

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

Jan. 16 to Jan. 31, 2020

DIVERSITY DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Mule Deer Migration Study: Deer Specialist Hansen worked with staff members in multiple regions and programs to complete deployment of 147 collars for four separate study areas in eastern Washington. These studies are investigating seasonal movement patterns of adult mule deer does to support prioritizations of habitat conservation and restoration efforts.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Nothing for this installment.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Region 1 Hunter Education Coordinator Whorton provided a first aid certification course for a number of hunter education instructors whom are required to have a first aid certified instructor within respective teaching teams. Instructors appreciate this service, although a drain on WDFW time. Small price for volunteer service received by devoted hunter education instructors.

Region 1 is initiating scoping of possible venues to host 2020 National Hunting and Fishing Day (NHFD.)

Region 5 Coordinator Elliott activated many classes which will take place through the year. She also worked to connect several chief instructors with others who may want to join their team.

Region 5 Coordinator Elliott shared information with local instructors and master hunters about a Pheasants Forever chapter startup meeting in Vancouver. The goal is to have an active Portland/Vancouver chapter that can contribute to habitat projects and local high school shooting teams. Elliott also attended the meeting which had approximately 20 interested persons attend. She talked with the organizers about the potential to partner with them for mentoring and clinics in the future.

Regional Coordinator Elliott and Hunter Education Instructor Steve Mills represented the WDFW Hunter Education Program at the Lewis County Home and Sportsmen's Show in Centralia. They manned a booth for the Friday through Sunday event, with additional assistance from Region 6 Coordinator Montgomery and Hunter Education Instructor Patti Mills. The group had a trivia wheel, answered questions, and gave out prizes and information. There was also a show presentation on Saturday about the Hunter Education Division and program. On Sunday they were presented with the first-place ribbon for educational booth.



6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Coordinator Elliott attended the Region 5 Wildlife Program meeting which included a session on records management and the statewide transition to One Drive.

7) Other

LANDS DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

SCIENCE DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 1

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Moose Composition Surveys: Biologists Atamian and Lowe began aerial moose surveys to collect calf-to-cow and bull-to-cow data for District 2. The surveys are focused on areas with good visibility and expected higher moose densities, and include Mount Spokane, Five Sisters, and Mica Peak. Due to poor weather conditions, only one morning survey in the Mount Spokane area has been completed so far.



Cow and calf moose spotted during an aerial survey in the Mount Spokane area

Mule Deer Monitoring: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy summarized this year's pre- and post-hunt composition surveys for mule deer and organized and updated capture records for radio-tagged mule deer. Fawn to doe ratios were similar for both pre- (54.3 fawns:100 does) and post-hunt (56.7 fawns:100 does) and higher than ratios over the last 2 years. Following the most recent mule deer capture on Dec. 22, we now have 44 active collars deployed, four inactive collars presumed to still be on deer, one functional collar in-hand from recent mortality, and one non-functional collar in-hand.

Forest Grouse: Biologists Mike Atamian, Carrie Lowe, Sarah Garrison, and Mike Schroeder attended the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's (ODFW) forest grouse wing bee in La Grande. Biologists from both agencies sorted through wings and tails placed in collection barrels by hunters, identifying harvests by species, sex and age class. WDFW recently reinitiated its forest grouse wing/tail collection barrel program. The ODFW wing bee supplied an opportunity for additional training for WDFW personnel, resulting in greater efficiency during Washington's upcoming forest grouse wing bee while helping out a partner agency.



WDFW biologists identifying forest grouse wings and tails collected by ODFW

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Asotin Creek Shooting Range: The shooting range along Asotin Creek is being used heavily this winter. Unfortunately, along with use we are finding abuse such as shot up signs inside the shooting bench, garbage, shooting debris left behind, and human waste along Asotin Creek in underbrush areas. Overshooting both target backstops also is taking a toll on trees along the creek which are suffering from literally thousands of bullet strikes. That simple rule of firing only into backstops continues to be ignored. Concern over flight path from the bench to the 200-yard backstop and beyond is prompting wildlife area personnel to remove the 200-yard pile. The flight path eventually crosses the parking area for the North Fork trail and is a real safety concern that needs correcting.



Shot up signs inside the shooting bench at the Asotin Creek range

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Tank Repairs: Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer repaired two vehicle-mounted tanks. The 300-gallon firefighting tank worked but needed extensive repairs and maintenance. The tank is now in great shape, ready for use during planned prescribed burning between April and June this year. The 120-gallon skid-mounted tank was re-plumbed and will now be able to gravity feed all-terrain vehicle (ATV)-mounted spray tanks. ATV sprayers are used for chemical weed control on wildlife area units located far from headquarters.

Trespass Livestock on Chief Joseph Wildlife Area: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice and other staff members discovered trespass livestock along Joseph Creek in mid-January. The cows belong to an individual leasing private grazing land from Diane Magden. Staff members checked the boundary fence and found some damage and an open gate. Dice contacted the owner of the livestock and was told: "it's not my problem the cows are out." The conversation didn't go well, and we are working with Enforcement on further options to remove the livestock from the wildlife area.



Trespass livestock grazing the riparian area of Joseph Creek

North Fork of Asotin Creek Potential Hydraulics Issue: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice discovered cleared trees, removed riparian vegetation, and evidence of machinery working in the water in the North Fork of Asotin Creek near a WDFW parking lot on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. The work was completed under a power line right-of-way without knowledge of wildlife area staff members or the district habitat biologist. The last time the power company did this was in 2005 and back then as now, they didn't bother to consult with WDFW before implementing their work.



Cleared vegetation along the North Fork of Asotin Creek



Tree that was cut down and left in the creek



Area where machinery was in the water and clearing trees

W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area Large Wood Project: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman participated in a meeting about the upcoming project that will be starting this summer (PA 13). The project area is from the fish trap to the hatchery bridge, behind Rainbow Lake. The Lacey construction crew will mobilize in May to begin constructing the access roads and moving in the material. The in-stream work window will be July 15 through Aug. 30.

Yellow Star thistle Meeting: David Woodall and Bob Dice attended a weed resource meeting hosted by Wallowa Resources and attended by other local land management agencies. They discussed potential yellow star thistle eradication. David gave a brief presentation regarding past control efforts and plans for the coming year.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Interagency Meetings: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy joined Private Lands Biologist Thorne-Hadley at the annual Walla Walla County Conservation District meeting, along with staff from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA), and local farmers. Vekasy provided updates on elk herd monitoring, spring bear permit increases, mule deer radio-tagging and monitoring, and ferruginous hawk nest platform installations. Vekasy also supplied some educational materials and program content for a presentation by the Blue Mountain Land Trust and Umatilla National Forest Nature Kids Program at the Walla Walla Public Library.

Asotin County Sportsman's Meeting: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice gave a presentation and update on the wildlife areas to the Asotin County Sportsman's Association on Jan. 16. Many questions were asked concerning proposed land acquisitions and why WDFW is no longer pursuing those projects.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Office Security: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch replaced the front door and added a smart lock for the new headquarters at Swanson Lakes. He drew up a spreadsheet to match authorized entrants with their assigned lock combinations. Staff members will have keyless access.



Keyless access pad at Swanson Lakes headquarters

Position Reallocation: The seasonal Natural Resource Worker 2 position at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area has been reallocated to a Natural Resource Technician 2 level. The higher level was justified due to an increase in required skills. Assistant Manager Mike Finch expects to fill the position on April 1.

Region 1 Office, Phase 3: Northeast Washington Access Manager Daniel Dziekan joined District 2 Wildlife Biologist Mike Atamian to represent the Wildlife Program during interviews with architectural firm ALSC. ALSC is developing plans for a parking and storage facility building behind the Region 1 office in Spokane. The architects had a series of questions designed to help them understand the parking and storage needs and wants of the Wildlife program. ALSC also interviewed representatives from other programs that will be using the new facility.

District 1 Wildlife Conflict Meetings: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor McCanna met with conflict specialists Bennett and Samsill in separate meetings and then together with Region 1 Wildlife Program Manager Robinette. Bennett will be responsible for all conflict duties in Pend Oreille and Stevens counties east of Highway 395. Samsill will be responsible for Ferry and Stevens counties west of Highway 395. This information was passed on to all District 1 staff members.

7) Other

Inland Northwest Wildlife Council (INWC) Membership Banquet: Private Lands Biologist Gaston attended the INWC Membership Banquet on Saturday. Private Lands Biologist Gaston was selected as the recipient of the Ann Faast Award.



Private Lands Biologist Gaston receiving the Ann Faast award from INWC President Pete Butler

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Sharp-tailed Grouse Update: In the last report, 35 Sharp-tailed grouse were foraging in riparian habitats along Scotch Creek. For this report, the highest winter count has climbed to 52. This occurred on Jan. 16, the morning after a heavy snowfall in the Okanogan. The surprise visit was observed when Manager Olson opened the office door. Thanks to high-quality water birch and other deciduous plants at the office that often hold sharp-tails this time of year. Surveys of other units in the Okanogan have not discovered any use.



Columbian sharp-tailed grouse feeding on catkins of water birch, their preferred winter food –
Photo by Jim Olson



Sharp-tails in their winter habitat on the Scotch Creek Unit – Photo by Jim Olson

Pygmy Rabbit Safe Harbor Program: Biologist Hughes met with a landowner to enroll his property within the Sagebrush Flats pygmy rabbit distribution area into the Safe Harbor Program. Hughes explained the steps to enroll ground into the Safe Harbor Program and identified where active pygmy rabbit burrows are in relation to his ground. Hughes and Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Bechtold conducted baseline surveys for the property being enrolled. No pygmy rabbits or sign was found during these surveys, resulting in a baseline number of zero. Hughes provided this information to USFWS which will allow them to send a baseline letter to the landowner. The property being enrolled is older Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and contains potential pygmy rabbit habitat. There is high potential pygmy rabbits may distribute to this ground within a few years if the property is able to stay enrolled in CRP (given uncertainties regarding CRP enrollment in Douglas County at this time).

Deer Management: Biologist Rowan completed edits to the aerial survey data and final summary report written by Biologist Atamian. Biologists from across regions one, two and three collaborate annually to perform surveys for the Columbia Plateau Mule Deer Management Zone, as a means of assessing the population and sub-herds.

Northern leopard frog: Biologist Grabowsky started the application process for two grants. Obtaining additional funding is extremely important for the northern leopard frog reintroduction project. Amphibian reintroduction programs often span several years, if not multiple decades. As with any reintroduction program, there are usually hurdles to tackle based on environmental fluctuations, disease outbreaks, release site selection, and other unforeseen / unknown challenges that are difficult to prepare for. With additional funds, WDFW can ensure that a successful frog population becomes established after release. Biologist Grabowsky has also begun planning for breeding surveys and coordinating with partners to ensure WDFW is prepared for another successful field season.

Washington Predator-Prey Project (captures): Biologists Fitkin and Hansen provided ground support for the recent mule deer capture effort in District 6. The contracted helicopter crew successfully deployed all 36 collars and distributed them nicely throughout the study area. The project sample size is now back up to 99 animals. In addition to addressing the project study objectives, these collars are also giving us valuable deer migration data and other information.



From top left: Capture crew preparing as the moon sets, pilot prepared hot lunch for the crew as Biologist Hansen reboots a radio collar, helicopter on the chase – Photos by S. Fitkin

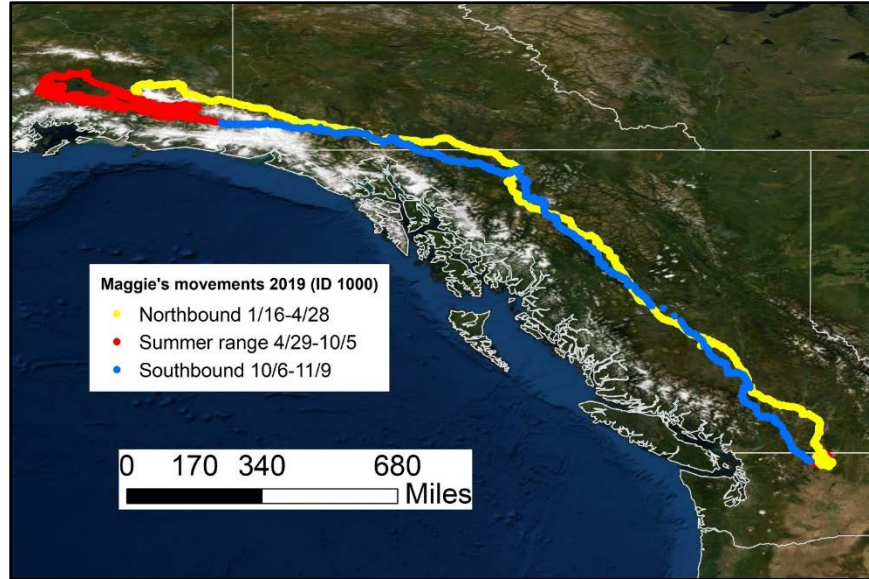
Wolf Management: Biologist Heinlen set up and checked cameras to assist in monitoring the Beaver Creek wolf pack in GMU 204. Two wolves were detected on camera. More information about wolves can be found at the WDFW Gray Wolf Conservation and Management page at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/species-recovery/gray-wolf>



A Beaver Creek Pack member – Photo by WDFW remote camera

Golden Eagle Research: Research Scientist Watson and WDFW volunteer Fischer successfully captured and banded a one-year-old, female golden eagle in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. The eagle was fitted with a backpack style, solar-powered PTT transmitter 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. Research Scientist Watson also compiled the migration data into a map from another female golden eagle captured in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area in January 2019. This eagle migrated north to Alaska for the summer then back to the Okanogan for the winter taking almost the same path up and back.





From top: One-year-old female golden eagle with solar-powered transmitter; migration route from female golden eagle captured in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area in January 2019.

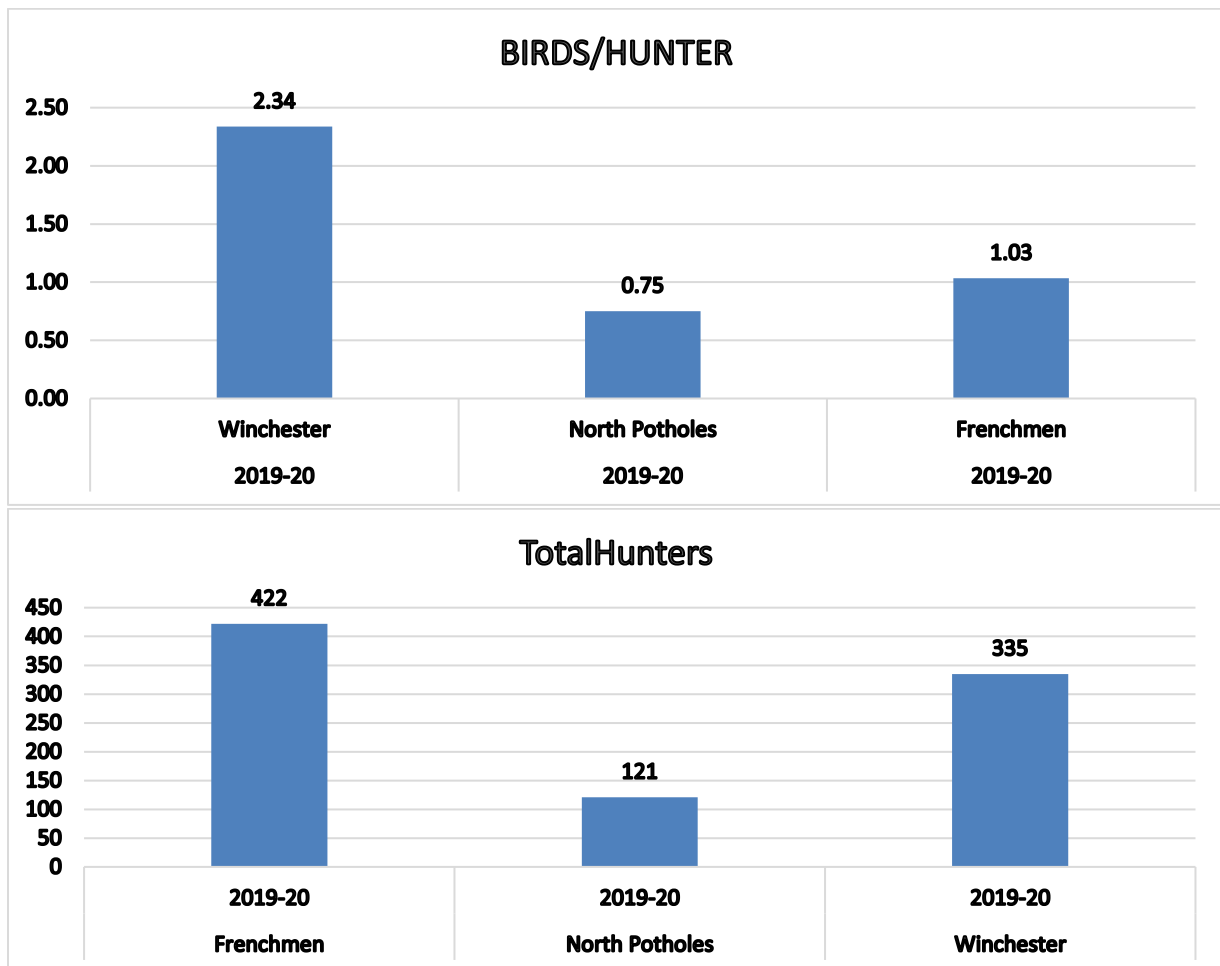
2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Youth, Active Military, and Veteran Waterfowl Day: February 1 will be the first-time youth, active military, and veterans will be offered a day just for them to hunt. Regular waterfowl season has been over for more than a week and with a week of rest, the wildlife area's wetland projects are full of waterfowl and opportunity to have a fun hunt. Specialist McPherson has seen large numbers of ducks and geese using both the Frenchman and Winchester regulated access areas, and birds are disturbed in all areas of projects offering for multiple groups and not overcrowding.



Mallards filling up on millet in Cell B of the Winchester regulated access area after the season ended - Photo by C. McPherson

Regulated Access Area Data: The general waterfowl season ended on Jan. 26. Specialist McPherson entered data collected from the wildlife area’s regulated access areas. Winchester produced the most birds per hunter and had the most hunters use the area since the 2014-2015 season which is very good to see after a new water delivery system was put in place and the moist soil management that occurred last field season. Frenchman provided many opportunities hosting 422 hunters throughout the season, but the harvest was average for the area. North Potholes did not see as much harvest or hunter use as it has in previous years. Typically hunting at North Potholes is best when large numbers of birds concentrate on the reserve and feed in the Hiawatha Valley northwest of the project. Weather throughout the season did not allow for these conditions to be met and is possibly the reason the project saw lower harvest and hunter use.



3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Elk in Orchards: Specialist Bridges responded to multiple landowner calls concerning elk in agricultural crops. The depredation program was discussed, non-lethal deterrents were issued, and the landowners were instructed to contact Bridges again if non-lethal deterrence methods were unsuccessful.

Reissuance of Depredation Permits: Specialist Heilhecker reissued landowner kill permits for antlerless deer. Two orchardists had previously been issued kill permits for December that went unused. They stated the deer were coming at night and consequently they had not been able to utilize the kill permits.

Cost Share Fencing Application Review and Contract Award: Specialist Heilhecker along with a committee of five other WDFW staff members (including Specialist Bridges and Supervisor Rickel) reviewed the seven applications received for game-proof fencing materials. Each committee member independently reviewed and ranked all the applications, which was followed by a group discussion. Of the seven applications, four were selected for funding with a fifth application pending. Specialist Heilhecker contacted the landowner with the pending application to request documentation that confirms he meets the definition of “eligible farmer.” Specialist Heilhecker drafted award notification letters and created packets of information to send to the seven applicants. The next step for selected applicants entails signing a cooperative fencing agreement. Agreements must be notarized and received by the contracts office in Olympia before the purchase of any fencing materials. Specialist Bridges assisted Specialist Heilhecker with estimating materials for funded fencing projects.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

WDFW Restoration Pathway: Wildlife Area Manager Olson met with WDFW Habitat Biologist Iten, Wildlife Biologist Heinlein, and Fisheries Biologist Fortier, and Colville Confederated Tribes Fish Biologist Matt Young. The Colville Tribe is proposing a Beaver Dam Analog project on Nine-mile Creek in the Eder Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area. This stream is an important tributary for upper Columbia steelhead spawning. The project is aimed at holding stream flow back for later release into an intermittent section of Nine-mile Creek. Also, to lower stream temperatures critical to spawning adults. This meeting was the 30 percent design review so WDFW could have the opportunity to review and provide input. The project is well designed, and the project proponent is experienced in these types of projects. Plans are progressing well with the hope that construction can be started this fall within a window of no hunting seasons.



Nine-mile Creek canyon. A tributary of the Okanogan River on the Eder Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area. This stream reach is important for upper Columbia steelhead spawning.
– Photo by Jim Olson

Russian Olive Removal in Frenchman Expansion: Specialist McPherson had an excavator delivered to the Frenchman expansion and wildlife area staff spent a week removing stands of Russian olives. These stands were in proximity to wetland cells or in footprint of wetland cells, removal will make habitat more favorable to waterfowl and wetland obligate wildlife.



Perfect tool for removing Russian olive stands - Photo by C. McPherson

Winchester Excavations: Manager Eidson, Assistant. Manager Cole, and Specialist McPherson went and evaluated new excavations on the east side of Winchester Wasteway with Halme and Ducks Unlimited Engineer Heck. Only one of the four basins being excavated had standing water which was concerning after shooting elevations and doing some test digs with dozer it was determined that more material needed to be removed from basin bottoms. Halme is currently working on excavating basins to new deeper profile and should have work completed in the next month.



Excavation area six during process of removing material - Photo C. McPherson

Private Lands Farm Bill Teleconference: All private lands staff members participated in the Farm Bill teleconference. Information on latest efforts with Farm Bill CRP was discussed. Mike Kuttle Jr. Farm Bill Coordinator, WDFW asked of attending private lands staff members if they had time to assist with general CRP plans due to the fact there will be a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) personnel shortage statewide. Private lands staff members explained limited availability to assist due to anticipated habitat restoration projects and work associated with current Farm Bill contracts. SAFE CRP (which is now a part of general CRP) was also discussed and most staff reported that many landowners statewide are not interested in SAFE CRP and have not signed up during the CRP signup where available. The lack of interest is linked to low signup and practice incentives, lower rental rates, reduced or no cost share for certain plan practices and only 10-year contracts vs. previous 15-year SAFE CRP is difficult to sell with landowners because there are no real incentives for added work to install practices for SAFE CRP grouse nesting cover.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Dog Ice Rescue: Private Lands Biologist Braaten was able to rescue a dog that belonged to a local ranch in the Coulee City area that had fallen through thin ice on Banks Lake. It was a coordinated effort with Aulin Smith, WDFW and Coulee City Fireman. Based on accounts from several sources it appeared as though the dog was in water for over five hours. The dog was shaking and could not move lower extremities very well due to cold when Braaten arrived on scene. Once the dog was brought to shore the fireman recognized the dog and took her home to warm up! The story about the rescue took off like wildfire as numerous news outlets and social media sites were a buzz with the story for the last week. Great effort by all and Hazel is doing great.



“Hazel” rescued from ice on Banks Lake - Photos by Eric Braaten, WDFW

What was going on 20 years ago?

Chelan County:

Met twice this week to discuss the Environmental Assessment for the Mission Ridge Ski Area, once with WDFW staff and once with USFS. It was agreed that the proposed Summit Lodge would not be located at the summit but further down the mountain. Snow-making activities would also not commence until November 10, to reduce disturbance to deer and elk and reduce disruption to hunters during the late-deer season, November 1-15.

Moved six bighorn sheep from Clemen's Mountain. to Lake Chelan.

Joe Pascal transported 126 turkeys from Stevens County to Chelan County. Enforcement personnel and volunteers released the birds at various sites on WDFW

and private land where turkeys were planted in 2000. This will complete our turkey translocations for 2001.

Okanogan County:

Most of last week was spent involved with the translocation of 11 bighorn sheep from Clemens Mtn to Mt Hull. The primary reason for the augmentation was to maintain genetic diversity within the herd. Secondary objectives include refinement of seasonal range use patterns, documenting dispersal routes (primarily males), and improving survey methodology and population estimates.

Grant County

Prepared for and attended the "annual" meeting with Grant County Mosquito Control personnel. Ron and I are both frustrated with the situation. The district does not appear to want to provide enough information about its program for us to evaluate the potential impacts on wildlife.

Upland Restoration: Processed Wallace Account incoming applications and worked on winter-feed budget accounting. Made final contacts with Swedberg, Mountjoy, and Fitkin regarding turkey releases scheduled for 14th-16th. Helped John Nelson put net out in Lincoln County on Tuesday and helped trap turkeys on Friday. Gretchen and JC continue to work on CRP cost-share reimbursement as signed paperwork comes in from landowners and FSA (Farm Service Agency). Also going through sign up 18 commitments, contacting landowners, mapping guzzler locations, etc. (A tremendous amount of work to do before and after the actual guzzler goes in!) Budget woes continue to plague us.

Photo Gallery:





Mule deer buck and Methow Wildlife Area with alpenglow on Pasayten Peaks – Photos by S. Fitkin



Rough-legged Hawk on the Scotch Creek Unit - Photo by Justin Haug



Coyote posing for a picture on a trail camera deployed in Chelan County – Photo by Joe Bridges, WDFW



Sharp-tail grouse on water birch near Scotch Creek headquarters – Photo by Justin Haug



Photos of sharp-tail grouse on Scotch Creek Wildlife Area – Photos by Justin Haug

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Oak Creek Wildlife Area personnel started feeding elk at the Cowiche feed site on Jan. 14, with 500-600 animals that came in after the start of a snowy week. Currently, staff members are feeding over 1,500 elk. Animal condition is typical for this time of year. All the snow is now gone in the area and high temperatures are pushing to near 50 degrees.

Oak Creek staff members started feeding at the Oak Creek headquarters feed site on Jan 15. Numbers are hovering around 500 elk and they are in typical seasonal condition. Currently, there is no snow on the ground at headquarters given the past week of above normal temperatures.

Oak Creek staff members also continue to monitor the Nile feed site. Elk were coming in, and we were getting up to over 200, but they now seem to come in only at night to avoid excessive human disturbance in the general area.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area personnel count and classify elk on the feed sites when elk cooperate. Good counts have been obtained most days in the last week. Calf ratios have been the lowest in history, ranging from 15-18 calves per 100 cows instead of an expected 30-35/100. It isn't unusual for some calves to be a bit slow coming to the feed sites, but total cow elk on the Cowiche site are near average. Elk on other feed sites will be counted/classified next week.

District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with U.S. Department of Energy and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service partners to discuss management of the Hanford elk population. During winter months the elk congregate in the low elevation areas of

the Hanford Reach National Monument and the Hanford site. This herd is well over objective and continues to grow, recently reaching 1,600 elk. Safety concerns regarding elk/vehicle collisions, along with continued concerns for crop damage on private lands, damage to habitat of the Ecology Reserve, and other topics were discussed along with potential solutions.

District 8 Wildlife Biologist Moore worked with Deer Specialist Hansen and Baker Aircraft to capture and collar 58 mule deer over the past week. All went well despite some equipment and weather delays. There was great cooperation from local landowners, Puget Sound Energy (PSE), EDP Renewables, and DNR's southeast regional office for access to property/facilities. The main goal of the project is to document deer migration and habitat use.

Colockum Wildlife Area staff members responded to a report of a dead bighorn sheep that was reportedly found floating in the Columbia River near Tarpiscan Creek. A waterfowl hunter had taken it to the east side of the river and left it on the beach there. At the request of the WDFW Region 3 district biologist and the WDFW veterinarian, Colockum staff members located the sheep and removed the lungs, boxed them up and shipped them to the Washington State University Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (WADDL) at Pullman. The lab will test for disease that could impact the Quilomene sheep herd. The sheep also had severely deformed front feet, impacting its ability to walk. The feet were removed and sent to Colorado State University's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory for testing.



Deformed front feet of bighorn sheep, Colockum Wildlife Area



Lungs of bighorn sheep removed for disease testing

Elk numbers at Watt and Robinson feed sites on the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area have fluctuated a bit with changing weather conditions. With a couple inches of new snow on January 28, there were 677 elk at the Watt site and approximately 350 at Robinson Canyon.



Elk at Watt feed site



Forester Pfeifle, Rod Pfeifle Sr. and Malcolm Thompson assist with elk feeding on the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand responded to an injured calf moose that was involved in a vehicle collision near the Touchet River. Along with Region 1 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley and Fish and Wildlife Officer Seiss, the moose was euthanized, and the carcass was taken to the Richland Rod and Gun Club meat salvage team for processing and donating to the Union Gospel Mission to feed the homeless.



Vehicle injured moose awaiting processing for charity food donation

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

With the warm weather the last half of this reporting period, Oak Creek Wildlife Area saw many visitors on UTVs.



Parking lot in Cowiche full of weekend warrior side by siders

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel discussed the open master hunter seasons with several hunters who called to ask about areas where elk have been in the 3911, 3912, and 371 hunting areas. Several permit master hunters have called to inquire about when they will be called on the ordered lists and requirements. Several other master hunters called about a crippled elk on private land that they wanted to harvest, but they did not have landowner permission. Biologist Bernatowicz talked with one master hunter who was turned away from the Yakima Training Center gate on Jan. 21. Upon being informed the season ended Jan. 20, the individual claimed he's always hunted until March 31. The master hunter season has never extended into March and has ended Jan. 20 since 2008.

District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel and Technician Leuck patrolled the Thorp area for elk activity. A group of elk was located in the Swauk area and monitored for movement. The location where the elk were found is not in a damage area, and if the elk move toward damage areas, further action will be taken.

Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by several Cle Elum residents about elk in their residential neighborhood. Elk had been rummaging in a hay storage tent and eating hay stores. Large tarps were used to wrap the tent and discourage elk from feeding on the hay as well as hazing tactics discussed with the landowners.



Hay tent discovered by elk

While checking for elk activity in a large orchard at the end of Tieton Drive, an elk return gate was found wired shut and inoperable again, for the third time in as many months. The gate was again opened and is now operating.



Elk return gate closed for unknown reasons

A residential access road gate needed repair at a location at the end of Slavin Road. The open gate had no fencing on the swing bar and elk were observed going in and out of the area. A cattle panel was attached to the swing bar and the gate now effectively keeps elk from walking into the orchard areas south of the elk fence.



Cattle panel attached to swing bar gate that had been open to elk movements

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with a homeowner in the south Kennewick area who was concerned about risk to her pets from coyotes. Advice on deterrent strategies were discussed as well as reference to “Living with Wildlife” publication for self-help guidance.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Forester Hartmann prepared a draft Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) grant proposal to do restoration thinning work along U.S. Highway 12. Forester Hartmann also presented his proposal for pre-commercial thinning projects at Rock Creek to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation PAC board. Forester Hartmann also coordinated with GIS staff members to process LiDAR data to map vegetation heights on current and upcoming forest projects.



LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a remote sensing technology with a wide variety of applications in land management. In forestry, it can be used to map vegetation heights, giving a detailed picture of the landscape right at your fingertips. Pictured above is part of a stand map created for Windy Point, with dark red areas showing the tallest trees, green areas of small regeneration, and brown/grey showing open grassy/brushy areas.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand and District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra worked the annual Tri-Cities Sportsman Show with other District 4 staff members. WDFW employees answered fish and wildlife-related questions and provided educational materials and other goodies to the public over the 3-day weekend event. Fidorra also responded to interview requests by local media about the event: https://www.nbcrightnow.com/news/the-th-annual-tri-cities-sportsmen-show-attracts-thousands/article_b76d0454-3935-11ea-9b58-6bd11dcf1135.html

Wildlife Education Corps (WEC) volunteers have been staffing the Visitor's Center at the Oak Creek Wildlife Area headquarters seven days per week since Jan. 15. We have observed a plethora of visitors during this period even during weekdays. Peak counts of visitors at the center have been over 300 people in a single day on the weekends. Truck tours are ongoing and have also been a popular activity.



6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

L.T. Murray purchased a new snowplow for their UTV. They hope for more snow in February!



Natural Resource Technician Nass testing the new snowplow

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Brant Data Collection: Waterfowl Biologist Wilson and District Biologists Waddell and Moore collected data from hunter-harvested brant in Skagit County during the two-day season. Biologists documented the age (juvenile or adult), sex, and the specific population of brant (black or Western High Arctic) for each harvested bird. The Western High Arctic brant is one of the smallest Arctic goose breeding populations in the world and winters only in a few areas, including Padilla and Samish Bays, thus it is important for biologists to understand what proportion of the harvest includes this type of brant. Of the two brant populations, one segment breeds in the coastal subarctic region of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in western Alaska, and the other breeds in arctic regions of Alaska, Canada, and Russia. Biologists also collect two primary feathers from harvested juvenile brant for stable isotope analysis to determine the breeding area the brant originated from.



Biologist Wilson (Left) and a hunt club member collect data from hunter-harvested brant

Avian Response to Estuary Restoration Projects: District 13 biologists Hamer and Milner joined staff from the Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) to begin establishing study plots in the intertidal habitats at Fir Island Farms and Leque Island. PVC pipes were installed at plot corners to help surveyors navigate during high and low tides. The placement involved rigorous walking through mud and water to get the plots outlined in wet, cold and windy conditions. Surveys to count and identify bird species will begin shortly.



CNLM and WDFW staff members preparing to install markers at Leque Island

Island Unit Advisory Group Preparation: District 13 personnel reviewed and provided input and edits to the presentation on waterfowl biology that the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Waterfowl Section Lead Spragens prepared. The information was presented to the Citizen Advisory Group at their all-day meeting where various other topics were presented and discussed.

Annual Swan Survey: WDFW personnel and numerous volunteers conducted the annual swan survey in several counties in Region 4 and Region 6. Participants collected data including the species of swan, tundra or trumpeter, the total number in the flock, and the age of birds, either adult or juvenile.



Swans in a field in northern Whatcom County

Oregon Spotted Frog Working Group Annual Meeting: District Biologist C. Moore attended the annual two-day Washington Oregon spotted frog workgroup meeting at the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge. The group discussed restoration methods, habitat monitoring, upcoming challenges, and the effectiveness of current policies. Oregon spotted frog is a medium-sized aquatic frog endemic to the Pacific Northwest. Historically, the frog was found from southwestern British Columbia, Canada to northeastern California. Today there are 46 occupied locations of which several occur in Skagit and Whatcom counties within the Sumas, Nooksack, and Samish River drainages. Moore is soliciting permission from landowners to carry out breeding surveys this spring. If you have wetland property in this area and are interested in being involved, email callie.moore@dfw.wa.gov or call 360-466-4345 ext. 281. Volunteer opportunities are also available to the public; please contact Moore for more information.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Cougar Depredation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Seitz conducted a depredation investigation on an alpaca carcass in King County. The alpaca was confirmed to have been killed by a cougar. Several prevention measures were discussed with the alpaca farmer to help avoid further conflicts.



Necropsy of an alpaca carcass confirmed as cougar depredation. The hide was skinned back around the neck to reveal subcutaneous hemorrhaging and tissue damage as a result of the attack.

Depredation Investigation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Seitz conducted a depredation investigation on two goats that were killed in Snohomish County. Unfortunately, several days passed before the owner contacted WDFW, so there was very little evidence to work with and the cause of death was unable to be determined.





Skeletal remains of two goat carcasses that were killed in Snohomish County

Bear Complaint: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Seitz responded to a bear complaint in Snohomish County. The bear was getting into garbage and bird feeders on several properties in the area. Seitz provided advice to several homeowners in the general vicinity.



A bear burglarizing a bird feeder in Snohomish County

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Presentation to Camano Islanders: Projects Coordinator Brokaw presented at an event organized by Sound Water Stewards for the public to learn about the Leque Island Estuary Restoration Project. The event was attended mostly by locals who live on Camano Island and pass by the project every day as they drive over the bridge to Camano Island. Questions and comments from the group were mostly supportive of the project and highlighted that the public is very curious about this type of work. Many people expressed appreciation for the new walking trail on top of the berm.



There was considerable local interest in the Leque Island project presentation, as the room capacity of 115 people was reached 15 minutes before the event started. Another presentation is scheduled for April to accommodate people who arrived after the room was full.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

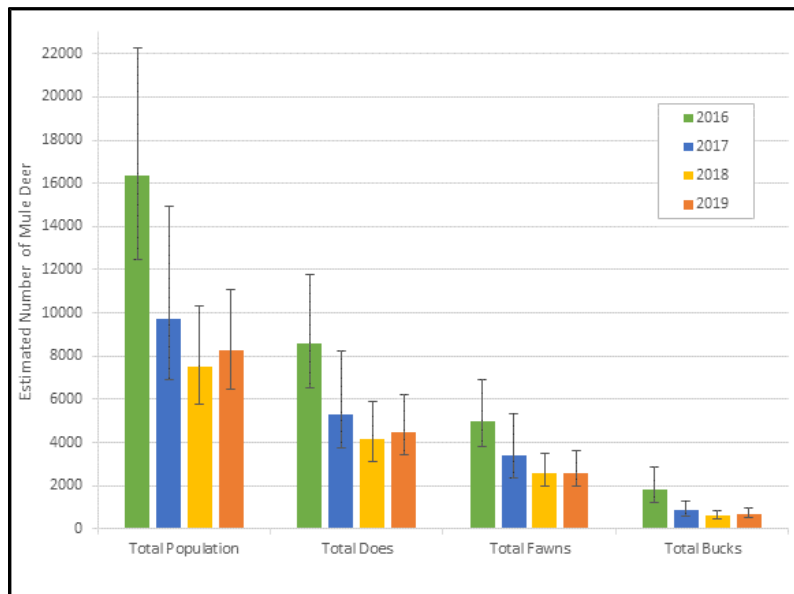
REGION 5

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Monthly Winter Elk Count on the Mudflow: Biologist Stephens counted elk on the Mudflow Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. A total of 185 elk were present during the survey. Typically, elk are classified during the survey but given the driving rain and high winds, it was not attempted.

Klickitat Mule Deer Surveys: In mid-December 2019, biologists from districts 9 and 10 conducted post-hunt aerial surveys (via helicopter) for mule deer in Game Management Units (GMUs) 382 and 388 in Klickitat County. The GMUs are divided into 72 subunits, and units are stratified by density and then randomly selected for surveying. With available funding and weather constraints, the team was able to survey 19 subunits, and these randomly selected units are treated as representative of the entire population. The raw data were analyzed and entered a sightability model, which allows the district staff members to generate population estimates and buck-to-doe and fawn-to-doe ratios for the herd within those two GMUs. In total, 369 groups of deer were documented, and 2,084 deer were counted and classified (by age and sex). The population is estimated to be 8,248 deer, up from 7,535 in 2018. Ratios of fawns per 100 does and bucks per 100 does were estimated to be 58 and 16 respectively, which is consistent with previous years, and the buck ratio falls within the management objective of 15-19 bucks per 100 does that is outlined in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) Game Management Plan. After the severe winter of 2016-2017, the district saw significant declines in the deer population according to their post-hunt aerial surveys, spring road surveys, harvest, and anecdotal observations. Hopefully, this survey is the first sign that the population is starting to recover, and the team looks forward to the results of future surveys.



Population estimates for the Klickitat mule deer herd 2016-2019

Dusky Goose Survey: Biologist Wickhem conducted a dusky goose survey in Clark County this week. Dusky geese are a protected subspecies of Canada goose, that breed in the Copper River Delta of Alaska and winter in the Willamette Valley of Oregon and along the lower Columbia in Oregon and Washington. During the summer, duskies are captured by biologists at their breeding grounds in Alaska and fitted with neck collars, each with a unique alpha-numeric code that can be read from a distance using a spotting scope or binoculars. When collars are sighted throughout the year, the collar number and location are reported to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who can track the individual movements and migration routes of the collared geese. On this survey, Wickhem observed six dusky geese with red neck collars and recorded their codes. Wickhem also spotted one snow goose with a collar but was unable to read the code. Other species observed during the survey included: swans, bald eagles, sandhill cranes, seagulls, American kestrels, a Northern harrier, and several species of ducks.

Dusky Canada Goose Surveys: Biologists Stephens and Holman conducted dusky Canada Goose surveys in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. The purpose of the surveys is to count dusky geese observed and read alphanumeric codes on any red collared duskies. Wildlife managers survey the geese multiple times across their primary wintering grounds and use the data to generate survival estimates. The dusky geese are collared on their breeding grounds in Alaska every other year. During the survey, dusky, cackling, Taverner's, and Western Canada geese were located and recorded. One dusky goose with a red collar was located in Wahkiakum County and the collar code was recorded.

Oregon Spotted Frog Working Group Annual Meeting: Biologist Wickhem attended the annual meeting of the Oregon Spotted Frog Working Group which was held at the Billy Frank Jr. National Wildlife Refuge outside of Lacey, WA. The meeting was attended by other WDFW Biologists and biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washing Department of Ecology, Joint Base Lewis- McChord, the Samish Tribe, and amphibian monitoring volunteers. The main topics of discussion included habitat restoration efforts occurring across the range, results of last year's egg mass surveys, and the various methods that are being used to remove invasive wildlife species, primarily bullfrogs, from Oregon Spotted Frog habitats. In some parts of the state, breeding season and egg mass surveys will begin in a few weeks, so members of the group appreciated the chance to collaborate with others, acquire new volunteers, and share field techniques.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Private Lands Signage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist and Private Lands Biologist Jacobsen and Wildlife Regional Program Manager (RPM) Jonker removed several WDFW Hunt by Reservation signs on a parcel of land that is currently being used as a livestock wintering pasture. The site is frequented by winter goose hunters, but access will be closed to hunting for the remainder of the winter to protect the livestock from disturbance.



Wildlife Regional Program Manager Jonker removing a Hunt by Reservation sign on a beautiful, but windy, winter day in Klickitat County

Graffiti: This week access staff Rhodes and McKinlay had to paint over graffiti at four access sites in Clark and Lewis counties. Some of the graffiti appeared to be gang-related, others had satanic emblems and racist remarks.

Land Slide: Due to the landslide on State Route 4, access to the Onieda boat launch is cut off from the East. Access Manager Mitchel in Region 6 has agreed to maintain the site for us with restroom cleaning and checking for damage and litter. We really appreciate the help!

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP) Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Biologist Bergh attended the annual CRMP meeting with livestock producers, industrial timber landowner representatives, and personnel from other governmental agencies to discuss issues on grazing permits and leases in west Klickitat County that have arisen over the past year. Fences, water issues, Assets Under Management rates, timber harvest activity, and wildlife conflict issues with livestock were all discussed. Four consecutive meetings with six different livestock producers were held as part of the CRMP meeting.

Master Hunter Damage Pool Deployment: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen deployed a Master Hunter from the Region 5 Damage Pool to a farm in Clark County. The farm was experiencing severe damage to hay fields from elk. The master hunter was able to successfully harvest an elk the first morning. Hopefully, this activity will keep the elk off the property for several weeks.

Missing Fowl: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Wildlife Regional Program Manager Jonker followed up with a landowner who had lost some of his free-ranging fowl to an unknown carnivore during the previous week. A trail camera deployed by Jacobsen revealed that a bobcat had been responsible for the depredations on the missing duck and chicken. While at the residence, Jacobsen noticed that the landowner's chicken coop had incurred recent damage from an animal and, from the blood drops and feather in the vicinity, suspected that another depredation had occurred the previous night. The landowner was unaware anything had happened to his chicken coop. Jacobsen and Jonker trailed several sets of wildlife tracks through the snow, and eventually located the remains of an additional duck and chicken that were killed and consumed the previous night. Bobcat tracks were found at the scene. Coyote tracks were also found distributed across the property. Relevant advice was given to the landowner on how to reinforce the construction on his chicken pen to prevent additional depredation attempts.



Bobcat caught on a trail camera at the scene of a cached duck carcass from the previous week



Damage to the chicken coop where a carnivore had entered the coop the previous night and killed a duck and chicken



Duck and chicken remains found in the woods. Bobcat tracks were present in the snow on top of the stump and log in the photo.

Damage Hunt in Lewis County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey deployed a master hunter on a damage hunt in Lewis County. The landowner and Aubrey met to discuss the damage occurring, and the potential for increased damage as the fields became more saturated with the precipitation in the forecast. The landowner and Aubrey determined that deploying a master hunter was the best course of action.

Cougar Concern: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey was contacted about a dead opossum found near the end of a homeowner's driveway. The opossum was fresh but heavily fed on. The homeowner was concerned it may have been a cougar. Based on the photographs provided, it was unlikely that a cougar was the culprit in this case. A discussion was also had on the best practices to keep the homeowner's chickens safe from any potential predators in the area.

Injured Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey received a report of an injured elk, likely with Treponema Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD), located on private timberland in Cowlitz County. The reporting party noted the elk did not seem to be able to move at all. Upon arriving at the area, Aubrey observed the elk and noticed deformities in both rear hooves and that the animal was no longer mobile. Unfortunately, the elk had to be euthanized.

Injured Elk 2: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey received a report of an elk with TAHD in Wahkiakum County. Aubrey arrived and was met by the reporting party who informed him that the elk had unfortunately already died. Aubrey observed the hooves and did not find any injuries or abnormalities. However, there was an injury in the chest and stomach area, possibly from crossing a fence, that was likely the cause of death.

Deer with Arrow Injury: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey and Biologist Holman responded to a report of a deer that has an arrow lodged near its back. They observed the deer moving and feeding. Because of the area of the injury, Aubrey and Biologist Holman determined that removing the arrow would likely cause more harm to the deer than leaving the arrow as is. They decided to give the deer a fighting chance and will continue to monitor the situation.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Riverbank Structure Check: Manager Hauswald and Assistant Manager Wildermuth visited the Mudflow Unit to check on erosion control structures along the North Fork Toutle River this week. Several of the large structures had been hit by water during the high flows from recent rain and warm weather. They were all still intact and showed signs of performing as planned to redirect flowing water back out into the river channel and away from eroding upland habitat. It was a warm day on the Mudflow with no snow left on the valley floor and several herds of elk were seen.

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Bird Boxes: Assistant Manager Wildermuth hung five bird boxes on the Cedar Creek Unit of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area. The boxes were built by Technician Fox to provide secure nesting locations for songbirds. The boxes were filled with cedar chips and placed around the perimeter of the upper field. Hopefully, the birds will make good use of them this spring. Later this summer, Wildlife Area staff will check the boxes to measure nesting success.

Klickitat Wildlife Area - Follow-up to Removal of Dead Canyon Bridge: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven went with WDFW Habitat Biologists Stambaugh-Bowey and Johnson to check on the condition of the bridge removal project area in Dead Canyon. In 2018 the bridge over the creek was removed to allow the creek floodplain to function more naturally. Upon the January 31 visit, with recent rains and snowmelt, the creek was up and flowing swiftly. The

stream has developed a multi-branched channel that appears to be flowing through the rocky floodplain as desired, indicating a successful outcome for the project. (See photo, Jan. 31, 2020.JPG.) Grasses are a bit slow in becoming established over the upland parts of the project site, although plants are fairly uniformly scattered and coming along. The grass has been grazed, probably by elk that spend winters in the area.



Follow-up to the removal of Dead Canyon Bridge

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Living with Wildlife Presentation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen delivered a presentation to Klickitat County residents on Living with Wildlife, focusing on Washington's large carnivores and livestock husbandry. The presentation was hosted by the Underwood Conservation District as part of their Winter Workshop series. The presentation was well attended, with over 50 people coming to learn about living with wildlife.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Immobilization Practice: District 9 Wildlife Program staff members partnered with WDFW Detachment 6 Enforcement officers to conduct a wildlife immobilization practice session. Protocol for handling and loading immobilization darts, use of tranquilizer dart guns, handling of immobilized animals, and reviewing immobilization scenarios were all covered.



Officers Whipple and Bolton practicing with their Pneu-dart brand dart gun

2018 Farm Bill Training: Wildlife Conflict Specialist and Private Lands Biologist Jacobsen attended a training hosted by the NRCS regarding the implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill. Natural Resources Conservation Service staff members, conservation districts, WDFW personnel, and other partners from around the state attended this training.

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Taylor's Checkerspot Captive Rearing: Biologist Linders met with personnel from the Oregon Zoo, Mission Creek, and the Evergreen State College Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) for the annual pre-season meeting held at Mission Creek. This meeting was also attended by incarcerated butterfly technicians and allows them an opportunity to contribute to the discussion on lessons learned, planning for the upcoming season, and to request and suggest improvements to the program and their working environment. With the completion of the second greenhouse at Mission Creek, the number of inmate technicians has doubled. The enthusiasm and energy they bring to the program continues to increase, making it very gratifying for everyone involved. Linders also had a second meeting with staff from SPP to look at the data collection stream for Mission Creek to suggest changes that could streamline the process and increase data accuracy.

Western Gray Squirrel Status Assessment: Work is progressing on two fronts in anticipation of the upcoming periodic status review. To move the habitat assessment piece forward a team of wildlife diversity and science staff met to finalize rules for a photo interpretation step that will be used to assess habitat change (gain or loss) between 1993 when western gray squirrels were state-listed and 2017 (i.e., current condition). In addition, headquarters staff held a conference call with regional staff to debrief on 2019 hair tube surveys, share results and discuss staffing needs for the upcoming season, which will be the third and last year of the current effort.

Western Gray Squirrel Connectivity Modeling Workshop: Biologists Linders and Azerrad were joined by Research Scientist Vander Haegen to assign values to each of a series of land uses and land covers that occur within the project planning area (western Washington). These values are tied to the concept of resistance, where resistance represents the degree to which landscape features impede or facilitate animal movement processes. Western gray squirrels are one of five focal species being used to evaluate landscape-scale connectivity. The model's intended audience includes groups from conservation to transportation with an interest in preserving and improving opportunities for terrestrial wildlife movement and population integration.



Course scale location of Larch Mountain salamander (Plethodon larselli) within Mount Rainier National Park

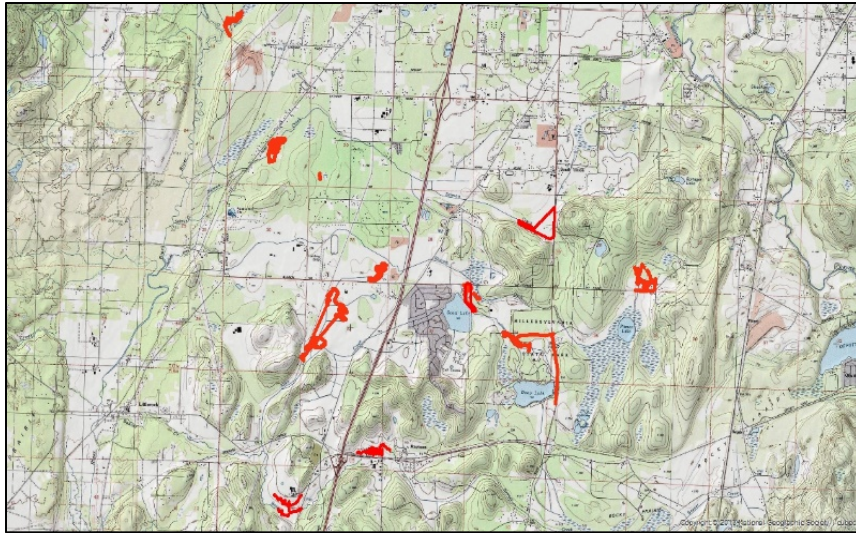
Larch Mountain Salamander Reporting: Biologist Tirhi finalized and submitted a project summary report to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as required by her monitoring permit for conducting surveys with Mount Rainier National Park (MRNP). District 11 confirmed Larch Mountain salamander's continued presence at two of the locations they were assigned to monitor within the park (MRNP staff conducted monitoring elsewhere in the park).

Oregon Spotted Frog Planning: Biologist Tirhi and Butler represented District 11 at the annual Oregon Spotted Frog Working Group meeting held at the Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually Wildlife Refuge office. Topics ranged from recovery planning to bullfrog control to habitat enhancement studies. The district 11 team is honored to be a part of such long-lasting and effective, collaborative working groups for both western pond turtles and Oregon spotted frogs.

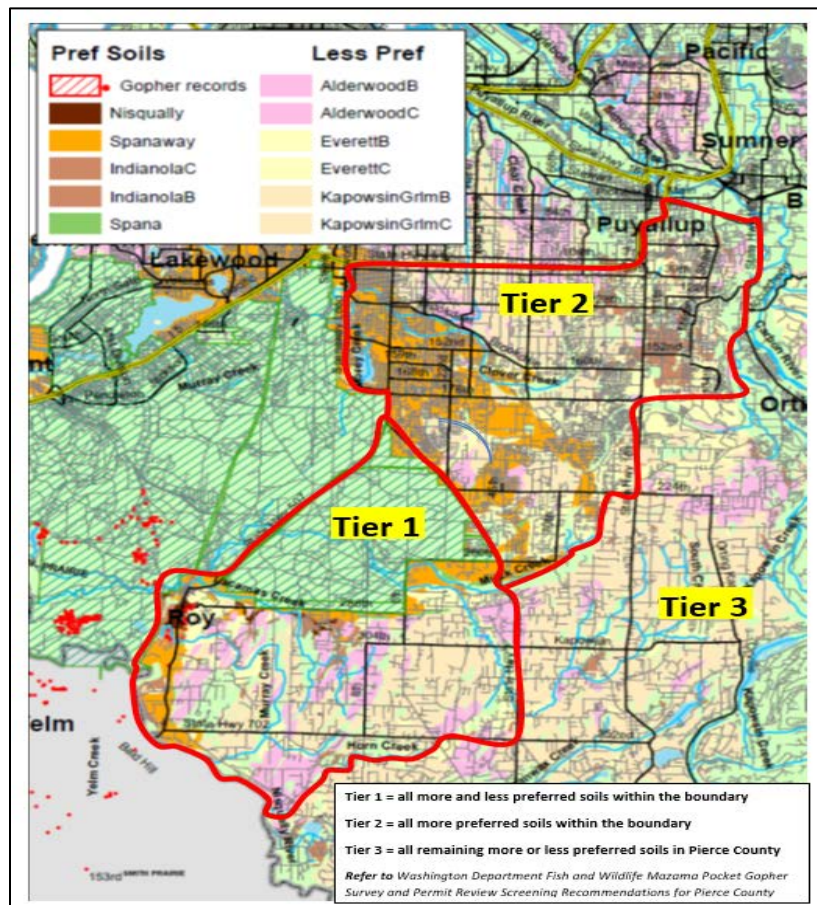


WDFW staff members and partners planning for Oregon spotted frog recovery at the annual spotted frog working group meeting

Biologist Tirhi met with headquarters staff members and data managers to confirm the process for collecting and storing Oregon spotted frog survey effort in District 11 and potentially statewide. Biologist Tirhi has traditionally required all staff and volunteers conducting amphibian surveys within the district to track their locations while doing surveys using a Global Positioning System (GPS). Tirhi then maintained a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) layer, by year, of this search effort. The layers are used for planning future surveys and answering questions pertaining to what areas have been searched. Due to time limitations, Tirhi requested these layers be organized and stored in the headquarters data section. Tirhi was advised at the meeting that we will move away from individual GPS tracking and replace it with smartphone technology using Survey123 and Collector. All survey efforts and potentially corresponding data forms will then be centrally stored and managed and accessible to all.



Example of Oregon spotted frog survey rack lines (search effort) maintained by District 11 staff members



Draft Mazama pocket gopher screening recommendations for Pierce County, WDFW 2020

Mazama Pocket Gopher-Pierce County: Biologist Tirhi met with Biologist Stinson and Research Scientist Olson to formalize recommendations to Pierce County on a tiered process to conduct pocket gopher surveys and screening within the county. District and headquarters staff members will be meeting with both the USFWS and Pierce County over the next week to discuss implementation

Elk Hoof Disease: One branched bull harvested from the Sequim-Dungeness Elk herd on Oct. 23, 2019, had deformities to the hooves. This warranted the sampling and testing of the hooves which came back positive for *Treponema* Associated Hoof Disease (TAHD), as specified in the report below:

COMMENTS: While all hooves exhibit extensive inflammation associated with a variety of bacteria and fungi on the skin, coronae, and hoof walls, with the **right** hind limb exhibiting gross lesions similar to those seen with *Treponeme*-associated hoof disease (TAHD), a single, small crateriform lesion in the interdigital space of the **left** hind limb was the only location containing argyrophilic spirochetes (confirmed by Warthin-Starry stain) in erosive lesions typical of TAHD. These were further confirmed as *Treponema* spp. by send-out immunohistochemistry. This case may represent an early lesion, and while the significance of the other inflammation and various other microbes, including pleomorphic bacteria tunneling into superficial interdigital hoof keratin, is unclear, it may lend credence to the possibility that initiating insults are necessary for spirochete colonization.

Taylor's Checkerspot Habitat Planning: The Department of Natural Resources has proposed to conduct timber harvest adjacent to the two occupied Taylor's checkerspot sites west of the Elwha River. A site visit was conducted on Jan. 30 to both sites to further identify the specifics of the habitat alterations that will benefit Taylor's checkerspot habitat and ideally expand the occupied habitat at both sites.



Department of Natural Resources habitat enhancement project from over 10 years ago. Result = Occupied by Taylor's checkerspot butterflies



Department of Natural Resources forest cover to be harvested for Taylor checkerspot habitat



During January 30 field visit Biologist McMillan noticed several larvae basking on leaves



Field Crew observing larvae at bottom of habitat slope in area with scotch broom

Lead Poisoned Swan Collection at Lake Tapps: Biologist's Tirhi and Butler spent a morning patrolling Lake Tapps for observation and collection of swans displaying signs of lead poisoning. An overview of this monitoring can be found in weekly highlights from December and January. Tirhi and Butler successfully captured one lethargic swan who had symptoms of early lead poisoning. The swan was able to swim, hold its head upright, and flap wings but could not take flight and thus was easy to capture. All swans captured are transported northwards to an evaluation and rehabilitation facility. Questions pertaining to this program can be sent to our Region 4 office.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities



Bogachiel River Leyendecker access

Bogachiel River, Leyendecker Access: After the last high-water event, logs and debris settled on the ramp making launching and retrieval of vessels impossible. While on-site, a drift boat showed up after fishing eager to pull out. Mitchell & Reeves along with the help of the guide and his two clients quickly had the ramp useable again.

Bay Lake: The Access Team, working with Enforcement, removed an abandoned vehicle hulk at Bay Lake in Pierce County. Cost for removal, \$675.00. Illegal dumping such as this has greatly increased across Region 6 at our access sites this year, putting a strain on our budget to accomplish other improvements to benefit our customers.

Morse Creek Homeless Camps (continued): Wildlife Area Manager Lowery coordinated with Enforcement Officers on the latest sweep and cleanup of the wildlife area unit. The information below is reprinted from the Region 6 Enforcement Report.

“Det. 8 Officers performed a sweep of the Morse Creek Wildlife Unit to ensure no one was still unlawfully residing there (The unit has been closed to public access since December). Officers observed several vacant camps, and one large new structure that had been unlawfully constructed since December on WDFW lands. The abandoned camps contained large amount of trash, including hypodermic needles, and even fishing equipment. No one was observed on the Morse Creek lands, and officers noted a vast increase in the number of deer frequenting the area. The following two days WDFW Officers and land staff with assistance from the Clallam County Sheriff’s Office Chain Gang removed 4,920 pounds of refuse from the Morse Creek Wildlife area which had accumulated since the last sweep in September.”



Officers Cooney and Davidson with a new structure unlawfully constructed on WDFW land at Morse Creek



Officers Cooney and Davidson surveying abandoned camps at WDFW Morse Creek property



Brant Hunting: Clallam County Pre-hunt brant count along the beach was zero brant seen from shore on Jan. 10.

Hunter checks:

- Jan 11: no brant checked.
- Jan 15: no checking due to snowy weather.
- Jan 18: 8 adult brant checked, with additional two adult brant reported.
- Feb 1: no brant checked.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Oregon Spotted Frog Land Acquisition: Biologist Tirhi prepared a draft application for the purchase of a conservation easement of over 35 acres of wetlands and creek used by state and federally listed Oregon spotted frog. The funds are being offered by the Chehalis Basin Strategy’s Aquatic Species Restoration Plan (<http://chehalisbasinstrategy.com/asrp/asrp-implementation/>). Tirhi sent the draft application to WDFW Real Estate Services and the Region 6 program manager for review.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Puyallup Sportsmen's Show: Several agency employees participated in staffing the WDFW booth at the Puyallup Sportsmen's Show this month. Biologist Tirhi covered one shift and stated she had some great conversations with hunters regarding topics from wolf monitoring to season setting. Tirhi was also able to help two new hunters in Washington locate access for waterfowl and elk hunting in District 11.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.