

# Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

Dec. 16 to Dec. 31, 2019

## **DIVERSITY DIVISION**

### **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**

**Douglas County CRP Acreage Cap and Wildlife Conservation:** Farm Bill Coordinator Mike Kuttel, Jr. continued work on a solution for a problem caused by changes in the 2018 Farm Bill. Douglas County is home to the largest remaining sage and sharp-tailed grouse populations in Washington. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has provided important habitat for prairie grouse for decades. The wildlife focused State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) initiative of CRP has been particularly important. Under prior Farm Bills, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) had broad authority to exclude CRP acres from the enrollment cap of 25 percent of the acres of cropland in a county. Douglas County had a waiver that excluded SAFE acres from the county enrollment cap. The 2018 Farm Bill removed this broad authority so the waiver for Douglas County is no longer in effect. About 50,000 acres of CRP need to expire in the county before USDA can allow new enrollments or contract renewals. USDA projects this will take until 2022. Losing this amount of CRP cover could have serious implications for wildlife conservation. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is planning to offer short-term options to help producers keep CRP cover in place. Kuttel has also been working with WDFW Federal Coordinator Meagan West to work with the Governor's Office, the State Conservation Commission, and our congressional delegation on possible solutions to the lost CRP acreage cap waiver in Douglas County. This situation highlights the need for a state funded option to complement Farm Bill funding as national conservation program priorities change. If Congress passes Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) that could be an option to help with this need.

### **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.

**GAME DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

**HUNTER EDUCATION**

Nothing for this installment.

**LANDS DIVISION**

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**

**Forest Health Story Map:** Lands Data and Outreach Specialist Trena developed a story map outlining the department's forest management practices throughout the state. The department uses a variety of tools for forest health management, including prescribed fire, fuel breaks, and forest thinning. Actively managing healthy forests reduces the risk of severe wildfire, improves habitat for fish and wildlife, and protects homes and local communities. For information on the department's projects throughout the state, see the [forest management story map](#).

## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

## 7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

## SCIENCE DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

## REGION 1

### 1) Managing Wildlife Populations

**National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) Meeting:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett spoke with the regional director for NWTF about funding opportunities to address turkey damage in northeast Washington.

**Wolf Population Monitoring/Surveillance:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill checked and deployed several cameras in the Wedge and Togo pack territories this week. Samsill observed two sets of adult wolf tracks in the Togo pack territory.

**Preparation for Wildlife Capture:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill read through the white-tailed deer capture protocol for the predator-prey research study he is about to participate in.

**Bighorn Sheep:** Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman located the bighorn sheep and submitted the locations with Survey123. The five sheep that were inside the elk fence are now outside the elk fence with the rest of the herd.

### 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Private Lands Access:** Natural Resource Technician Fish finished two contracts for private lands access Hunt by Written Permission. Technician Fish visited four Hunt by Written Permission sites.

**Water Access Areas:** Access Manager Daniel Dziekan attended an informational meeting with State Representative Marcus Riccelli of Spokane, concerning the Waikiki Springs access area, Riverside State Park, and the undeveloped land in between. WDFW Regional Program Manager Kevin Robinette, State Parks representatives, and interested neighbors also attended. Representative Riccelli wanted to learn more about these properties, including potential for linking them all under state ownership, for recreational public use. WDFW, Parks, and Riccelli will continue to investigate options as opportunity allows.

**Access Site Maintenance:** Technician Heimgartner traveled to Heller Bar, Shumaker, and Boggans and serviced access sites. He stopped at the North Fork shooting range and picked up trash. He collected 12 gallons of shotgun hulls.



*Spent shotgun shells left as litter*

**Brush Pile Removal:** Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman burned brush piles on Maloney Mountain with Access Manager Heimgartner and Forester Ashiglar. The Washington Conservation Corps helped burn on Monday and Tuesday. She also burned the slash pile at Rainbow Lake with the help of DNR Wildland Fire Technician Burri.

### 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Fencing Contracts:** Natural Resource Technician Fish and Conflict Specialist Samsill delivered materials to a provider for his fencing contract.

**Range Rider Contacts:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill worked on invoices for the contract range riders in the Togo pack territory. Samsill also spoke to two range riders via phone calls and texts.

**Conflict Prevention:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill and Private Lands Technician Fish delivered fencing materials to a landowner in Pend Oreille County who is in the process of signing up under a No-cost Fencing Agreement contract with WDFW. Both WDFW staff members delivered twenty-nine 6"x12' posts, twenty-nine 4"x12' posts, seventeen 4"x10' brace posts, one hundred and five 10' T-posts, three rolls of 8'x330' field fence, 1050 T-post clips, and one roll of 340' tension wire. All of these materials were at Sherman Creek and will be replaced once contract is processed for payment. The trailer used to transport materials was returned to Sherman Creek Wildlife Area upon completion of the delivery.



Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill and Private Lands Technician Fish responded to a report of a wolf sighting in Addy, where a dog was reportedly attacked by wolves. After speaking to the reporting party, coyotes seemed more likely the culprit of the dog attack. Regardless, they performed a site visit and assessed the scene upon arrival. Although there was blood all over the reporting party's driveway, WDFW staff members determined that the blood was from the wounded dog involved in the previous night's attack. Further investigation yielded no evidence of either wolf or coyote presence around the residence. Due to the abundance of dog tracks around the supposed attack site, Samsill determined that the attack was a result of neighborhood dogs getting into a fight. Samsill left the reporting party with a business card and some information and advice on how to treat the wounded animal as well as how to reduce the likelihood of wolf/dog and coyote/dog interactions.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill responded to another report of three wolves seen in northern Steven County reportedly stalking cattle. Samsill determined that the report was a couple days old, so he reached out to the associated producer and left a message.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill met with a local houndsman at the District 1 office who is interested in becoming a WDFW contracted houndsman for future cougar and bear conflict. Samsill took the houndsman's information and passed it on to Sergeant Leonetti for a follow-up.

**Elk Fence:** Technicians Meisner and McGee spent a week going over the elk fence making repairs.



*Elk fence*



*Large tree fallen across the fence*

#### 4) Conserving Natural Areas

Nothing for this installment.

#### 5) Providing Education and Outreach

**Public:** Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman answered questions from the public.

#### 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

**Administration:** Biologist Baarstad worked on a variety of administrative tasks. Biologist Baarstad was on leave for most of the week.

**Meetings:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill participated in a Togo planning meeting with Conflict Supervisor McCanna and Sergeant Leonetti.

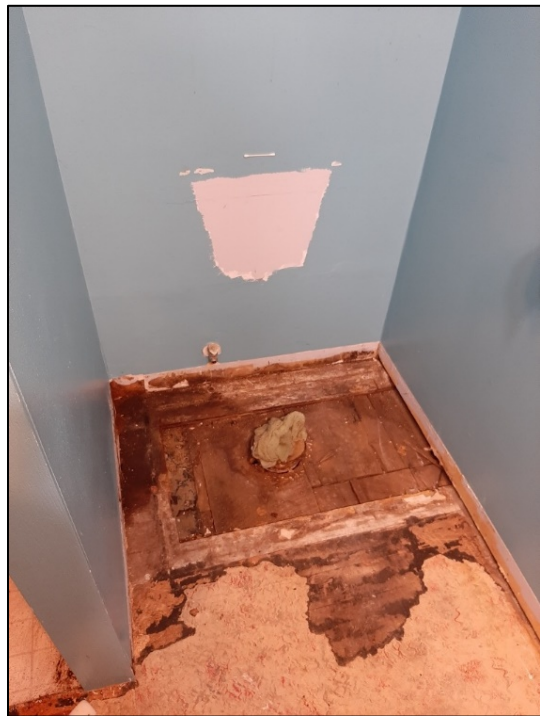
**Interagency Cooperation:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill cleaned out and organized the storage shed at the District 1 office.

**Reporting:** Biologists Finch, Palmer, and Anderson completed progress reports for several grants. Final reports went to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for shrubsteppe restoration at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. Interim reports were submitted with the state Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) for parking lot installation at the recent Reardan Wildlife Area addition, and for forest habitat improvement at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area.

#### 7) Other

**Interviews:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisor McCanna assisted with interviews for the Natural Resource Technician 2 (herder/hazer) position. McCanna also worked with headquarters personnel to move forward with the top candidate.

**Facilities:** Technicians Meisner and McGee worked together to replace the overhang over the front door on the Smoothing Iron Ranch house. Snow and ice last year destroyed overhang. They also started tearing into the bathroom floor. They found water damage from a leaking shower. They purchased supplies and materials to replace the shower and flooring. This project is ongoing over the next couple of weeks because the floor needs to dry out. Technician Stallcop spent a few days painting.



*Bathroom, stripped down*



*Freshly coated walls of the living room*

## **REGION 2**

Nothing for this installment.

## **REGION 3**

### ***HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:***

#### **1) Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Snow Goose Surveys Completed for Columbia Basin:** District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra assisted teams conducting snow goose and swan surveys at roosts along the mid-Columbia and inland sites. Very few geese were located in Franklin County but McNary and the river near Paterson held over 50,000 roosting snow geese. Counts were coordinated with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and USFWS personnel as well. This was the third annual count in the region.

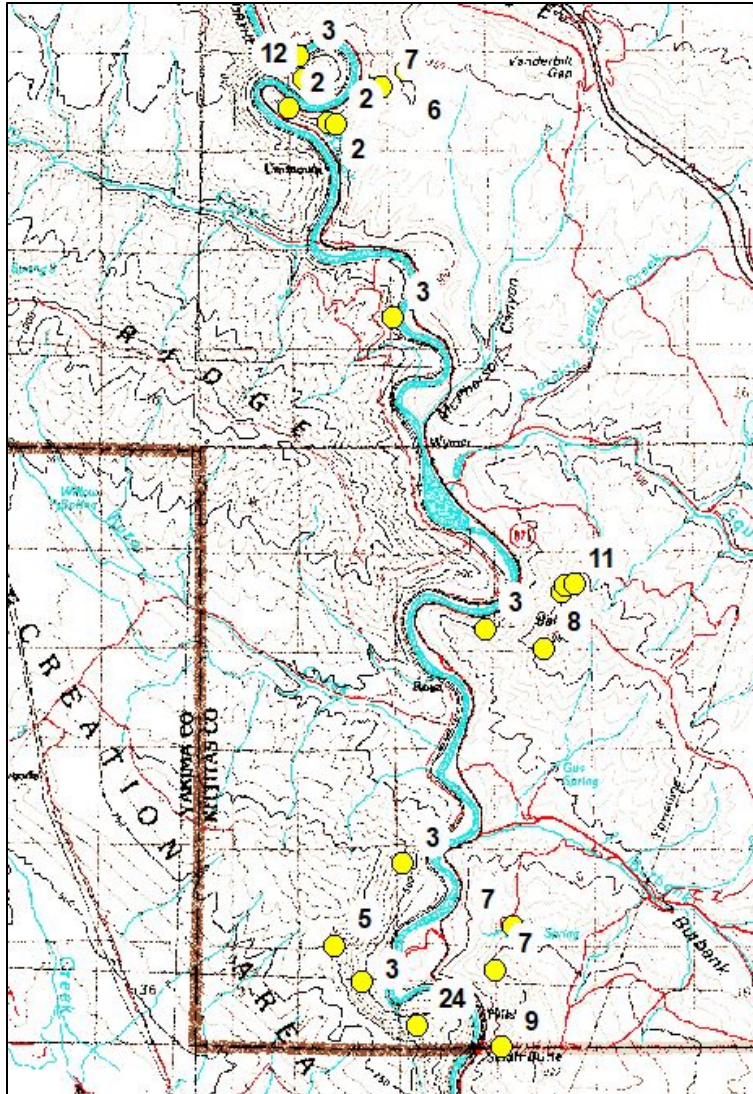
District 4 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz worked with the Yakima Training Center and Muckleshoot Indian Tribe to collect elk hooves for treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) sampling. Nine sets of hooves were sent to the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Lab (WADDL) and more are being collected.





*Elk with probable laminitis*

District 4 Wildlife Biologist Moore and Conflict Specialist Wetzell flew bighorn sheep surveys in the Yakima River Canyon. Only 14 lambs were found, which is unfortunately normal for the Yakima River Canyon and is due to the bacteria *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (M. ovi). Sampling of hunter harvested sheep documented M. ovi is still prevalent in the herd 10 years post outbreak. “Test-cull” is being considered for the remaining sheep.



*Distribution of Yakima Canyon bighorn sheep*

Montana biologists notified WDFW that a hunter from Yakima had harvested a deer that tested positive for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). The hunter did everything right and only brought back boned out meat. To avoid any potential risk, District 8 Wildlife Bernatowicz obtained the meat and had it buried at the local landfill.

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Waterfowl Hunting Opportunities Opens Near Pasco:** Region3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett activated the Snake River DNR hunting opportunities. Hunters may now use the Hunt by Reservation system on the WDFW website to reserve one of the three crop fields. These sites are only open on goose days and will continue through the late snow goose season.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber assisted with a mentored pheasant hunt for youth and hunters new to pheasant hunting on Friday, Dec. 27 at the Sunnyside Headquarters Unit. There

were 22 participants and many volunteer mentor hunters. This class was a collaborative effort with Pheasants Forever and WDFW.



*Class started with presentations by Aaron Garcia, Manager Kaelber, and Pheasants Forever*



*Next up was clay pigeon practice*





*Mentor hunters teaching shooting skills*



*Hunters watch as the dog is on a scent*



*This happy hunter bagged his first pheasant*



*Mentored pheasant hunt day was a success!*

### 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Kahlotus Deer Damage:** District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand conducted hazing and monitoring patrol of deer in winter wheat fields in the Kahlotus area. Mild winter weather has deer scattered over the landscape rather than concentrating as typical in harsher weather. Late season permit hunting and hunting with damage permits have assisted in minimizing deer damage impacts in the wheat crop.

**Nuisance Kennewick Coyotes:** District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and handled a complaint from a resident in south Kennewick concerning coyotes raiding chicken coup and harassing domestic pets. Information was provided on protection strategies and contact information for local nuisance control operators and hunters.



District 8 Conflict Specialist Wetzel patrolled all major conflict areas for elk activity. Most areas had few elk. Elk were moving through most areas in a general eastward direction.



*Elk moving out of the Thorp/Lauderdale area*

A landowner in the Manastash reported elk in his new seeding, and District 8 Conflict Specialist Wetzel moved the elk out of the area. The elk have been gone for at least a week from that field since they were moved.



*Elk hazed away from new seeding in the Manastash*

District 8 Conflict Specialist Wetzel worked with an orchard owner in the Badger Pocket area to transport elk fence materials to the fencing location.



*Posts ready for transport to Badger Pocket orchard project*

District 8 Conflict Specialist located a small bull group and a separate group of cows in the Thorp area. The bulls were hazed and moved to the west and the cows were hazed by landowner permit hunting effort, though no elk were harvested at that location.



*Thorp location where elk were hazed out of the area*

#### 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett picked up the first seed order for the Blackrock Green Strip Pilot Project. Seeding of the first 30 acres will occur soon after the first of the year, depending on the weather. The other two sites will be seeded once Farm Service Agency approves the job sheet from Natural Resources Conservation Service NRCS.

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area staff members burned Russian thistle skeletons at the Corrals parking area on the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area.



*Russian thistle skeletons burning at Corrals on the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area*

#### 5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

#### 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

**Region 3 Private Lands Technician Position Filled:** Private Lands Technician Byers started working on Dec. 16. She had previously worked for Fish Program as a seasonal technician. Over the first few weeks Byers checked all of the hunting access sites in Franklin County and updated signs as needed. Byers also took down signs on two properties that declined to reenroll into the hunting access program. Welcome Trina Byers!

#### 7) Other

Nothing for this installment.



## **REGION 4**

Nothing for this installment.

## **REGION 5**

### **1) Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Black-tailed Deer Necropsy:** After receiving a report of an emaciated, dead doe on a private property outside Vancouver, biologists Bergh and Wickhem responded to perform a necropsy. An outbreak of adenovirus hemorrhagic disease (AHD) has recently been confirmed in northwest Oregon, so biologists in Region 5 have been following-up on reports of dead deer in the area that were displaying symptoms of AHD. This doe had diarrhea and was foaming at the mouth prior to death, both of which are visible symptoms of AHD. Bergh and Wickhem took samples of several body organs that will be sent in for testing as soon as possible. For more info about AHD, please visit our website: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/diseases/AHD>.



*Deer necropsy in Clark County*

**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. Fourteen dusky geese were detected during the survey. Additionally, cackling, Taverner's, and western Canada geese were located and recorded.

**Columbian White-tailed Deer Survey:** Biologists Stephens and Holman conducted a Columbian white-tailed deer survey on Puget Island this week. A total of 173 deer were observed between the two driving routes that cover most of the island. This was by far the most deer seen during a survey in past two years. These surveys are done in collaboration with USFWS who maintain the data and coordinate surveys within the range of the deer in the Columbia River population.



*Ear-tagged Columbian white-tailed buck*



*Columbian white-tailed deer foraging in a field on Puget Island*

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.



### 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Damage Hunt:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey worked with a landowner in Wahkiakum County to deploy a master hunter from the Region 5 list on a damage hunt. The landowner is experiencing elk damage his crop fields that he uses as feed for dairy cattle.

**New DPCA for Elk Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with a landowner in Lewis County who contacted him about potential elk damage. Aubrey toured the property and was shown some of the problems that elk have caused this fall and will likely cause again in the future. Aubrey began the process to enter into a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) with the landowner to address ongoing elk damage.

### 4) Conserving Natural Areas

**Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Fence Repair:** Manager Hauswald, Assistant Manager Wildermuth, and volunteer Davidson repaired a section of barb wire fence along the northern boundary of the Cedar Creek unit. The fence runs through a heavily forested area along Cedar Creek where downed trees and underbrush knocked down the wire. A neighbor's small herd of cattle had entered the wildlife area several times and this was one of several fence repair efforts to prevent cattle from entering the wildlife area in the future.

**Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Tree Cages:** Manager Hauswald, Assistant Manager Wildermuth, and volunteer Davidson built and placed tree cages on young trees at Cedar Creek. The trees were planted several years ago and consist of species that provide cover and forage for native wildlife species including band-tailed pigeons that frequent the nearby mineral springs. The young trees were originally planted in tree tubes but have outgrown the tubes and tree cages are now necessary to protect them from over browsing.



*Manager Hauswald and volunteer Davidson building and placing tree cages at the Cedar Creek unit*

**Klickitat Wildlife Area Slash Pile Burning:** Several large piles of slash were left from the thinning of timber on the Soda Springs Unit in 2018. Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Forester Mize observed that weather conditions were favorable for pile burning early in the week

and seized the opportunity to light five of the large piles and one small slash pile over the course of two days. Van Leuven visited the sites on subsequent days to throw remaining unburned wood surrounding the piles into the fire while it was still hot. Snow followed by rain on Thursday put a stop to this effort.

In addition, Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven ignited two slash piles in Unit 3, which is near the Glenwood Highway. The piles were large and created a spectacle, especially as dusk fell and passersby slowed down to look. A Department of Natural Resources fire forester visited the worksite and remarked on the clean burn and lack of smoke issues. Van Leuven returned to the remains of the piles the following day to gather up peripheral wood and throw it into hot spots to dispose of more of the debris. Despite the proximity of the piles to live trees, only a couple of small trees were lost.



*Klickitat Wildlife Area Slash Piles in Unit 3 alight*



*The next day*



## **REGION 6**

### ***HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:***

#### **1) Managing Wildlife Populations**

**North Rainier Elk Herd:** Biologist Tirhi hosted a meeting to plan 2020 elk surveys for the North Rainier elk herd. Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Hancock Forest Resources, Hampton Lumber, Olympic Resource Management (manages Pope Resources timberlands) and Biologist Smith (Region 4) attended. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss cooperation between the various land management and land ownership entities within the herd range, the purpose of surveys, survey design, and financial commitment towards surveys. This follows work in 2018-19 by various members of this group, along with Mount Rainier National Park, to develop a strategic plan for cooperatively conducting and paying for consistent surveys of this elk herd.

**Deer with Wire Around Abdomen:** Biologist Murphie searched the Lake Limerick area near Shelton for a doe with wire around her sternum. The agency has been receiving calls since September with staff members responding since then, but unable to locate this deer. Biologist Murphie was finally able to locate and immobilize the doe on Dec. 19, 2019. The wire was removed. The doe was released on site.



***Doe with wire at Lake Limerick near Shelton***



***Doe with wire removed***

Photos courtesy of Toni

**Buck Mortality:** Biologist Murphie followed up on a buck mortality signal from a collared deer near Quilcene. He recovered the collar from a buck that had been killed by a cougar.

**Goose Hunter Checks:** Biologist Michaelis continued field checking and collecting goose hunter information and making contacts in Pacific County during the remainder of November through the end of December. Hunters checked and hunters phoning in their harvest report fairly good success throughout the county.

Date	Location / County	# of Hunters	✓ or phoned in	November 27- December 28, Goose Hunter Checks Goose Species Reported or Recorded								
				Cackler	Aleutian	Taverner	Lesser	Dusky	Western	GWF	Snow	UK/Other
11-27	SWPA	2	PI	6		2						
11-30	SWPA	4	PI	3		5				12		4
11-30	NPA	1	PI	1								
12-1	SWPA	3	✓	2		6	4					
12-1	SWPA	2	PI				3					
12-21	SWPA	2	✓	2		2	1					
12-21	SWPA	5	PI	2		4						
12-21	NPA	1	PI	1							1	
12-21	SWPA	2	PI	6		1						
12-28	SWPA	2	PI	7		1						
Totals		24		30		21	8			12	1	4

SWPA = Riekkola Willapa NWR, Sandridge Rd., and near the town of Chinook. CPA = Areas south of South Bend to HWY 4. NPA = north Pacific County ✓ = field checked, PI = Birds phoned in and classed as to what the hunter(s) believed them to be.

The goose season was closed for 20 days during December and reopened on Dec. 21. Sixty-three Canada geese were harvested during this time period. One snow and 12 greater white-fronted geese were also taken.

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**DNR Access:** Biologist Michaelis continued field checking accessibility into Department of Natural Resource (DNR) lands in Game Management Units 602 (Dickey) and 612 (Goodman). One day was spent with Biologist Murphie in the northern portions of the Dickey. Murphie had personal knowledge of the area. Only a small number of parcels in the Dickey and Goodman GMU's remain.

### 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Lead Poisoned Swan Collection, Lake Tapps:** Biologists Tirhi and Butler spent a morning patrolling Lake Tapps for observation and collection of swans displaying signs of lead poisoning. Swans ingest lead found in their environment, often from lead shot or lead fishing tackle. Lead poisoning impairs swan flight and movement coordination which ultimately leads to death. Predators then locate dead swan carcasses and are poisoned themselves when they in turn ingest



the lead. In order to remove poisoned swans from the lake before they die, District 11 is patrolling the lake approximately every 12-14 days, getting the swans flying and making observations on sick swans. Those swans are then targeted for net capture; captured and dead swans are transported to a lab for necropsy and lead confirmation. Tirhi and Butler observed no sick swans during this patrol although Butler had previously picked up one dead swan carcass reported by a lake front owner.

*District 11 staff members getting swans flying on Lake Tapps, Pierce County to monitor for lead poisoning*

### 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.