

Wildlife Program

Week of Jan. 21 – Jan. 27, 2019

DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Short-eared Owl Surveys: Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan worked with other coordinators from partner states to organize for the 2019 Western Asio flammeus Landscape Survey (WAfLS). This project involves coordinating volunteers to conduct road-based surveys for short-eared owls at randomly selected locations in landscapes with appropriate cover types, agricultural crops, grasslands, marsh, and shrublands, across eight western states (California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming). This will be the second year of a three-year project. Many volunteers from 2018 are again involved in the project, and new volunteers have registered to conduct surveys. There are 50 survey locations in each state. All survey locations in Washington are in the Columbia Basin. Each site will be surveyed two times during survey windows that collectively extend from March 1 to April 15. Information about the project, including the sign-up link to register for a survey site, is available at the WAfLS website: <http://avianknowledgenorthwest.net/citizen-science/short-eared-owls>.



Short-eared owl - Photo by Gregg Thompson

Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)

Surveys: Biologist Derek Stinson and Survey Section Manager Cotten heard from Xerces cooperators that the SGCN stonefly, *Lednia borealis*, was among the samples we collected in the Glacier Peak Wilderness last summer. This collection fills in a gap in their range. Only known from the Washington Cascades, it had previously been collected near Mount Baker, in North Cascades and Mount Rainier National Parks.



REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Moose Composition Surveys: Biologists Atamian and Lowe were on standby most of the week due to fog, but were able to fly one afternoon survey in the Mica Peak area. Eighteen moose were observed in 15 different groups, this is much lower than the 58 moose counted in 2012 in the Mica Peak area. However, the 2012 flights were much more intensive surveys where entire units were carpeted, while these flights were only over hotspots (areas of high moose counts in previous years) and cloud cover limited access to portions of some of these.



Cow and calf moose spotted on Mica Peak during composition survey

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

New Restrooms: Waitts Lake and Loon Lake are receiving new CXT restrooms. Dziekan put in a request about a year ago to replace the two restrooms. The concrete at Loon Lake was failing and the restroom was literally disintegrating. The restroom at Waitts Lake did not have a clean-out hatch, which meant the septic pumpers were unable to remove trash from the restroom. Over time, the pumpers were having to service Waitts

Lake more frequently due to less room being available in the vault, this would have eventually led to the restroom being closed.



Failing concrete at Loon Lake



New vault toilet at Loon Lake

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

Domestic Dog Depredation in Stevens County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett and WDFW Enforcement Officer Konkle responded to a report of two injured domestic dogs near Arden. One dog was located with a bite wound to the head. The second small dog was not located. Based on tracks, blood patterns, and bite wounds it was determined that the dog had made contact with a bobcat.



Domestic dog with bite wounds discovered on its head in Stevens County

Cougar in Driveway: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley met with a homeowner about three miles south of Dayton regarding too many cougars hanging around his place.

They are very concerned for their safety as well as their pets. They deployed their own cameras and were able to get several pictures of at least two different cougars in the past three weeks.



Two cougars captured on camera on private property

Clarkston Turkey Issue: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade and Natural Resource Technician Heitstuman spent two early mornings trying to trap a group of aggressive turkeys in the Clarkston Heights. Both mornings the turkeys were spooked by human and pet activity just as they were entering the trap causing them to move away from the area. Wade and Heitstuman will attempt to trap again next week. Wade also received a report of one of the turkeys being killed by a homeowner while the turkey was attacking one of his grandchildren.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Methow Mule Deer Monitoring: Biologists Fitkin and Hansen and Wildlife Area Manager Troyer conducted the second round of flights for radio-collared mule deer in the Methow Valley as part of the effort to develop a sightability model for mule deer in eastern Washington. This round went quite smoothly as both the weather and technology cooperated fully.



Mule deer winter range in the Methow Valley – Photo by Scott Fitkin



This cream-colored fawn (leucistic) was seen on the Golden Doe Unit of the Methow Wildlife Area during aerial surveys – Photo by Scott Fitkin

Predator-Prey Project: Biologist Fitkin assisted the University of Washington (UW) crew with a cougar capture for the ongoing Predator-Prey project. We successfully replaced the collar on an adult female cat originally collared last winter whose existing collar malfunctioned earlier this fall. The study subject appeared to be in good condition and returned quickly to her usual routine. This research is examining the interactions between large carnivores and the interactions between large carnivores and their prey.



From top: Treed cougar prior to darting, and UW field crew re-collaring the immobilized study animal – Photos by Scott Fitkin

In addition, biologists Fitkin and Heinlen investigated a radio-collared mule deer mortality and Biologist Fitkin retrieved the remote camera from an earlier mortality (cougar kill).



Cougar showing us just what she thought of us interrupting her meal – Remote camera

Sinlahekin Golden Eagle: Research Scientist Watson and WDFW Volunteer Fischer successfully captured and banded a two year old, female Golden eagle in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. The eagle was fitted with a backpack style, solar platform transmitter terminal (PTT) that will record and transmit data about the bird's location. Research Scientist Watson is trying to determine the migration patterns and outcomes of wintering golden eagles within the state. This was the second year of successful capture and banding of golden eagles on the Sinlahekin.



Research Scientist Watson (left) and volunteer Fischer banding a golden eagle – Photo by J. Heinlen

Douglas County Fence Marking – Grouse: Private Lands Biologist Braaten and Hughes marked fences for landowners that are adjacent to leks. A half mile of fence was marked adjacent to two sharp-tailed grouse leks on private property. They documented fences already marked from landowners performing the effort themselves in addition to the fence they marked.



Sharp-tailed Habitat Plot Assessment: Private Lands Biologists Braaten and Hughes assessed success of a seven-year-old habitat plot on private land. While marking fences they were able to access old habitat plot projects Braaten had completed. Hughes and Braaten were excited to see that the old habitat plots were doing great!



Water birch planted seven years ago on private land for sharp-tailed grouse

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

Natural Resource Conservation Service Local Working Group Meetings: Biologists Rickel, Hughes and Walker attended the Big Bend local working group meeting for Grant, Kittitas and the irrigated portion of Adams counties. Pheasants Forever attended the first half of the local working group meeting. Private Lands Biologist Hughes updated Gretchen from Pheasants Forever on how the local working group meeting went. The state will have 10 practices that will have 90 percent cost share. One of the things done at this meeting was voting on which practices the local working group will submit to be looked at as the area's top 10 choices. Conservation cover, field borders, and tree/shrub establishment made it into the 10 practices our group will submit to the state level.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wenas Wildlife Area - Manager Cindi Confer Morris

Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor met with foresters and regional habitat biologists to field review proposed timber thinning on the north end of the wildlife area. The group was able to access the upper Umtanum Creek site on the north side of Umptanum Road. We had a good discussion on current condition of this ponderosa pine stand and management that would improve the stand. There are multiple channels of the creek and high flow events often result in water flowing out of channels and across Umptanum Road rather than under the bridge. The group agreed to reconvene on the site in early spring to identify main channels and look at issues and potential solutions. Due to new snow, we were unable to access the stands on top of Manastash Ridge.



Regional staff members discussing upper Umtanum timber stand



Upper Umtanum timber stand



Upper Umtanum timber stand

Mellotte Feed Site Elk Numbers: Feeding continues with numbers increasing after the recent snow and colder weather. Several additional bulls have come in, increasing branch bulls to 12 and spikes to 10. Two spotted calves have also shown up recently.

Elk are in good condition and there are around 650 to 700 total elk, with no limping observed.



Raghorn elk on feed site



Cow elk in good condition



Spotted calf on feed site

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area - Manager Melissa Babik

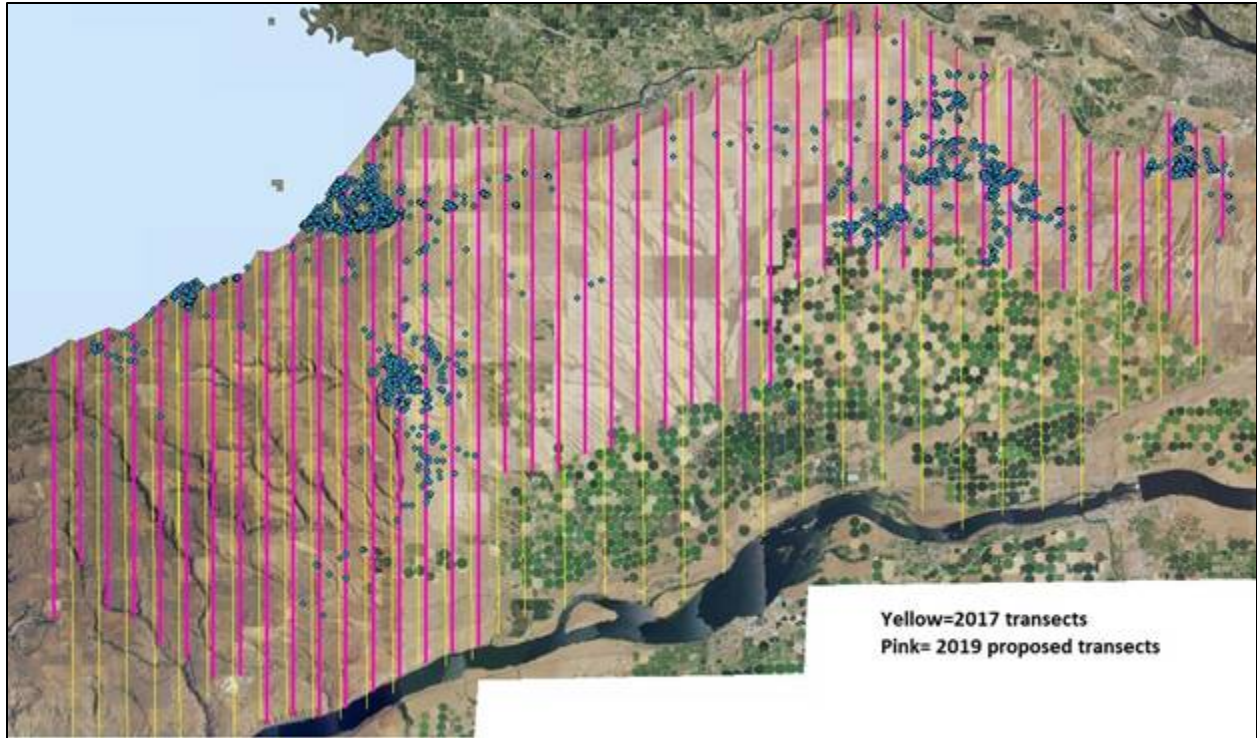
The beginning of the week saw about 650 elk at Watt and about 500 elk at Robinson. Weather was cold at around 28 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperatures increased to 32 degrees mid-week, about one to two inches of fresh snow on Tuesday night brought a count of 690 elk to Watt, 65 bulls. Robinson also saw an increase in elk on Wednesday with about 680, due in part to the snow and more elk being driven into the fenced area by the conflict specialists. Temperatures continued to rise (up to 40 degrees at 8:00 a.m. at Watt) and the elk numbers at Watt stabilized at around 700, while numbers dropped at Robinson to about 500 elk. A continued warming trend is predicted throughout the weekend.



Nice bull at Joe Watt

District 4 Wildlife Biologist - Jason Fidorra

District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra worked with partners and aircraft vendors in coordinating the upcoming pronghorn survey. The survey will occur over two days when fog and weather permit, hopefully in early February 2019.



Flight transects planned for the 2019 pronghorn survey flight

District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra provided power pole perch deterrent information for Wildlife Area Manager Finch who has funding to install predator perch deterrents along power line poles in his area.

District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra met with a landowner in Franklin County having continuing damage issues from deer in winter wheat. Fidorra visited the site again and discussed the issue with the landowner. The landowner stated that deer grazing in October and November pulled up newly growing wheat leaving large patches without growth. Hunting pressure, lure crops, fence funding, and past claims were also discussed.

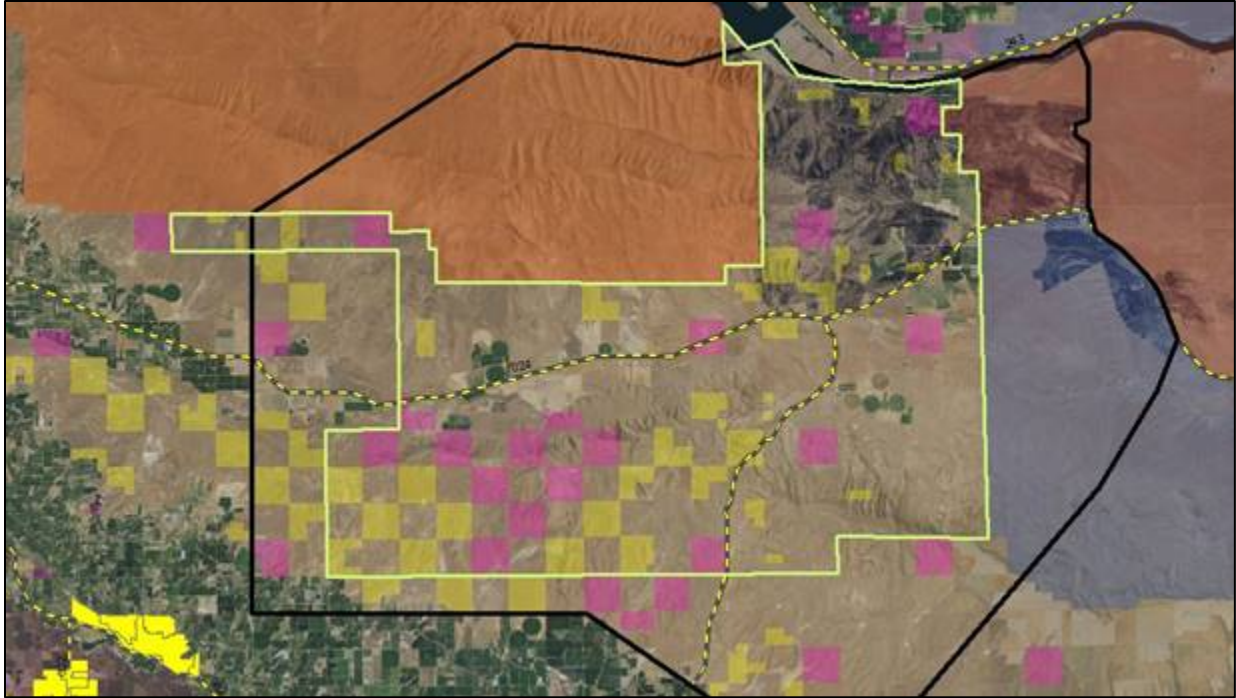


Patchy rows of winter wheat and bare spots likely caused by deer grazing and pulling plants up by the roots in early fall



A suspected wheat thief fleeing a winter wheat crop when approached for questioning

District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra reviewed GIS materials related to fire protection in the Blackrock Landscape, a key linkage between shrubsteppe of the Yakima Training Center and Hanford Reach National Monument. Fidorra mapped current fire districts to determine the extent of the area lacking coverage, which was around 80 percent of the private land in the focal area.



Polygon represents land in the Blackrock landscape without fire district coverage

Yakima Canyon Bighorn Sheep Project: Biologist Bernatowicz checked both bait piles at the south end of the canyon and found minimal.

Wolf Search: Biologists Moore and Maletzke searched for wolf sign in the northwestern portion of Kittitas County, but none was found.



A nice view of upper Kittitas County

Elk Darting: Moore worked with Biologists Maletzke and Wetzel as well as Technician Leuck to dart and translocate an elk with a garden hose wrapped around its neck that has been frequenting a local neighborhood. There had been numerous reports for multiple days that the hose was tight around its neck, but once WDFW arrived, the animal was free of the hose. It was decided to hold off on darting this animal.



Habituated cow elk, free of the garden hose, hiding out behind a snow pile

Colockum Elk Study: Biologist Moore continued to review literature, outlined the steps in performing a Negative Binomial Resource Selection Probability Function (NB RSPR) as described by Ryan Nielson and Hall Sawyer, and began the same process for Resource Utilization Functions (RUF).

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

Wenas Wildlife Area - Manager Cindi Confer Morris

Access Manager Garcia arranged for the removal of an RV abandoned at Thrall/Ringer Road access site. He was only able to find one company willing to remove and dispose of it, and the total cost came to \$1,280.77.



Tow truck hooking up to abandoned RV at Thrall/Ringer Road access site in Ellensburg

Access Manager Garcia checked on the status of construction on the new Duportail Bridge crossing of the Yakima River.



Duportail Bridge update

Region 3 Private Lands Biologist - Seth Hulett

Private Lands Biologist Hulett assisted a hunter interested in gaining hunting access on an area enrolled in the Hunt by Reservation program.

Private Lands Biologist Hulett met with a landowner in Franklin County to get their signature on a hunting access contract renewal.

Private Lands Biologist Hulett spoke with a landowner who is having issues with hunters trespassing on their land. He explained how there was a section owned by DNR next to his land that hunters would access and then use to access his property. Hulett explained the various ways our hunting access programs could help him address this issue. At this time, the landowner is thinking over the options.

Region 3 Private Lands Technician - Ashley Rodgers

Private Lands Technician Rodgers continued to visit Hunting Access sites in Franklin and Benton counties. All registration sites were maintained.

Private Lands Technician Rodgers continued organizing and entering hunter data from the Army Corp pheasant release sites, as well as sites enrolled into Hunt by Reservation.

Private Lands Technician Rodgers went through all the signs recently collected from expired hunting access contracts. All signs were organized and placed at the Windmill site.

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

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area - Manager Melissa Babik

Manager Babik conferenced with a representative from the Teanaway Family Farm. Babik described her goal to preserve the family's history on an interpretive panel. The family will work to provide Babik with photos and a write up of how the family used the property for generations.

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist - Don Hand

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored elk and deer activity along Hanford's southern boundary near newly seeded winter wheat fields. Muddy conditions prevented access to a good portion of the ridgeline. Over 45 deer were hazed from crops and no elk were observed outside of Hanford.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand participated in a Landowner Hunting Permit conference call to discuss the timeline for a review of the program. It was determined that a survey will be provided to landowners and hunters with follow-up meetings scheduled in early March.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored elk activity along Highway 240 after numerous reports in the past couple of weeks indicated numerous elk have been crossing the busy highway. Over 500 elk were observed on the Hanford National Monument and one cow elk was recently involved in a vehicle collision. Unfortunately, the meat was determined to be unsalvageable.



Roadkill cow elk along Highway 240

District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist - Steven Wetzel

Conflict Technician Leuck and Conflict Specialist Wetzel monitored for elk in the Thorp area several days this week. Several elk were hazed out of the Thorp area this week. No large groups of elk were seen in the area.

Conflict Specialist Wetzel met with a homeowner in Roslyn about elk getting into his yard. The homeowner believes the elk come from Suncadia, where elk are fed daily. The two locations are less than a half mile from each other. Elk feeding issues were discussed with resort staff members and more discussion about elk feeding will take place soon.



Elk feeding at Suncadia



Damage from elk in a Roslyn neighborhood

Conflict Technician Leuck herded over 200 elk through return and open gates this week. Elk are getting through holes in the elk fence, which were located and partially fixed. More fence work will be needed next spring. Conflict Specialist Wetzel and Technician Leuck herded elk on several days with some success but close to 60 elk are still on the wrong side of the L.T. Murray elk fence.

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

Wenas Wildlife Area - Manager Cindi Confer Morris

Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor discussed options with Area Habitat Biologist Bartrand for addressing the water flowing over Mellotte feed road and removal of a tree in the creek just upstream of the bridge. Confer Morris submitted a Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) application requesting permission to add rock to the feed road and to pull the down tree to the edge of the ordinary high water mark. After receiving the HPA, Taylor coordinated with YCS to deliver rock for the feed road. Water continued to flow over the road after the delivery, until Taylor set a hay bale in the overflow channel as identified in the HPA. These two things have been enough to lift the road section out of the water, but is still allowing flow to move through the rock into the channel on the far side of the road.



Hay bale put into overflow channel to reduce amount of water going over the road



Additional rock on feed road

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

East/West Bear Project: District 12 assisted Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil and Assistant Bear and Cougar Specialist Welfelt with ongoing bear den work. This portion of the project entails locating dens, placing cameras to document emergence and cub numbers, re-collar/adjust collars on adult females, and potentially collar yearling cubs. Work where newborn cubs are known to be present will be limited (camera placement only) to avoid den abandonment.



Adult female with yearlings during east/west bear project work

Annual Swan Survey: District 13 personnel conducted the annual swan survey for Island County and north Snohomish County. Conditions seem drier than usual, with fewer muddy or flooded fields. Most swans were found in pastures. Fewer swans were found on Whidbey Island than in past years. Numbers elsewhere were about as expected.



Photo courtesy of Paul DeBruyn

Island Marble Butterfly on San Juan Island: Biologist Milner began preparing for the San Juan County Agricultural Summit that will occur on Feb. 2 and 3. Milner will attend a booth on Sunday informing landowners about their options to enroll in a Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances to protect the island marble butterfly. We are hopeful that our federal partners may be able to join us, now that they are back to work.

Swan Deterrents: Biologists Waddell and Moore placed deterrents on a section of private property in Whatcom County to discourage use of the field by swans. The concern was that swans might accidentally ingest lead pellets as they scavenge for grit. Swans, like other waterfowl, have a thickly muscled organ called the gizzard. The gizzard is part of their digestive tract and acts like teeth for these birds. Waterfowl will purposefully ingest small rocks and hard material that gets stored in the gizzard to grind down food particles. If swans ingest lead shot, the birds can become sick and die from lead poisoning. The two biologists placed almost 100 wood stakes with bird scare tape and 400 brightly colored pin flags on the field. The deterrents appear to have worked, since no reports of swans using the field have been received since their placement.



Biologist Moore secures bird scare tape to a stake on a cold, rainy January day

Bat Management: State Parks requested input from District 12 as part of their special access permit review regarding multiple Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) training events. Training will involve fire and smoke (diesel and other combustibles) in a traveling containment vessel that will be near a local bat maternity colony which is white-nose syndrome positive. Parks had concerns over the colony during pregnancy as well as the disease status possibly making the bats more vulnerable, leading to abortion of pups. All training situations are a good distance from the colony and will be conducted during the day with smoke management and containment – no issues from WDFW.

District 12 discussed upcoming survey work for maternity colonies with local State parks management. Also discussed ongoing sharing of findings.

District 12 provided a presentation to the field personnel and a portion of the executive staff members of Mountains to Sound Greenway. The presentation went through local bat population management, white-nose syndrome status, and desire of WDFW to gain more locations of bat roosts, sick or dead bats, and what to do and where to report. Mountains to Sound's internal efforts on the ground and in networking with their partners provide great opportunity to collaborate with WDFW to reach more citizens and managers in providing this same outreach and knowing where to report these items. After the presentation, a 40-minute round-table of questions and ideas of how they can assist ensued. It was nice to have positive reception.

Urban Bird Treaty City – Seattle: District 12 discussed with Diversity and then Seattle Audubon regarding loss of personnel capacity and need to extract WDFW out of an in-kind match in a grant effort involving outreach materials on WDFW side. Various partners, including Seattle Audubon, are applying for a NFWF grant to fund a habitat project and outreach in Capitol Hill, Seattle. We collectively landed that if funds are received, they will approach WDFW again regarding collaborating outside of the scope of any grant stipulations.

Protected Species – Great Blue Herons: District 12 discussed state take needs and coordination with the Habitat Program, project entity, and city of Seattle. Due to the nature and location of the project, WDFW outlined state take needs along with Habitat Program recommendations for project management under the Growth Management Act. The project proponents will be referring to their city management plan in a request for state take authorization.

Hunter Contacts: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman worked with the Region 4 north hunt coordinator to deploy four Master Hunters throughout the week. The hunters were assigned to properties to address elk related damage.

Leque Island Estuary Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw turned in a progress report to the Recreation Conservation Office documenting project activities over the previous six months. Highlights are completion of the permit-level design, continued engagement with stakeholders, securing additional grant funding needed for construction, and permit application submittal.

Lower Stillaguamish Socioeconomic Study: Projects Coordinator Brokaw had a meeting with the economists who are leading a study of the lower Stillaguamish Delta to quantify benefits and impacts of Leque Island and City of Stanwood Parks projects on the local economy.

Skagit Conservation District Board Meeting: Private Lands Biologist Wingard attended a board meeting of the Skagit Conservation District. Introductions were made and a variety of questions were fielded. Most required follow-up with WDFW staff members who specialize in that area.

Oregon Spotted Frogs: Private Lands Biologist Wingard and District 14 Wildlife Biologist Waddell participated in two conference calls with WDFW staff members on Oregon spotted frogs. Status and monitoring efforts were discussed, along with outreach plans.

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

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Hunters finished the waterfowl season at Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program sites. Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo along with Private Lands Biologist Wingard toured Waterfowl Quality Hunt program sites to assess site use and identify issues.

Skagit Meetings: Wildlife and Habitat Program personnel met with Skagit Drainage and Irrigation District Consortium to discuss ongoing projects in Skagit delta, including the upcoming Island Unit alternatives analysis project. Staff members also met to discuss timing and integration between the Island Unit and Skagit Wildlife Area planning processes.

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

Puyallup Sportsman Show: District 12 worked a shift at the Sportsman Show in Puyallup. Many of our customers stopped by the booth with good questions, comments, suggestions, and a few complaints.

Ungulate Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with two managers from a Skagit Valley blueberry farm to review and discuss implementation of a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA). Shortly after leaving the property, the elk decided to enter the blueberry field during the middle of the day. Once the agreement is signed, additional measures will be implemented to address the elk in the blueberries.



Elk herd in a blueberry field

Injured Wildlife: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and Natural Resource Technician Cogdal responded to a report of an owl stuck in the grille of a vehicle. The driver of the vehicle was on her way to work when she struck the owl. After arriving at work, the driver was surprised to see that the owl was still alive and trapped in the grille and bumper. Witman and Cogdal were able to successfully remove the owl and transport it to a local veterinarian for examination.



Barred owl stuck in a vehicle grille

Landowner Payment Forms: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo along with Private Lands Biologist Wingard met with partner landowners to discuss any issues that arose during the season and to sign A19s.

Public Questions: Private Lands Biologist Wingard along with Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo were contacted by many hunters regarding wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities for waterfowl.

Hunt by Reservation Double Bookings: Private Lands Biologist Wingard worked extensively on addressing double bookings in the Hunt by Reservation system for Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program sites.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Annual Western Pond Turtle Meetings: Biologists Bergh, Wickhem, and Burlingame along with Regional Program Manager Jonker travelled to Olympia for the annual western pond turtle internal working group meeting and the annual meeting with project partners. During the internal meeting, all aspects of western pond turtle management were discussed including priorities and needs for 2019. The annual partners meeting was very well attended (minus our USFWS partners who were on furlough) and included staff from the Oregon Zoo, Woodland Park Zoo, Sustainability in Prison Project, University of Illinois, Shedd Aquarium, PAWS, and retired western pond turtle researchers Frank and Kate Slavens. WDFW staff members and others presented on accomplishments from 2018 with some fascinating research from the University of Illinois and Shedd Aquarium, observations from the turtles currently in treatment for shell disease, updates on husbandry practice improvements, and WDFW's work on shell disease, population estimation, habitat improvement, and bullfrog removal.

Beaver Relocation Meeting: Biologist Bergh and Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven were invited to attend a meeting of the south Mount Adams Beaver Believers. The group is made up of several different organizations that are interested in relocating nuisance beaver to lands where beaver are wanted or are unlikely to cause human-wildlife conflicts. In recent years, there has been much interest in and many scientific studies about putting beavers back into locations where they have been extirpated in order for those ecosystems to regain their full functionality. Beavers can have a positive impact for fish and wildlife habitat, watershed function, and can increase stored water which is beneficial during drought and climate change. A computer model illustrated drainages where conditions may be good for beavers, but where they are currently thought to be absent. The area of interest covers Skamania, Klickitat, and Yakima counties and includes the Yakama Reservation. The Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group, the Yakama Nation Fisheries and Wildlife Programs, and the Underwood Conservation District have invested the most effort in moving this proposal along. The south Mount Adams Beaver Believers would like to include education and outreach on the benefits of beavers along with a program for identifying release sites, holding beavers so that family groups can be released together, and monitoring released beavers and the changes in habitat post-release. The meeting focused on discussing the goals and objectives of the group, knowns and unknowns about beaver populations in the area, experiences with beaver relocations, and current rules and regulations for recreational beaver trapping and beaver relocation with an update on the forthcoming WDFW beaver relocation procedure.

Dusky Canada Geese: Biologist Burlingame surveyed areas in Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties for dusky geese. Several small flocks of duskies were observed, including seven duskies with red neck collars. Collar re-sights aid in determining survival and distribution of duskies that overwinter in southwest Washington. Large flocks of cackling, taverners, western, and snow geese were observed as well.

Gate Installation: Assistant Manager Wildermuth followed up on a new gate that was recently installed on the Hoffstadt Unit. As part of the recent commercial timber thinning operation, sections of new road were built into the unit to join up with existing roads for better access during the timber operation. The gate was installed and signs were hung to prevent motorized access to the area. As a reminder, there is no motorized access allowed on any units of the Mount Saint Helens Wildlife Area.



New gate on the Hoffstadt Unit

Dead Canyon Bridge Project: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Assistant Manager Steveson took advantage of good environmental conditions to seed the disturbed ground in the bridge removal area. The concrete bridge over Dead Canyon Creek was removed in early fall 2018 to improve access for fish to important creek habitat upstream. The last detail for completion of the project was to plant the area with native grass seed. This will stabilize the disturbed soil, provide suitable plant resources for local wildlife, and suppress the establishment of weeds, which would otherwise colonize the site in the absence of competition. Wildlife area staff members covered the area on foot using broadcast seeders. Snow allowed for easy monitoring of progress.



Distributing grass seed

Fence Post Stockpile: Assistant Mount Saint Helens Wildlife Area Manager Wildermuth delivered four bundles of treated wood fence posts to the Klickitat Wildlife Area early in the week. Fortunately, the ground was frozen so the transport vehicle and a tractor could be driven to the storage area, which allowed the posts to be put directly into the designated spot for storage until they are needed for a project. The next day, the farmer who holds an agricultural lease on the Soda Springs Unit delivered his rent payment for the 2018 season, 41 more wooden posts. The Klickitat Wildlife Area is very well supplied for fencing and signage needs, which coincides nicely with plans for more fence corner reconstruction and sign installation in the not too distant future.

Planning for 2019 Grazing Season: Wildlife Area staff members met with the holders of a grazing permit on the Soda Springs Unit to discuss ways to solve water shortage issues and a few other concerns. A variety of measures were identified for further action in time to be ready for cattle turn-out in May. In addition, Manager Van Leuven and Assistant Manager Steveson met with grazing permit holders who utilize part of the Simcoe Mountains Unit. They discussed potential effects of another land purchase by WDFW and ensuing updates to their grazing

permit, gain the permittees' perspective on a spring restoration project proposal and a fencing project that is in the works, and better ways to monitor the movement of cattle so that the harvest of forage by the animals can be more accurately be estimated.

Fence Repair: A few segments of fencing were left in poor condition following a logging project on the Soda Springs Unit, so Assistant Manager Steveson made necessary repairs to bring them up to standards. He also added a wire gate in one location so a tractor can pass through for access to forage plots without having to run the tractor on the highway to get there.

Patrol of the Soda Springs Unit: Assistant Manager Steveson checked areas that are popular with visitors, collected trash, and dismantled several fire rings that were left behind in areas off limits to open fires. He also hauled a load of trash to the transfer station. Evidence of public driving around one of the road closure gates was noted for future action. Unlawful off road driving was discovered adjacent to Anderson Road in an agricultural field owned by WDFW but leased by a local farmer. The amount of crop damage is unknown at this time. Steveson also exchanged information with hunters that he encountered in the field (coyote hunting season is open.)

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

Southwest Washington Goose Management Area 2-Inland: The goose season in GMA 2-Inland closed on Jan. 13. The season will re-open Feb. 9, although WDFW wildlife areas and national wildlife refuges will be closed to goose hunting. Please review the goose section of the Migratory Game Bird Seasons in the regulations book for details.

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

Coordinated Resource Management Planning Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen attended four Coordinated Resource Management Planning (CRMP) meetings in Klickitat County. In attendance were livestock producers/grazing permit lessees, as well as representatives from various timber companies, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Department of Natural Resources, the Klickitat County Conservation District, the County Noxious Weed Board, and WDFW. Jacobsen presented updates on Klickitat County carnivores and treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD). Extensive feedback was received regarding cougar populations and cougar management.

Deer with Arrow: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen fielded a report of a deer with an arrow lodged in her back, near the spine. It had only been seen one time by the reporting landowners, who said they would contact WDFW if the deer was seen again.

Sick/Injured Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to a call of a sick/injured deer in yard in a residential area. By the time Jacobsen arrived, the deer had already expired. Jacobsen disposed of the carcass, which was likely hit by a car, and talked to neighboring landowners about problems with feeding deer in the neighborhood.

Aggressive Deer: A Skamania County homeowner contacted WDFW Enforcement regarding an aggressive deer that frequents his yard. The deer routinely jumps over the fence into the landowner's small, residential yard to harass and attack the landowner's Labrador retriever. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen assisted in providing advice to the landowner and recommended using a paintball gun or water hose to haze the deer out of the yard when they enter. Jacobsen offered to assist with hazing efforts when the deer return to the yard. The fact that neighboring landowners are feeding the deer is likely aggravating, if not causing, the issue. More outreach and education is needed in this community on the negative effects of feeding deer.

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted by a local orchard owner who has been having issues with elk entering the orchard, despite the 8-foot fence surrounding the orchard. The elk test the fence for weaknesses, then rip the fence apart and squeeze through the small openings they create. Once inside the orchard, the elk bite the new growth and buds off the apple and pear trees. This not only damages the trees for the current year, but affects the way that the tree will grow in subsequent years as well. Jacobsen deployed the recently-constructed, inflatable elk deterrent with strobe light on its inaugural application to hopefully keep the elk from entering the orchard via a particular section of fence. The landowner will update Jacobsen on the effectiveness of the deterrent.



Elk browsing damage on a fruit tree



Remote-powered, inflatable elk deterrent with strobe light deployed in an orchard

Calf Necropsy: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Officer Bolton investigated a dead calf in Klickitat County. After a thorough investigation, which included shaving the majority of the calf hide and skinning the carcass, it was determined that the calf's death was not the result of a depredation. Bruising to the muscles around the ribs and shoulder, along with what appeared to be bruising to internal organs, suggests that this calf may have died from blunt trauma, possibly from one of the two large bulls occupying the pasture with the calf.



Calf necropsy

Cougar Sighting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen contacted a couple livestock producers regarding a cougar that had been observed in close proximity to their calving pastures.

Damage Hunts: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin and Master Hunter Glass teamed up to escort two hunters on various farms in east Lewis County. One of the youth hunters was able to harvest a cow elk.



Youth hunters with harvested cow elk

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin spent her week coordinating and escorting youth, disabled, and master hunts in Wahkiakum and Lewis counties. The numbers of elk on agricultural fields have increased dramatically over the past two weeks.



Successful Disabled Hunter. The elk was taken on commercial agricultural land in Lewis County



Successful youth hunter with his first elk. The elk was harvested on commercial agricultural ground in Wahkiakum County



Successful youth hunter with his first elk. The elk was harvested on commercial agricultural ground in Wahkiakum County



Youth hunter with his first elk. The elk was harvested on commercial agricultural land in Lewis County

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

Inflatable Elk Deterrent: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen completed a remote-powered, inflatable elk/deer/predator deterrent. The system uses a 12-volt battery and an inverter to power the inflatable scarecrow and the blower motor, as well as a strobe light.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Swan Mortalities Lake Tapps/Snag Island: Biologist Butler along with partners with Puget Sound Energy (PSE) worked together to catch sick swans and remove any dead swans on Lake Tapps this past week. This is in response to the ongoing swan mortality from lead poisoning occurring over the past year on Lake Tapps caused by ingested lead shot and lead fishing lures. Four sick swans and one dead swan were collected during this week's effort. Unfortunately, the four sick swans were found to have high levels of lead and were euthanized. Necropsies will be done on all five swans to examine the cause of the lead poisoning.

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

Ocean Park Elk: Natural Resources Technician Tupen responded to an elk damage report on a golf course in Ocean Park. The owner of the course has been hazing a group of around twenty elk for the last several weeks. Due to the golf course being on, as well as surrounded by, State Parks owned lands, lethal removal is not an option. Tupen is working on getting in contact with hunters who drew permits for this area to see if they might be able to gain hunting access to some of the private property that surrounds the park. Biologist Harris has attempted to contact Washington State Parks about this problem and has received no return calls. With the elk getting more comfortable on the golf course and habituated to people the next action will likely be the elk moving into a residential area.



The owner of the course is worried that his greens may eventually look like the above picture. Luckily, the elk are only tearing up the moss and grass on the outskirts of the course for now.

Youth Outdoors Unlimited Hunt: Natural Resource Technician Tupen and Biologist Harris assisted with the annual Youth Outdoors Unlimited (YOU) hunt. This hunt started several years ago when a producer gave a permit to a youth sponsored by YOU. This year's youth is a cancer survivor. With master hunters and producers reporting elk locations, they started the morning on a local group that has been causing some problems. Using the early morning fog as cover, the young hunter, guided by a local master hunter, her father, and a YOU member, slowly worked themselves into position. Biologist Harris's last observation of them was four orange dots disappearing in the fog and fence line. When the fog lifted, the elk were in a good spot and the young hunter harvested her first elk on her very first hunt!



Youth Outdoor Unlimited sponsored hunter and her first elk

Aberdeen Elk: Biologist Harris and Aberdeen Police Department, Animal Control Officer Sidor removed an injured elk from a local neighborhood. The elk had been there for several weeks. When the first reports came in the cow elk showed signs of some type of injury. Not knowing what happened, the decision was made to see if she would recover. Her condition worsened, so Biologist Harris recommended euthanasia. Attempts were made, but because of the proximity to a school and the fact that she was basically living in someone's yard, they were unable to euthanize her. Biologist Harris was able to chemically immobilize and later euthanize the elk. The elk was given to the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission for use in an upcoming necropsy training.

Satsop Elk: The Satsop elk are still crossing the county road. A local master hunter has been monitoring them every morning and has been successful in moving them across the county road before traffic problems occur. Unfortunately, they keep going onto properties we cannot access.

Forks Elk Hunt--School Lockdown: Unfortunately, an armed hunter returning from a hunt walked down the wrong road, causing the local school to go into lockdown briefly. Local police were on scene in seconds and determined what had happened.

Wynoochee Elk: Four more elk were harvested from the middle group this week. One elk was harvested by a youth using a damage prevention permit. Three others were harvested under kill permits for donations. Two went to the Quinault Indian Nation Senior Nutrition program. The other was cut up by a local meat cutter and donated, by the producer, to the Coast Guard for distribution to personnel in need due to the government shutdown. The lower group showed up earlier in the week. A master hunter was on call for the property and was able to harvest. The elk are still in the area.

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

Washington Sportsmen's Show: Biologists Butler and Michaelis staffed the WDFW booth at the Washington Sportsmen's Show this past Sunday. The Sportsmen's Show was held at the Washington State Fair Grounds in Puyallup from Jan. 23 through 27. WDFW Wildlife, Fish, and Habitat program biologists as well as customer service personnel and members of the ADA advisory committee staffed the booth during the show. WDFW staff members answered a variety of questions from the public and handed out information on a variety of programs and some fun WDFW items for kids.

Natural Resource Technician Tupen worked multiple shifts at the Sportsmen's Show, where he was able to interact with many sportsmen as well as members of local tribes and people from other fish and wildlife organizations.

Biologist Harris also worked a shift at the Sportsman's Show. While visiting other booths one individual commented that, he really appreciated the levels of WDFW personnel at the show. He thought it was good that WDFW was supporting hunting by their attendance.