

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

August 1 to August 15, 2020

DIVERSITY DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Fishers: Fisher reintroduction project partners from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the National Park Service, Conservation Northwest, Calgary Zoo, and United States Forest Service recently initiated a genetic analysis of fishers to predict the effect of augmenting ten new fishers to Olympic National Park. One main goal of the analysis is to determine how the success of the augmentation could differ depending on whether the fishers came from British Columbia versus; two genetically different source-populations. Using existing genotypes from British Columbia and Alberta fishers, this analysis will provide insights into the best source population of fishers to use for the planned augmentation to the Olympic National Park, where 90 fishers from British Columbia were reintroduced from 2008 to 2010. A 2019 genetic analysis of fishers on the Olympic Peninsula (based on hair samples collected at baited hair-snare and camera stations from 2013-2016) indicated that genetic diversity of the Olympic fisher population had declined slightly and would be expected to decline further in the future, which could put that population at risk. An augmentation of new fishers could restore this genetic diversity and this new analysis of the effects of releasing more British Columbia versus Alberta fishers into this population will help us decide the best source population and the best implementation approach.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Areas

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.

SCIENCE DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

Nothing for this installment.

LANDS DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nothing for this installment.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Recreate Responsibly Coalition: WDFW continues to participate in the Recreate Responsibly Coalition, which is a broad coalition of federal, state, and local land managers and organizations representing various outdoor recreation and conservation interests. The Coalition was formed to help coordinate communication around closures and re-openings, as well as safety tips for recreating during Covid-19. This month, the group produced updated mask guidelines for recreating safely.

WDFW is also participating in the Equity and Social Justice working group, which is a subgroup of the Recreate Responsibly Coalition. The subgroup's purpose is to provide a resource hub and network to share best practices and shared responsibilities for expanding, belonging, and access to the outdoors. In doing so, the group aims not just to expand equity and access to the outdoors, so all people feel welcome and safe, but also to expand perspectives of members of the outdoor recreation community in Washington.

Outdoor Recreation Principles: In 2015, Colorado Parks and Wildlife adapted and adopted the [Shift Principles for Advancing Outdoor Recreation](#) and Conservation. The [Colorado Outdoor Principles](#) have become a foundation for coalition building, leading to the creation of the Colorado Outdoor Partnership. WDFW has introduced the principles to Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and State Parks, as well as a group of legislators and non-profit partners, via the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable convened by Representative Ryu from the 32nd Legislative District. An adapted version of the principles is also being considered as part of the vision statement of the forthcoming Statewide Recreation Strategy.

Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation: Section Manager Sisolak and Division Manager Wilkerson met with Johnny Mojica from Earth Economics to discuss their recent 2020 report on the Economic Value of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State. We are working to understand how to interpret the report from the perspective of WDFW and WDFW lands. Values for WDFW lands weren't explicitly included in the report. We are working to identify whether, and at what cost, some of the methodologies applied to DNR lands to estimate visitation rates and economic benefits could be applied to WDFW lands.

Target Shooting Rulemaking: On July 31, The Fish and Wildlife Commission heard its second briefing on an update to WAC 220-500-140: Firearms and target practicing. The Commission will decide on adoption in October and the updated rule is expected to be enacted at the beginning of 2021.

Statewide Recreation Strategy Initiative: The recreation planning workgroup of the initiative steering committee met on August 12 to continue its work to integrate recreation planning into the Wildlife Area management planning framework, one of the major recommendations that will be included in the strategy. A draft strategy will be presented to the Emergency Management Team (EMT) in late September.

Counter data: Staff members are working to identify areas where counters can be deployed so the department can track visitor data and trends over time. During the pandemic, there has been a significant increase in traffic on many public lands, and tracking that data could prove to be a valuable investment moving forward.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Forb Plots Evaluated: Vegetation Ecologist Merg evaluated the survival of forb plugs planted in 2018 and 2019 to improve habitat for bumblebees on the Sinlahekin and Sherman Creek Wildlife Areas (WLAs), respectively. Because it is so late in the season, it was a little difficult to distinguish dormant from dead forbs, but it was nevertheless clear that survival of the plugs probably exceeds 75% at both sites. This is unprecedented survival for forbs in WDFW restorations, where they are usually planted as seeds. While the expense of a plug is much greater

than that of a seed, the dramatically greater survival to date suggests that the expense is warranted.



Mountain Monardella (Monardella odoratissima) at Sherman Creek, blooming in its first growing season



Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) planted as plugs in 2018 (flagged). Appearing as islands of green in a sea of Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), these plugs enhance this Sinlahekin site with both species diversity and crucial, late-summer floral resources for pollinators.

Field data transcribed: Vegetation Ecologist Merg continued transcribing audio files from plant transects that he conducted this summer on the Wenas WLA. These data are the first set in a fledgling monitoring program that will help us understand how well our land management efforts are fulfilling our mandate.

Teanaway Community Forest: Range Ecologist Burnham conducted another course of grazing monitoring on the Teanaway Community Forest (TCF) and communicated results and recommendations to the TCF grazing technical group.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Range Ecologist Burnham worked on the nested frequency dataset with Cindi Confer and Ian Daling. Burnham also consulted Biometrician Keren for assistance in handling the various factors in the dataset that could result in an unbalanced design and analysis.

Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration Webinar: Range Ecologist Burnham attended portions of this year's Working Lands for Wildlife Workshop because it was converted to a virtual format. Several modules addressed the need, theory, planning, design, and implementation of riverscape restoration, primarily through the use of beaver dam analogues and post-assisted structures. The instructors discussed effectively integrating plans with many different considerations, including risk to anthropogenic structures/activities, interaction with grazing management, permitting, and others.

Weed Management: The North Puget Sound Weed Crew treated cattail at Deepwater Reserve (5.6 acres), Skagit HQ (4.5 acres), and Wiley Fields (1.0 acres). Kellan Noteboom led the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew and mowed cattail at Goat Island (0.9 acres) and treated *Spartina anglica* at North Leque (0.09 acres).

The Montesano Weed Crew worked in Willapa Bay looking for *Spartina alterniflora*. Brad Morgan surveyed the Clam Beach (no plants found), from the Smith Creek bridge to the Point (three plants treated), Cedar River meadow (two plants dug) and Russ Nunez surveyed the upper marsh at Smith Creek Point (three plants treated). The also went to Grays Harbor where Brad Morgan surveyed the Sink in Ocean Shores (no plants found), Burrows Road (no plants found) and Russ Nunez surveyed the Bowerman Basin shoreline along Hwy 109 (no plants found, but *Phragmites* was noted). Brad Morgan assisted Darric Lowery to mow fire lines at Scatter Creek for several days.

Dave Heimer and Russ Nunez treated knotweed (0.59 solid acres) spread throughout the north forest using the Marshmaster at Satsop Ponds. The Marshmaster used trails made by the construction contractor to access the knotweed, increasing the efficiency of treatment. The project is part of the restoration project being led by Habitat and CAMP. Provided Michelle Cramer (Habitat) with a three-year budget for knotweed control.

David Heimer, Russ Nunez, and Travis Haring (Shellfish Unit) worked with Ecology and the Benton County Noxious Weed Control Board to survey and treat flowering rush, a Class A weed, along the Yakima River. Unfortunately, the amount treated in 2020 eclipsed previous

years. It is unclear whether the increase was a result of survey timing (when plants are most conspicuous), water levels (allowing more and better access), poor efficacy (permitting dictates the use of glyphosate, but performance can be inconsistent), and/or higher propagule pressure (there are river miles that can't be navigated using airboats and flowering rush in those areas may be replacing and colonizing treated areas downriver).

Rx Fire Staff Work: Crews continued working on thinning projects on the Sinlahekin/Sarsapkin, Chopaka/Scotch Creek, L.T. Murray Gnat Flats WLA's. The Yakima Crew helped foresters mark trees for commercial harvest. Crews have been prepping prescribed fire units this summer as well in Oak Creek, Stemilt, and Colockum WLA's. Preparing the Rx fire units now sets the crews up to move on projects when the weather is more conducive for burning. At this time the agency is still determining if prescribed fire will be conducted this fall due to Covid-19 concerns.

Chelan Wildlife Area—Swakane/Burch Mountain Restoration Thinning Project: Forester Mize has completed marking on Unit 4, and the forestry interns are approximately 50% through Unit 3. Forester Mize will be commencing marking operations in Units 1 and 2. In addition, Forester Mize has a scheduled field review with Yakama Nation Biologist Kozma on Friday, August 21, to discuss and review the work on this project.



Bird nest with eggs discovered at the base of leaf tree in Unit 4 on Burch Mountain



Ponderosa pine growing between two rocks on Unit 4 Burch Mountain in Chelan County

Weatherly Wildlife Area – Weatherly Forest Restoration Project: Forester Mize continues to supervise this forest restoration treatment on the Weatherly Unit of the Asotin Wildlife Area. Harvest activities, including cutting, skidding, processing, and hauling, continue in Units 3 and 4, with all activities completed in Units 1 and 2. Billing for July log deliveries was coordinated with Olympia accounting staff members, and the purchaser was billed for 640 thousand board feet of sawlogs and 680 tons of pulpwood.



Weatherly Forest Restoration Project Unit 1, Garfield County



Photo Point in Unit 1 showing pre/post-harvest conditions, Garfield Count

Simcoe Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area Roads and Pre-commercial thinning needs evaluation: Team Lead Tveten evaluated road conditions on the newly acquired lands along with the needs for pre-commercial thinning. Several roads are no longer needed and could be abandoned. Also, some stream crossings need maintenance work. Past forest management and on-going fire suppression have led to increased tree density and wildfire risk. Increased competition is also contributing to the decline and death of legacy oaks. The increased competition greatly reduces the production of acorns which is an important food source for a wide variety of wildlife species.



Acorn production is high where competition among trees is mild



Acorn production is negligible where competition among trees is intense

Division Manager Wilkerson, Real Estate Manager Sandberg, and Acting Regional Director Donley met with headquarters and regional leadership from DNR to secure a path forward on the use of an existing Boating Facilities Program RCO grant for the purchase of a road easement and boating access for fishing at Chapman Lake. We agreed on principles for the purchase of the easement and access that relies on WDFW leasing the rest of the DNR ownership in the parcel in the interim while we work to fulfill a long-term intent to acquire the land in fee title via exchange or purchase.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Migratory Bird Artwork Program: The department developed a story map to provide an overview of the Migratory Bird Artwork Program and the projects it has funded on WDFW lands for the current biennium. Funds from the artwork program are used to improve wetland habitats and protect migratory birds in Washington. View the story map [here](#).

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Emergency Access Area Hiring: Wildlife Program Administration Division Manager Crain worked with regional program managers and the internal cross-programmatic Budget Policy Committee to secure approval to hire nine temporary workers through the emergency hire process to assist with water access area operations and maintenance work. With the use of our lands, and particularly water access areas, our use numbers this summer are much higher than normal, and our staff members are even more overwhelmed than normal. Our car counter data indicates that we have had a 27-29% increase in use at select sites statewide in May and June compared to 2018 and 2019.

2021-2023 Biennium Budget: Division Manager Wilkerson worked with Section Managers to prepare and submit a decision package that represents just over \$3 million in cuts to the Lands Division operating budget, as directed by the Office of Financial Management (OFM) request to cut our agency by 15% and by the Wildlife Program and EMT process that narrowed the potential cuts offered through the program and agency-wide process. Division Manager Wilkerson also contributed to the Evergreen Jobs Enhancement Decision Package that would include at least one Washington Conservation Corps crew to work on WDFW Lands.

Spending Available Funds: Division Manager Wilkerson worked with Management Analyst Nelson to distribute nearly \$100,000 in funding from a variety of sources to high priority projects statewide utilizing the Budget Reprioritization Criteria process and spreadsheet.

WDFW Grazing Guidance and Grazing Management Tools: Section manager Dahmer revised the SEPA checklist to include the full document as the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) reviewed project, rather than specifically the WAC, policy, wolf/livestock direction, and new grazing evaluation framework. Also completed the summary sheet in preparation for briefing the Fish and Wildlife Commission on the topic.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Elk at SCWA: Wildlife Area (WLA) Assistant Manager Daro Palmer saw these two cow-calf elk pairs on a recent morning at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. They were on the hillside above Bisbee Mountain road, where it meets Highway 20. Elk are not commonly seen in that area but seem to be on the increase following forest thinning and prescribed burning projects.



Photo by Daro Palmer

Deer composition surveys: Biologist Vekasy began August deer composition surveys. August surveys are used to estimate pre-hunt buck: doe ratios and determine deer distribution.



Mule deer bucks observed during deer surveys

Deer Herd Composition Surveys: Biologists Atamian and Lowe conducted road-based deer surveys in game management units (GMUs) 127, 130, 136, and 139 to count and classify does, fawns, and bucks prior to hunting season. Sex and age ratios from these surveys are one of the metrics used to monitor populations. Surveys will continue throughout the district in August and will be repeated in September.



Group of mule deer bucks spotted during a survey in GMU 136



Mule deer buck in ag field in GMU 130

Pheasant Surveys: Biologists Atamian and Lowe completed the two runs of the Hangman Creek Pheasant Brood route this week. Several broods of huns and quail were recorded but no pheasants. Several district staff members are participating in a multi-state study, coordinated by Iowa State and South Dakota State universities, to assess roadside survey methods for pheasants and other upland bird species.

Waterfowl disease monitoring: Biologist Vekasy checked the wetlands at the Simplot feedlot where past outbreaks of avian botulism have occurred. The wastewater system has been reconfigured and is likely to reduce the incidence of botulism by making the impoundments less desirable for foraging shorebirds and waterfowl (less cover and emergent vegetation, greater water depths reducing access to bottom sediments, less mudflat area).

Bumble Bee Management: Biologists Prince and Turnock caught a buzz outside of Chewelah, a bumble buzz to be clear. The biologists sliced their nets through brambles to identify bumbles and finish up summer surveys as part of the Northwest Bee Atlas collaborative project. Lucky for the biologists, writing down the scientific names of the flowering plants they observed was not a spelling bee.



An unidentified bumble bee caught during the survey

Grizzly Bear Monitoring: Biologist Turnock collaborated with the Kalispel Tribe of Indians wildlife biologist to setup and takedown hair corrals used for grizzly bear monitoring. Unfortunately, no grizzly bears visited the site they took down, but the corral was visited by several black bears as evidenced in the photo below.

Biologist Turnock collaborated with the Kalispel Tribe of Indians wildlife biologist to setup three hair corrals used for grizzly bear monitoring in the Salmo Priest Wilderness. The corrals were set up in an area with a high priority for monitoring, but no past monitoring effort. The corrals will remain up for at least two weeks before being removed.

Monarch Survey: Biologist Lowe and Communications Manager Lehman surveyed several small patches of showy milkweed in Lincoln County to determine if monarch butterflies are present and/or breeding at the sites. Monarchs only lay their eggs on milkweed, and larvae feed exclusively on this plant. A monarch caterpillar (i.e., evidence of breeding) was found at one of the sites in 2016, but no evidence of monarch activity has been found since then. The western population of monarchs has declined over 99% since the 1980s and the species is currently being considered for federal listing.



A monarch caterpillar found feeding on a milkweed plant in Lincoln County in 2016 (left); red milkweed beetles (but no monarch larvae) were found feeding on milkweed plants in 2020 (right)



A small patch of milkweed is being taken over by invasive thistle

Pheasant Surveys: Biologist Lowe conducted a pheasant survey in the Hangman Creek area southeast of Spokane, while Biologist Atamian ran one in the Union Flat Creek area in Whitman County. Several district staff members are participating in a multi-state study, coordinated by Iowa State and South Dakota State universities, to assess roadside survey methods for pheasants and other upland bird species.

Bighorn Sheep near the Wooten Wildlife Area: Kari Dingman located the bighorn sheep and submitted the locations through Survey123. There are still four lambs alive.



Tucannon bighorn sheep spending time on private land north of the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Access Site Redevelopment: State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) funds came available last week to redevelop the walking trail system at Waikiki Springs Access Area, located by Spokane's Fairwood neighborhood. Access Supervisor Daniel Dziekan submitted the work request in 2018, so this is a welcome surprise. The trail consists of switchbacks leading down to the Little Spokane River and sees heavy use by hikers and wildlife watchers. Improvements will include erosion control, trailhead renovation, and better foot traffic routing. Dziekan is in the early stages of coordinating with engineering staff members in Olympia for required activities and timelines.



Road Repair: Pend Oreille County Road Department is using rock from a pit at LeClerc Creek Wildlife Area (WLA) to repair the West Branch LeClerc Creek Road, which will improve WLA access for the public. The crew started this week, beginning with repairs to the road into WDFW's Caldwell Lake Water Access Site. The crew went to the extra effort to do some brushing around the parking lot and cut a couple of downed trees laying across the trail to the lake. The road had been in such bad shape that only a four-wheel-drive vehicle with good clearance could traverse it. The top layer of gravel will be added toward the end of the county project.



Caldwell Lake Access Road: Before (L) and After (R). Top gravel to be added at end of project work

Access Site Maintenance: Region 1 North Access Manager Daniel Dziekan caught up on mowing and string trimming at his sites. Along with routine restroom maintenance, he had another week of heavy litter removal. Dziekan provided Region 1 Program Manager Kevin Robinette details for hiring a temporary assistant and placing porta-potties at his busiest sites, to keep up with Dziekan’s heavy workload until public use slows down toward the end of the year.



Ruby Ferry Water Access Site on the Pend Oreille River: before (above) and after (below)



Litter Dziekan picked up after a week of site maintenance, far above the normal amount

Hunter Survey: Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock participated in a discussion about a recent antler point restriction survey administered to hunters. Over 13,000 hunters replied to the survey and the majority indicated that while they would like to see more mature white-tailed bucks while hunting, they did not want more restrictive hunting seasons.

Hunt by Written Permission: Natural Resource Worker Holcomb began posting a new property enrolled in the Hunt by Written Permission program. The property will border on the Spokane and Pend Oreille county lines. The property will be 275 acres and will allow small game and big game hunting opportunities. The property is also being uploaded onto the agency website.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Wolf Depredations in Stevens County: WDFW staff members completed four depredation investigations in Stevens County associated with wolves. All four depredation investigations involved the Leadpoint Pack (one confirmed mortality, three confirmed injuries). Deterrents and the next steps were covered with producers and riders.



A calf investigation in Stevens County

Wolf Depredations in Stevens County: WDFW staff members completed two confirmed wolf depredations in Stevens County associated with the Leadpoint pack. Deterrents and next steps were covered with producers, rider, and internal personnel.



A calf investigation in Stevens County

Injured Owl: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman responded to two injured owl reports. When Westerman called both situations were resolved.

Aggressive Falcons: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman spoke to a landowner who was having issues with three falcons that were dive bombing her and her dog. Westerman provided advice.

Elk Hazing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb was prepared to permanently emplace a Zon Gun on a Walla Walla County producer's seed corn crop; however, the landowner, who lives in the vicinity of the crop did not want an audible disturbance present on the landscape. Kolb removed the Zon Gun at the producer's request due to the landowner's reservations. Kolb will continue to provide an early morning presence to assist the producer in hazing efforts. Additionally, Kolb assisted the producer, who was harvesting wheat, by fixing broken irrigation lines caused by elk in seed corn crops.

Cloverland Elk Check-in: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade was contacted by a Cloverland producer regarding 100 plus herd of elk that had shown up next to his commercial crop. Wade and the producer had worked together to deploy a Zon gun in another of the producer's fields previously, but the producer was concerned that if he moved the Zon Gun to the new area it might be taken by a passerby due to the proximity to a road. Wade and the producer discussed the issue and determined that the risk would be worth the reward if the elk left the area. Most of the crops in the Cloverland area are nearing being ready for harvest and are in their most fragile state.

Conflict Prevention: Samsill responded to a nuisance deer call in Curlew where a lone mule deer doe was reportedly jumping a perimeter fence around a garden and causing a lot of damage. Despite several attempts to deter and haze the doe, she continued to return. Samsill met the reporting party (RP) at her residence and documented the damage. Samsill deployed 160 feet of six-foot electric fencing around the garden and affixed a solar energizer to the fence. The deer has not returned to the garden since.

Wildlife Conflict Specialists Samsill, O'Connor, and Assistant District Biologist Turnock responded to the report of another livestock depredation in the Leadpoint pack territory. Upon arrival, WDFW staff members confirmed that another calf was injured by wolves in the same pasture where the other depredations have occurred. The injured calf and the mother cow were moved to the ranch headquarters for intensive care and monitoring.

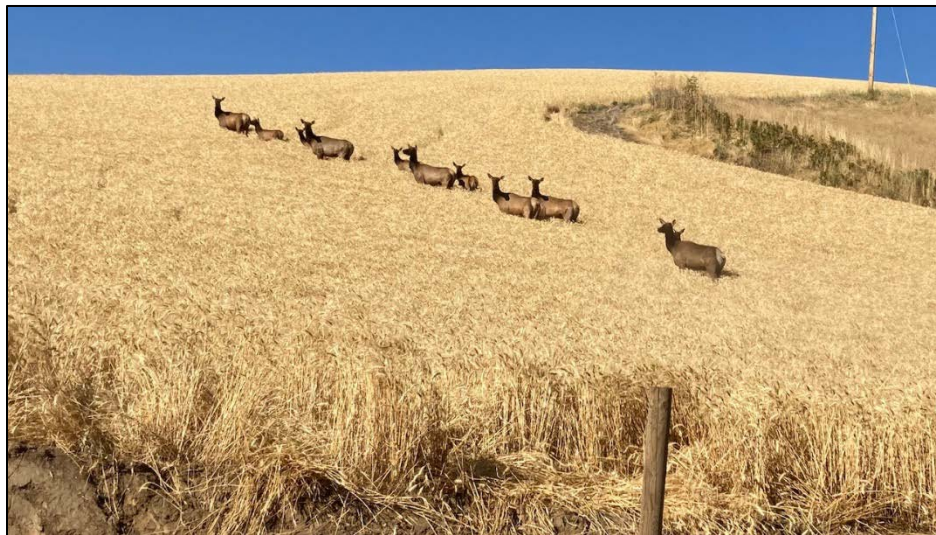
Cougar in Tree: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman responded to a report of a cougar in a tree in an urban area. When Westerman arrived, the feline was no longer there. After talking with the RP, it was determined to likely be a domestic feline and not a cougar.

Injured Fawn: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman responded to a report of an injured fawn. The fawn had a compound fracture on its front leg. The mom and its twin were still around, and it was still highly mobile and was not able to be captured safely.



Broken (disconnected) irrigation lines in a Seed Corn crop

Walla Walla County Elk: A Walla Walla County producer contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb to discuss ongoing Elk issues in a travel corridor between bedding and feeding areas. The producer was understanding of the excellent habitat available for ungulate populations but also wanted to ensure that damage to their commercial crops was communicated. The producer has an existing damage prevention cooperative agreement (DPCA) and is currently implementing non-lethal deterrent measures.



A healthy elk cow/calf group transiting between bedding and feeding areas in Walla Walla Co (six cows/five calves).

Columbia County Mule Deer Commercial Crop Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb rode around with a producer in his Bankout Wagon (with proper Covid-19 personal protection equipment) to survey mule deer damage caused to dry pea crops in Columbia County. The producer has an existing DPCA and encourages bow hunters (early season) to hunt impacted areas. Although damage was extensive this year, the producer does not anticipate filing a claim at this time.



Columbia County Dry Pea Crop: Although some sprayer tracks are evident, the remainder of the tracks are exclusively Mule Deer trailings through the pea crop. Kolb observed more than a dozen Mule Deer in a 50-acre piece of the pea field. The producer reported that more than 100 Mule Deer are present at times (May – June).

Grazing Weekly Check-ins and Grazing Allotment Checks: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade checked in with multiple producers regarding grazing progress this week. One producer reported getting pictures on a trail camera that he believed to be wolves in his private grazing allotment.



Picture supplied by the producer

Reported Cattle Depredation on United States Forest Service Allotment: Wildlife conflict staff members and private lands staff members responded to a report of a calf the was found on a United States Forest Service (USFS) allotment with injuries to its hind end. The producer hauled the injured calf home to be investigated. The injuries were determined to be probable wolf. While at the investigation conflict and private lands personnel investigated a second calf that had been brought home with a broken front leg. Staff members determined that the injuries were nonpredator related.





Probable wolf injuries recorded at the investigation

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Annual Silene Surveys: David Woodall and the summer interns recently conducted annual monitoring of the Spalding's Catchfly. They found the plants within the plots holding their own over the years, along with a few extra plants possibly due to ample spring rains and productive growing conditions. He also spent some time compiling and entering data from the last few years.



Spalding's Catchfly on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Injured Birds: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade responded to two reports of injured owls this week. The first was in Garfield County and turned out to be a night hawk that had broken its wing. Wade collected the night hawk and transported it to Washington State University (WSU) Veterinary Teaching Hospital for evaluation and possible rehabilitation. The second was a screech owl with unknown injuries that was brought to the Clarkston WDFW Office by a taxi driver. Wade transported the owl to the WSU Veterinary Teaching Hospital for evaluation and rehabilitation

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 2

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

District 8 Wildlife Biologist Oates drove captured goats from Olympic National Park to the North Cascades. Goats were released near Alpentan and White Chuck Mountain (photo below).



Mountain Goat Release at White Chuck Mountain

District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz checked and pulled two Western Gray Squirrel (WGS) tube transects in Klickitat County. WGS have been seen frequently on both transects and hair collected. We had one positive hit and the survey for this transect is done.

Bernatowicz ran waterfowl traps but had low success. About 50 mallards have been banded. Some ducks are showing up at the Moxee traps, but low numbers are entering the traps. One issue might be human activity. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) crews have been onsite spraying most of the day. In the photo below, there is still bait on the floating board three days post baiting. At the Sunnyside WLA, there have been issues getting water levels high enough and mowed vegetation is re-growing. Similar issues in 2019 prohibited trapping. Cellular cameras have been deployed to save travel time and to make trapping more efficient.



Good Numbers of Ducks At Moxee



Thick Vegetation and Low Water at Sunnyside WLA

Duck Banding Begins: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra with help from Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett and Natural Resource Technician Byers set duck traps and began baiting and trapping waterfowl to contribute data for annual Pacific flyway models.



Young female teal banded and ready for release



Natural Resource Tech Byers releases a duck after banding it

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Region 3 Access Manager Garcia and Natural Resource Worker Barbosa have been busy with sanitizing toilets and removing large amounts of trash being left at most of the access sites.

The warmer weather has increased the number of visitors using the region's access sites, with a corresponding increase in problems with trash and graffiti.



Graffiti damage at Tim's Pond



The exterior of western CXT



Tim's Pond after staff members cleaned up graffiti



The garbage piled up at Tim's Pond



Graffiti at Pond 4



Graffiti at Mellis Road



Graffiti at Pond 6

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart and Natural Resource Technician Blore built a new kiosk on the L.T. Murray WLA to disseminate information to recreationists. An interpretive panel is being designed in partnership with Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust.



**Blore digging holes for a new kiosk along the L.T. Murray's
Walter Springs Road**



New kiosk and "Leaving Wildlife Area" sign on Walter Springs Road

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Rattlesnake Mountain Wheat Harvest: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand worked with wheat harvest operations to document crop damage impacts from Hanford elk. The last fields were harvested on August 14 with many fields yielding above-average bushels per acre. Heavy elk damage was observed in fields adjacent to the Hanford site or areas where access to hazing was difficult.



Harvest Almost Complete for 2020

Plymouth Deer Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received a new deer damage complaint from an orchardist near Plymouth along the Columbia River. A small herd of deer has been browsing on a block of newly planted cherry trees causing significant damage to the young trees. Two “Critter Getter” acoustic deterrents were loaned and set up on travel routes the deer are using to enter the orchard. Additionally, archery general season hunting pressure was encouraged to aid in their hazing activities.



Browsing by deer on a young cherry tree

Treponeme-Associated Hoof Disease Hooves Collections: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand was able to obtain hooves from three elk harvested on damage permits in the Corral Canyon Elk Area. The hooves will be used in research by WSU College of Veterinary Medicine for disease surveillance. Collection report information was completed, and the hooves will be stored in a freezer at the District 4 office until needed by WSU. Elk continue to be above average in both Yakima and Kittitas counties due to the hot and dry conditions. Master hunters and permitted landowners are harvesting relatively high numbers of elk. Historically, elk in Badger Pocket have been nocturnal, making for zero to very low harvest. This year, elk have been entering fields in daylight and getting harvested. Harvest on the nearby Yakima Training Center has also been above average.

Cougars continue to be an issue in Kittitas County. A cougar killed two 4-H goats in east GMU 334. A trap was set and re-baited over the weekend, but no capture probably due to the open terrain. A cougar has also been killing sheep on the Red Top lease. Guard dogs are staying on the carcasses. There is some concern that if carcasses are not removed as per the lease agreement, there may be wolf/guard dog interactions.

Wolf Activities: No conflicts between wolves and livestock were reported this month. The Naneum wolf recently moved north into Region 2. The Teanaway wolves are near livestock, but not causing conflict. Trespass cattle were observed near the Teanaway wolves and reported to the USFS. District 8 Biologist Oates pulled a camera from Dome Peak that had been out for months. More human than animal pictures and none of wolves.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett finished job sheets for two State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) contracts. These fields will be fallowed for two years before the native grass and forb seeding will occur. These contracts will begin on October 1, 2020, and run for fifteen years.

Private Lands Biologist Hulett wrote a letter to serve as an agreement between a landowner and FSA for the landowner SAFE contract. The agreement states that the landowner will follow a detailed plan to control the weedy vegetation in their SAFE field and if the plan is not followed, Farm Service Agency (FSA) will terminate their contract. This letter will be put into the landowner SAFE contract for FSA's record.

Private Lands Biologist Hulett continued to submit Hunting Access contracts requests. Two new hunting access contracts were submitted including 3500 acres Feel Free to Hunt east of Connell. Currently, Hulett has six contracts that have been processed and are waiting for signatures from landowners.

Private Lands Biologist Hulett continued to work on the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program. Hulett inspected one site to determine how much the Voluntary Public

Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) could offer with a three-year contract and worked with the landowner to decide if the program would work for their family. The family is still talking everything over but will get back to Hulett soon. VPA-HIP contracts are not yet being processed due to the required cultural resource reviews that all these properties must have completed per the grant agreement with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Wenas Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technicians Kass and Stultz finished spraying for weeds in the Mellotte area and began spraying Russian and diffuse knapweed and Russian thistle in the Buffalo area. Kass also worked on roadside spraying. Trespass grazing has been a continual issue in the Quilomene, but staff members have never experienced the level observed this year. Staff members are regularly contacting the operator to retrieve cattle on WDFW lands.



Continual use of trespass cattle has overused the Parke Creek pasture

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart used the height weight grazing monitoring technique to determine the current year's grass utilization in Lower Parke pasture as a result of trespass cattle. Weak fences and gates being left open result in some trespass each year, but the problem was worse this year and has continued throughout the season. Lower Parke pasture has therefore not received a rest from grazing in three years. Areas of bare dirt in photos resulted from cattle hoof action after cheatgrass and tumble mustard desiccated.



West end of a restoration enclosure in Lower Parke pasture on Parke Creek showing cattle use when the pasture was scheduled for a rest year



A bench in the north portion of Lower Parke pasture where trespass cattle grazed the basin wildrye grasses enough that another rest year is needed for root recovery and seed production



Photo point in Lower Parke pasture showing the area of cheatgrass and tumble mustard that were trampled to bare dirt due to high numbers and duration of trespass cattle

Manager Babik worked with Forester Pfeifle and the burn team to place vegetation adjacent to popular camping areas to protect fragile meadow habitat. Signs were posted as well. We would like to thank the burn team for their hard work both performing precommercial thinning as well as protecting priority habitat.



Burn team placing vegetation to protect meadow habitat from motorized use

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor attended the pre-construction meeting with Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) Engineer Mosberger and the fence contractor on replacing three miles of elk fence on Cleman Mountain. Work is scheduled to begin the week of August 17.

The hay trucking bid has been awarded and hay deliveries (for elk) should start soon. Assistant Manager Taylor coordinated with Northwest Alloys on hay sampling and a meeting with this year's hay hauler.

Manager Confer Morris participated in a Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Budget Oversight Group meeting to discuss additional funding for Wenas WLA to address restoration needs from the 2019 fires. Over \$420,000 was approved to accomplish the work for over three years. A new contract will be developed for the project.

Manager Confer Morris provided additional information to CAMP Engineer Bartlett regarding the Capital Project request for Wenas WLA infrastructure acquisition. Manager Confer Morris assisted Access Manager Garcia on a new position description for the Access Area temporary assistant position.

7) Other

Nothing this installment.

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Mountain Goat Translocations: Various WDFW Region 4 staff members assisted Olympic National Park and other WDFW personnel with the third and final year of mountain goat translocations. Translocation operations occurred between July 29 through August 8, with a total of 50 mountain goats captured and removed from the park. Since September 2018, a total of 325 mountain goats have been translocated to the North Cascades.



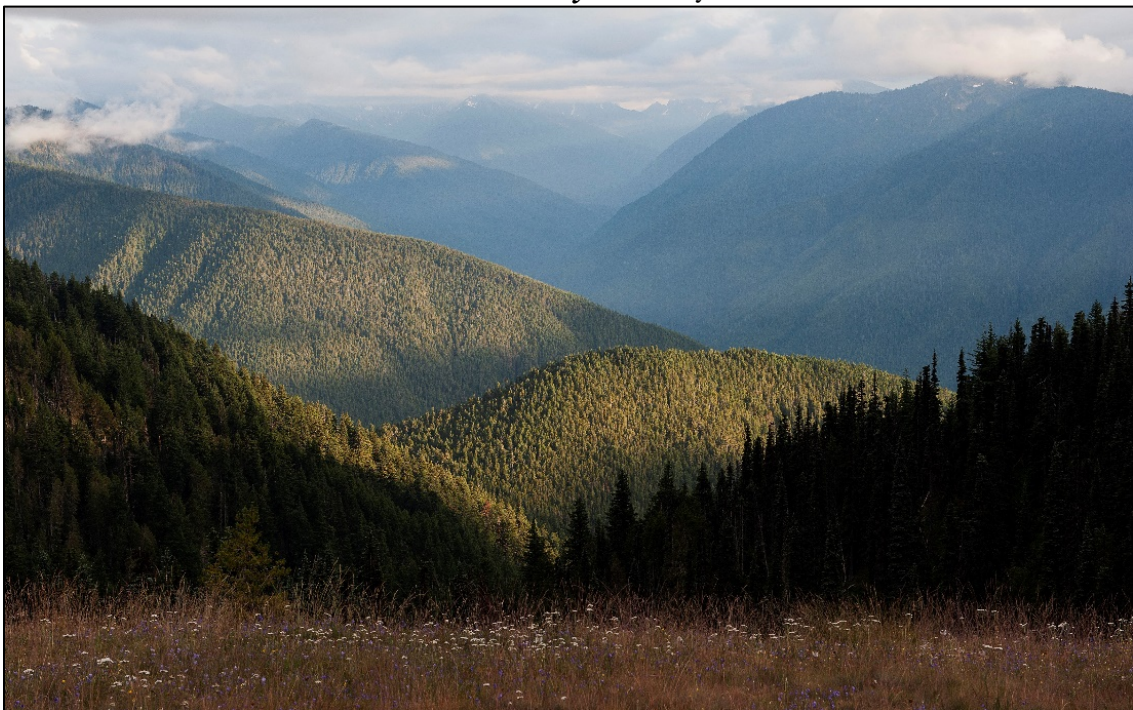
A helicopter lifts crates with mountain goats for release into the North Cascades - Photo by R. Waddell



Two mountain goats run from their transport crates upon release – Photo by R. Waddell



A scene along the Sauk River where WDFW biologists camped prior to the release of goats in the mountains nearby - Photo by R. Waddell



The view from Hurricane Ridge in Olympic National Park where captured goats were processed before transport to the North Cascades - Photo by R. Waddell



WDFW employees hooking up goat crates to be helicoptered to the release area in King County

Wildlife Health: King County biologists spent time shipping various specimens to the National Wildlife Health Center due to pathogen concerns. A cottontail came back negative for rabbit hemorrhagic disease (whew!). Multiple American crows are being tested currently under suspect of a King/Snohomish counties corvid reovirus outbreak – similar to the outbreaks that have occurred in the same areas in 2018, 2019, and perhaps 2020. Corvid reovirus is a relatively new pathogen documented and described. It appears to mainly affect only birds in the crow family. Individuals affected succumb quickly. WDFW has seen many crows affected the past two seasons. When there is a hotspot it involves multiple individuals over a month or so. If multiple dead crows are occurring in your area report to your local WDFW office and/or via our [Wildlife Health reporting tool](#).

Protected Wildlife Permitting Needs and Education: King County staff members have provided for emergency permits to remove protected nests due to inactivity at the nests found on industrial infrastructure. Consultation is ongoing with area megaproject entities regarding state Protected species such as Sound Transit Light Link projects.

King County staff members discussed wildlife regulations with Kirkland Code Enforcement due to several cases they are working regarding the inappropriate attraction of pests and state wildlife. Kirkland wanted a better understanding of state wildlife regulations, protections, and the prospect of working with area state wildlife biologists when appropriate.

King County personnel also discussed drone photography of wildlife with an area drone enthusiast representing a drone club. State Protected wildlife laws and appropriate wildlife

watching considerations were outlined. The biggest point of the discussion was the fact that a drone is a camera, just because no one is not behind it doesn't get you off the hook of appropriate consideration and ethical watching/photography. Drones are powerful and useful tools when utilized properly. Just as folks with cameras should not approach or get too close to wildlife due to harassment, disturbance of life activities, or even endangering the photographer and/or the individual wildlife species the same approach should be used for drone photography of wildlife. Use the same judgment you would use as if you were standing right there with the drone/camera. Encourage wildlife watching ethics and set an example for the rest of the hobbyist or professional drone photography community.

King County staff members worked with WDFW enforcement and customer service, Seattle Audubon, Urban Raptor Conservancy, and PAWS Wildlife Rehabilitation regarding multiple reports of a bald eagle nestling entangled in a fishing net and hanging from a well-known nest in Seattle. Unfortunately, there is nothing that can be done in this case as no one wanted to disturb the remaining soon to fledge nestling and adults. The entangled bird had perished prior to reporting. All agreed to leave the individual. This is a reminder to manage one's own fishing gear and report any derelict gear encountered. Learn more at [WDFW's Derelict Fishing Gear Removal Project webpage](#).



Bald eagle nestling entangled in a gillnet – Photo by Jeff Brown, PAWS Wildlife

San Juan Islands National Monument Advisory Committee Meeting: Biologist Milner spoke as an invited subject matter expert at an all-day (remote) meeting for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Monument Advisory Committee (MAC). The MAC was not able to meet and review the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Natural Resource Management Plan proposed by the BLM in 2019, so they requested a meeting to hear comments from staff members whose field of expertise is addressed in the plan. Milner spoke on behalf of wildlife and detailed why open access and dispersed camping would compromise the ecological integrity

of various sites within the monument. Her comments are also addressed in Governor [Inslee's consistency review letter](#).

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Carnation Farm in King County: WDFW biologists are working with Carnation Farm staff members regarding a timber management plan. Farm desire to have wildlife friendly aspects in their management plan; including elk management and abatement needs, waterfowl management, etc. This is the only state game reserve in King County. The status and what that means was discussed with farm staff members. Conversations and collaborative efforts are ongoing. It is great that the farm has the capacity and intent to take this action and we're looking forward to what the future holds at this local working non-profit farm and educational entity.

Private Lands Access Program - 418 Elk Hunt: Private Lands Biologist Wingard and District Biologist Waddell, along with officers Ludwig and Miller met with the GMU 418 archery elk hunters for a pre-hunt meeting. This meeting allows WDFW and partner landowner, Sierra Pacific Industries, to talk with the hunters about site rules and expectations. All eight hunters who drew the 418-archery tag attended the meeting. Using the picnic awning at the Skagit Wildlife Area Headquarters unit allowed for social distancing guidelines to be followed easily. New blind material was purchased for waterfowl hunting blinds, and landowners were contacted to assess crop conditions.



Natural Resource Technician Deyo installing new road signage on partner landowner property, these road signs help special permit elk hunters with vehicle access to the property

Private Lands Access Program Skiyou Island: Region 4 private lands staff members worked to install parking area signage and boundary signage at a new site that clarifies access to 320 acres of Forest Service property in Skagit Valley. Multiple neighbor contacts were made and many of the neighbors were excited about the opening (or reopening if they have lived in the neighborhood long enough) of the property.



Natural Resource Technician Deyo showing Private Lands Biologist Wingard how boundary signage is installed





Photographs of USFS property in Skagit County with a newly clarified access point

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Cherry Valley Water Control Project: Crews continued making progress on the project, which involves cleaning drainage ditches to improve water control on the property. Prior to working in the ditch, aquatic life must be relocated and isolated from the work area. In doing so, the crew captured over 400 salamanders in 150 feet of ditch.



Here are a few of the over 400 salamanders relocated from the Cherry Valley work area

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Audubon Presentation: Project Coordinator Brokaw presented virtually to Pilchuck Audubon regarding the Leque Island estuary restoration project. This group has been a key stakeholder in the project for the past ten years and was very engaged throughout the project advisory group process.



Aerial photo of the restoration area during low tide on 8/14/2020, ten months after restoration

Washington Waterfowl Association North Seattle Chapter Meeting: Private Lands Biologist Wingard presented to the North Seattle Chapter of Washington Waterfowl Association virtually. Information about the Waterfowl Habitat and Access Program in north Puget Sound was provided. The meeting was very well attended, and some great questions were asked.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Exotic Invasive Species: King County staff members met with Habitat and Fish program staff members regarding another report of African clawed frogs. This observation is at a new site. The specimen was discovered during an effort to trap aquatic life in order to clean a stormwater pond. Future efforts are desired to examine the relative abundance and distribution of this species in the vicinity of known sites. This state prohibited species is used in the science and pet trade. They are not to be within the state of Washington without special permits outlining their use e.g. in scientific research. They are voracious predators, eating anything they can fit in their mouths, including members of their own species. They have a boom and bust type life history which makes them very capable of sustaining poor aquatic conditions, low prey periods, as well as long periods of drought. They also are known carriers of amphibian ranaviruses and amphibian chytrid fungus. One can learn more about this and other exotic species of concern [here](#).



African clawed frog found during fish capture and relocation within a sediment pond to provide for removal of sediment – Photo by The Watershed Co

REGION 5

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 6

Nothing for this installment.