of the remote cameras and shortly after had a landowner hazing them. They then started hanging around the southern end, where cameras are not in place, and made themselves unwelcome. Producers were not able to locate them in the crab apple thickets and swamps during the day. They did show themselves early one evening and a producer was able to haze them and they have not returned yet. Biologist Harris issued kill permits for one bull due to the extensive damage they are causing. They have been hazed several times, and it is time to introduce some lethal actions to reduce damage. The meat will be donated and the head will be turned over to WDFW. Cranberry munching stealth deer continue to be making themselves unwelcome and Master Hunters and permits given to landowners don't seem to be very effective resolving the issue currently. Overall the remote camera system is proving to be very effective giving advanced notice to elk intrusion and letting us know that the deer are outsmarting us.



*Elk caught on camera*



*Landowner on his way to haze elk*

**Wynoochee Valley Elk:** A new trend appears to be starting in the valley. The first elk harvested under a permit was again by a youth hunter using a Damage Prevention permit. The elk was harvested by a 15 year old huntress. After spending considerable time stalking into position, she patiently waited and observed the group of 51 elk and chose a cow that did not have a calf. An approximate 180 yard shot and she cleanly harvested a nice non-lactating cow elk. This is her first elk. The young lady also volunteers as an assistant helping teach hunter education. Biologist Harris encouraged her to consider the Master Hunter program. The landowner and Biologist Harris were very impressed with her professionalism and ethics. Needless to say, her mom and dad were pretty proud of her also!

*First elk for this 15 year old huntress*



**Willapa Valley Elk:** A Master Hunter harvested a cow elk after several days of trying to get into position on a newly seeded field at the east end of the valley. Another Master Hunter has been diligently working an area at the lower end of the valley with little luck. He has seen elk, but has been unable to get a clean shot. He also noted that the elk use is not what it was three years ago. Biologist Harris agrees. On the fields he is assigned, elk use has decreased significantly. When Biologist Harris started working the area, it was normal to see over 100 elk and 200 was not uncommon. While elk still use these fields, they are not in large groups. Many of the elk now avoid the fields and currently most of the use is from small local groups that have learned not to spend too much time munching grass.

**Satsop Valley Elk:** They have returned! After a longer than usual absence, producers reported to Biologist Harris that the elk have returned.

**Bear Timber Damage Subcommittee:** Biologist Harris attended the two day bear timber damage subcommittee meeting in Issaquah, WA.

**Avian Influenza Concern:** Conflict Specialist Blankenship was contacted by an organic egg operation in Roy regarding geese in their fields. The main concern of the landowner is the possibility of Avian Influenza getting spread to their chickens. USDA Wildlife Services has been contracted out by this landowner in the past to prevent the geese from staying in their fields. Blankenship is working closely with the landowner on other non-lethal options that can be utilized to help deter the geese away.

**Goat Depredation:** Conflict Specialist Blankenship responded to a possible cougar depredation of a goat in Spanaway. At the time of Blankenship's visit to the property, the carcass of the goat was disposed of by the property owner. The property owner was able to show the kill site to Blankenship where he was able to determine that a cougar was indeed in the area where the goat was preyed upon. Property owners in the area were advised of the cougar activity and to take proper precaution with livestock in the area. Blankenship will remain in contact with the property owners in the area for future sightings of the cougar.

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

**Other**

**Internal Coordination:** Biologist Sundstrom, Novack, and Harris met to discuss work activities and planning for the next three months. A separate meeting was held with Biologist Michaelis to conduct work planning through October.