

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

April 16 to 30, 2021

DIVERSITY DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

Nothing for this installment.

LANDS DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

SCIENCE DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 1

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Washington Ground Squirrel: Biologists Atamian and Lowe walked several grid cells searching for new Washington ground squirrel (WAGS) colonies. Biologist Lowe found a new colony near Crab Creek in far western Lincoln County. This is part of an effort by WDFW to determine if the few known remaining colonies of WAGS truly represents the current distribution of the species or if there are more.



Active burrow in newly located Washington ground squirrel colony

Sick Deer: Wildlife Biologist Turnock responded to a report of a sick-looking mule deer that died. The deer was collected and was necropsied by Research Scientist DeVivo. Chronic wasting disease (CWD) and other samples were collected. Cause of death is unknown at this time.

Golden Eagle Survey: Wildlife Biologist Turnock conducted a second golden eagle survey at a historic nesting site along the Columbia River. Adult eagles were observed but an active nest was not located.

Golden Eagle Mortality: District Biologist Vekasy met with a Pacificorp employee and USFWS agent to collect samples from recent wind turbine mortality of one of our territorial golden eagles. The adult male was captured and banded in 2014, and also fitted with a transmitter at the time. The transmitter had not functioned the last few years and was not on the bird when it was killed.

Prairie Grouse: Biologist Lowe surveyed traditional sharp-tailed grouse lek complexes in Lincoln County. While walking out from the sharptail lek, Lowe checked the sage grouse lek and was surprised to see two male sage grouse on the lek. They did display a little, but only halfheartedly. Biologist Atamian participated in the quarterly Sage Grouse Tech Team meeting and reviewed the sage grouse recovery priority actions document.



Male sharptail that would not dance just hide in the grass by the historic lek



One of the two male sage grouse that were back on the lek after a little absence

Two male sharptails were observed at one lek and six total grouse at another. Though the grass is starting to come back, there is still too little to supply much cover for grouse. However, there is enough for some of our ground nesting passerines. Biologist Atamian also ran the raven and raptor point count survey this week. Very few ravens or hawks were observed, but the first sighting this year of a Swainson's hawk was recorded.



Sunrise at historic sharp-tailed grouse lek within the Whitney Road wildfire. Grass is starting to regrow but not much cover for a grouse to nest in yet



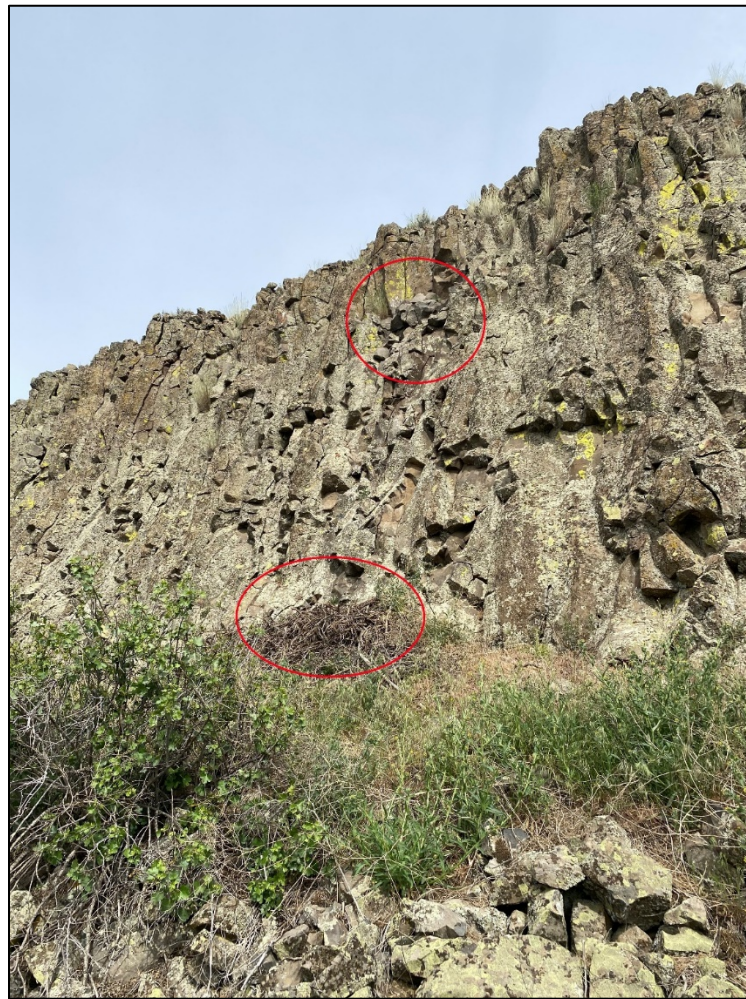
Horned Lark nest at the same historic lek in photo above. Not much cover for a grouse, but our ground nesting passerines are giving it a go



Sharp-tailed grouse found at Lincoln County lek complex with burned area in the background

Ferruginous Hawk Surveys: Biologist Vekasy completed second occupancy checks at Priority 1 territories. Final occupancy numbers included 12 Occupied-active, one Occupied-inactive, and seven Unoccupied. Of the seven Unoccupied, only two have been recently active in the 20 years, but one has been active every year since at least 2016.

Biologist Atamian checked three historic nesting territories. One site had an adult ferruginous hawk, as seen perching above the nest site, however the nest had been blown down from the cliff site. No other nest site was observed during two hours of walking the area. At the second territory, two hawks were observed. The female was sitting on the nest, assumed to be incubating, and the male flew through the area once. At the last territory, the historical nest site had not been used for many years. However, a second nest site was found while walking the draws and buttes to the north of the historical nest. Unintentionally while walking through the small valley, the female was flushed off the new nest. There were three eggs in the nest and the male came over to find out what was going on.



Ferruginous hawk nest that had been blown down from the cliff. Red circles show where the nest use to be and the remains at the base of the cliff



Female Ferruginous hawk incubating eggs on cliff nest above Palouse river



Ferruginous hawk nest with three eggs, female was accidentally flushed while walking through the valley since the nest was not known to be there until found during this visit to the territory

Biologist Lowe revisited one occupied territory to check nesting status and observed one ferruginous hawk incubating and the other hunting and visiting the nest.



Nesting pair of ferruginous hawks outside of Odessa in Lincoln County

White-nose Syndrome Surveillance: Biologists Atamian and Lowe, along with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) biologist Hugo and Eastern Washington University (EWU) Professor Magori and his graduate student Colley, captured bats at two *Yuma myotis* maternity roosts in the District to swab the recently returned bats to test for the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome (WNS).



A male Townsend big-eared bat caught visiting one of District 2 colonies



Two harp-net traps set up at a bat condo, there is also a mist net setup behind the condo that can not easily be seen in the photo

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Turkey Hunting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman spoke with a new turkey hunter about where to go in southern Spokane county for turkey opportunities. Similarly, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade met with two turkey hunters who traveled from out of the area to hunt in Asotin County. Wade helped them identify a few areas where they would likely be successful.

Access Contracts and Signage: Private Lands Supervisor Earl entered five new Feel Free to Hunt contracts and submitted them for approval. A total of 5,433 acres were maintained and/or added for public hunting. Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley also worked with Contracts Specialist Lotonuu on work pertaining to access contracts. Thorne Hadley sent a new contract to a land manager for review and signature. They were contacted by a landowner with an active access contract to make aware that the property was listed for sale and currently under contract. Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley also posted and replaced access signs at WDFW access locations in Columbia and Walla Walla counties.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Canada Geese Stuck on Hotel Terrace: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman and coworker helped catch a goose and five goslings that were stuck on the terrace of the Davenport Historic Hotel and did not have a way to jump off the terrace because of a glass wall that surrounds the terrace. The geese had nested on a planter along the wall and instead of the goslings jumping from the nest to the street they jumped down into the terrace. They were relocated to the nearby river.

Turkey Presentation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman worked on his presentation for the Western States Turkey Conference where he will be highlighting nuisance and damage issues related to turkeys in urban and rural areas.

Range Rider Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett continued to meet with a non-governmental organization (NGO) providing range rider services in northeast Washington. Additional producers are being scheduled during this month and early next month. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor McCanna also met with range riders and staff members on concerns about the upcoming year.

Range Rider Contacts: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill spoke to several contracted range riders (CRRs) and prospect CRRs interested in completing the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and either renewing or applying for a contract.

Radio Activated Guard Device Demo: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett participated in a training meeting to go over a deployment of the radio-activated guard (RAG) box prototype. Information on set-up and troubleshooting was covered.

Cattle Producer Contact: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade started pre-grazing season contacts this week. Wade discussed preventative measures and gave updates on wolf activity. Wade was also in contact with a new Grouse Flats producer and covered several WDFW programs to assist producers and minimize wolf livestock conflict, as well as gave updates on wolves and wolf activity. Wade also gathered herd information and on dates for all producers contacted.

Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement for Livestock: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett worked with staff members on recommended edits for the Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement for Livestock (DPCAL). Next steps will be for the amended language to go to Contracts then externals for review. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade signed up a new Garfield County producer with a DPCA. The producer currently has a herd of 60 elk frequenting his crops and is concerned about damage. Similarly, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill spoke to landowners and producers about DPCA contracts, damage permit reporting, range riding options, DPCA-L contracts, pilot projects, and plans for the upcoming grazing season.

Wolf Sighting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb responded to a report of a single wolf loitering within a 100m of a homesite calving pasture in Columbia County. The producer hazed the wolf away from their cattle. Conflict mitigation measures were discussed and emphasized, and additional non-lethal deterrent tools were loaned to the producer.



A producer provided photo of a grey wolf observed near a calving pasture in Columbia County

Wolf Concerns in Stevens County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett continued working with a landowner near Northport with cattle and wolf concerns. A list of volunteers for assisting with fencing have been started.

Pig Removal and Deterrent Assistance: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett worked with a landowner near Kettle Falls that had lost two pugs due to a domestic dog attack. Sanitation of the carcasses were completed to deter scavengers to the area. Fencing and other deterrents are being pursued.

Elk Crossing Discussion: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett continued to work with staff members on concerns of elk collisions south of Chewelah on Highway 395. Coordination with the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and impending meeting were covered to address ungulate collisions along that corridor.

Stateline Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb spend multiple evenings hazing elk from agricultural fields in Walla Walla County. The elk remain persistent and will require near-daily interaction.

Grizzly Depredation Compensation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett worked with staff members on addressing the funding gap for confirmed grizzly bear depredations in Washington.

Deer Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman spoke with a producer in northern Lincoln County near Lake Roosevelt about damage sustained this winter from 300 deer being on his fields when normally they are closer to the lake in the past. Westerman talked to him about options to help address damage and is waiting to hear back from him about documenting the damage and moving forward with a possible damage prevention cooperative agreement.

Deer on Alfalfa: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb assisted a Columbia County producer in hazing more than 50 white-tailed deer from their alfalfa field. The producer complained that they were not able to get a third cutting last year due to the amount of damage caused by the deer. Kolb initiated a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) with the producer and discussed hazing and deer deterrent techniques. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb also received multiple reports of deer and elk in circle crop fields in western Walla Walla County. Kolb conducted deliberate patrols of the area documenting damage and hazing wild ungulates out of the crops and into large conservation reserve program (CRP) sections.

Forest Service Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett continued to work with the Colville National Forest Range Manager on preparations for the 2021 grazing season including information on producer meetings and range rider deployments. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade took part in a joint USFS/WDFW meeting with one of the producer graze cattle on a USFS grazing allotment in the Umatilla National Forest.

Conflict Prevention: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill called all landowners who received a damage prevention or landowner kill permit this last season and had not submitted their harvest report, closing most of the outstanding permits in the Permits Database. Samsill also fielded a report from a farmer in the Chewelah valley who had a large herd of elk depredate his hay fields. Samsill provided the landowner with a suite of options to reduce damage, and the landowner agreed to contact them once the elk return to his property. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill and Private Lands Biologist Baarstad met with several landowners to address crop damage concerns from white-tailed deer. The two also met with Hunter Education Coordinator Garcia to discuss the possibility of hosting a Youth Deer Camp this fall.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area: Biologists Atamian and Lowe assisted wildlife area staff members with rebuilding a 4-strand barbed wire fence, as the original was lost during the Whitney fire. The bottom and top wires will be smooth wire to make this fence as wildlife friendly as possible. The fence is needed as soon as possible so the neighbor can turn out their cattle on their pastures while keeping the cows off two sharptail lek sites. Progress has been slow due to equipment malfunction and very rocky soil. Luckily, the neighbor has already finished their half of the fencing and was able to loan us their rock hammer, greatly speeding up construction.



WDFW staff members working on fencing at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area

Conservation Cover: Private Lands Biologist Gaston worked with a landowner to seed 10 acres of conservation cover. The landowner was able to use the no-till drill to ensure a good stand will develop if the rainy conditions come as forecasted. All Covid-19 safety protocols and social distancing was observed.

Guzzler Maintenance and Habitat Planning: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley met on site of an existing access property to repair two additional guzzlers as well as discuss future habitat possibilities with the land manager and his son. Thorne Hadley was assisted by four members of the Richland Rod and Gun Club along with the land manager and his son in repairing the guzzlers. One of the guzzlers was moved as it was in a poor location at the edge of the farmed field. It was a great learning experience for the land manager and his son who were unaware of how they worked or what they really did. Future plans for an additional guzzler to be installed were made at the end of the day.



Wildlife Watering Facility guzzler removed and reinstalled. One of three guzzlers that were refurbished to working conditions on the WDFW access property

Habitat Planting and Spraying: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley met Private Lands Supervisor Earl to pick up 75 plants and then planted the plants within an existing habitat project location. Thorne Hadley also spot sprayed an existing habitat project in Walla Walla County. When contacted by a landowner interested in enhancing existing habitat, Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley provided many suggestions including plant species targeting specific animal species.

Local Working Group Meeting: Private Lands Supervisor Earl attended a webinar regarding the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) projects in District 3. Several updates were given as well as PowerPoint presentations on habitat improvements.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Bear and Cougar Aware Presentation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett and District Biologist Prince partnered with the Pend Oreille Washington State University Extension Manager Jensen and Defender of Wildlife Washington Representative on another round of carnivore presentations. Cougars and both bear species information, bear spray, and bear spray exposure were discussed with the group.

Bear Education: Wildlife Biologist Prince teamed with an Ione resident to provide education to north Pend Oreille County homeowners. The local Firewise program was providing free use of a woodchipper and Biologist Prince handed out “bear aware” stickers and magnets. Unfortunately, attendance was very low.

Wolves Tri-Fold Pamphlet: Numerous staff members from across Region 1 – administrative assistants, public affairs staff members, customer service staff members, and district biologists – assisted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb in locating additional copies of the educational trifold titled *Identifying Washington’s Wolves*. District 1 Biologist Prince sent a large stack of the trifolds to the Walla Walla District Office. The collaborative effort of getting restocked on this educational material is greatly appreciated.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Recruitment: Biologist Baarstad worked with Human Resources staff members on the hiring process for the District 1 Natural Resource Technician position.

Farm Bill: Biologist Baarstad reviewed the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) contribution agreement language for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract work and discussed edits with staff members.

Explosive Bunker Inspection: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor McCanna traveled to Walla Walla County and met with a Labor and Industries inspector. The Walla Walla explosive bunker passed inspection.

Private Lands Access Program and Hunting Information Meeting: Private Lands Biologist Gaston and Private Lands Biologist Ferris helped put on a short meeting and training about the Private Lands Access Programs for Region 1, Region 5, and Region 6 customer service and administrative assistants. The one-hour meeting provided the regional teams with technical program information about how to best help hunters with questions about private lands programs, public lands hunting, and some of the intricacies of handling both landowners and hunters in the private lands program.

Blue Mountain Elk Assessment Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor McCanna and Wildlife Conflict Specialists Wade and Kolb participated on the Blue Mountain Elk Assessment call explaining how depredation and kill permits are issued and reported. Most of the elk harvested were in elk suppression zones of the Blue Mountains.

Wildlife/Enforcement Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor McCanna and Regional Wildlife Program Manager Robinette met with Captain Sprecher and Sergeant Taylor (acting for District 1) regarding staff members responding to cougar complaints. McCanna met with District 1 conflict staff members to provide an update on expectations.

7) Other

New Employee Paperwork: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett continued to work on paperwork and announcements for a new position to assist with conflict-related items in northeast Washington.

REGION 2

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Wildlife in Irrigation Canals: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand and District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra met with representatives of the South Columbia Irrigation District to discuss escape structures for wildlife to use when they are trapped in cement walled irrigation canals. Several options are being considered, including the idea of utilizing rubberized belting with tread (conveyor belt). Fidorra reached out to a local food processing plant for possible donated old materials that is interested in assisting.



Irrigation canal site of experimental escape ramp project where many deer have been trapped in the past

Townsend Ground Squirrel Surveys: District 8 Biologists Oates and Bernatowicz surveyed historic Townsend's ground squirrel sites as part of an Eastern Washington effort to update the status of ground squirrels. The main effort locally was to visit sites north of Yakima Indian Reservation and west of the Yakima River. Ground squirrels in that area have been noticeably absent since about 2016 and there is some literature suggesting ground squirrels west of the river are a different species than those east. Roughly 50 sites were surveyed in the area and only one active colony was found. That one colony is in urbanized Yakima. Two sites had small mammals using old burrow, but no squirrels were seen or heard. The recent fire on the Wenas Wildlife Area should have made detecting any ground squirrels easy. Local residents in the Wenas Wildlife Area believe it has been approximately five years since squirrels were present. The loss of colonies is most likely due to weather and disease events. East of the Yakima River, the few historic colonies northeast of Ellensburg were vacant, but a new colony was mapped on the windfarm. Ground squirrels until recently were extremely abundant east of the river from east Selah to Sunnyside. The squirrels were so abundant that limited attempts were made to map the colonies. Colonies east of the river have declined significantly, but squirrels are still present. Eleven colonies were recently mapped in the farmlands near Zillah. In 2020, approximately 25 were mapped east of Moxee to Zillah.



A Townsend Ground Squirrel in the Wildhorse Wind Farm



Old Ground Squirrel Colony on the Wenas Wildlife Area



Old Townsend's Burrow Filled with Ash and Fine Soil

Dead Bats Recovered: District 8 Biologist Oates picked up dead bats at landowners' property and shipped them for white-nose syndrome surveillance and surveyed the golden eagle nest near the Robinson feed site. The nest was not active, allowing for the road to remain open when the Wildlife Area opens for use May 1.

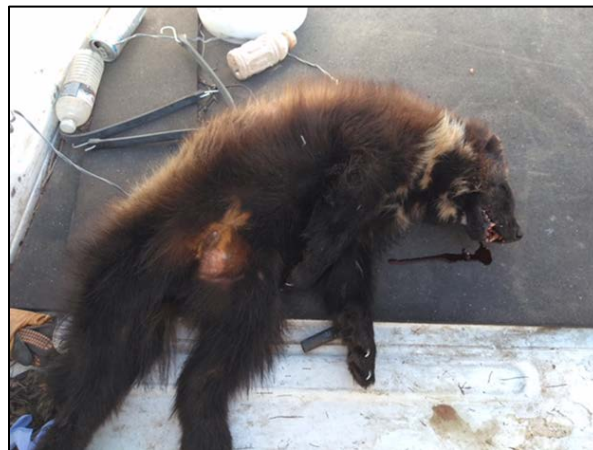
Deer Study Mortality: District 8 Biologist Oates responded to a radio-collared deer mortality in the Robinson Canyon area. The deer was old and had died from unknown causes.



Dead Radio-collared Deer

Sage Grouse Project: District 8 Conflict Technician Leuck continued to work on the Yakima Training Center (YTC) Raven Project to benefit breeding Greater Sage Grouse. Conflict Specialist Wetzel was able to help on a few of the days. Ravens are becoming increasingly wary and difficult to approach any closer than 250 yards. Ammunition for the project is difficult to find this year.

Wolverine Struck by Vehicle: A wolverine was struck and killed on Highway 821 in the Yakima River Canyon. An unusual event and wolverine researchers were interested in the carcass, which was transferred to Biologist Lewis. This wolverine was likely young and from a recent litter on Mount Rainer. It is the third known wolverine to have died in low elevation habitat since the 1980s. The last was a road-kill wolverine south of Finely in the early 1990s.



Wolverine Hit in the Yakima River Canyon

Highway Elk Collision: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand responded to an area of Highway 240 on Hanford after receiving a report of an injured elk that had been dispatched. Hopes were to collect hooves for Washington State University's treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) hoof surveillance program, but unfortunately someone used the salvage permit program and collected and removed the needed samples.

Bumble Surveys: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett helped District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz set up 2021 Bumble Bee Survey grids. Hulett contacted landowners in each cell and created maps of lands for those who were willing to participate in the survey.

Ferruginous Hawk Surveys Underway: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra and Scientific Technicians Martenson and Merlucchio conducted surveys at historic breeding sites for Ferruginous Hawks in Benton and Franklin Counties. Over 140 historic sites in the area exist, and visits to most sites have been completed with only 32 sites remaining at the end of the month. Nesting has been confirmed at four sites thus far in the district, with follow-up visits still needed at three additional sites where ferruginous hawks were observed but not at confirmed nests. Occupancy surveys state-wide will be completed by May 15.



Historic Ferruginous Hawk nests can remain on the landscape for many years after use

Water Flow Maintenance: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin are continuing maintenance of water flow into the Johnson Wetland area to provide stopover habitat for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds, also providing easy walk-in access for birders.

Weir Box Cleanup: Ferguson and Wascisin once again cleaned out the weir box for the Johnson Wetland intake due to heavy winds blowing kochia into the irrigation ditch, resulting in a massive build-up of kochia inside the weir box impeding water flow.



Natural Resource Technician Wascisin removing kochia “tumbleweeds” from Johnson Wetland weir box on Sulphur Creek

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

High Use Access Site Continues with Hunt by Reservation: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett created two hunting access contracts for Puget Sound Energy-Wildhorse Wind Facility that had recently expired. These contracts will be five years long and will keep the property in the Hunt by Reservation system.

Hunting Access Program: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett sent out letters to all landowners in Region 3 Hunting Access program. This letter provided information on new opportunities open to private landowners and thanked them for allowing access on their lands. All Hunt by Written Permission Landowners were also sent a pre-posted envelope to return all hunting cards from the previous season.

Green Dot Road Program: Colockum Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hagan worked to improve the green dot road markers on the Colockum, pulling damaged markers and installing new ones. These markers are white carsonite posts with a reflective green dot and mark roads that are legal for motorized vehicle use. Markers get damaged by weather, and of course, vandalism.

New Equipment Put to Use: Colockum Wildlife Area Manger Lopushinsky spent several days trying out a newly acquired John Deere 310 backhoe, doing needed road maintenance work. Work included unplugging several culverts that drain water across roads and placing boulders in roads and next to gates.

Sunnyside Birding Tour: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson, hosted a field trip for the Yakima Audubon Society chapter at the Sunnyside Unit led by Habitat Biologist Downes on April 23.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Kahlotus Deer: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand completed hazing and monitoring operations of deer in the Kahlotus area. A large portion of the deer herd has begun their migration north to their normal summer range. Wheat health appears to be good in most areas, although dry weather and soil conditions are a concern entering the summer months.



Kahlotus area wheatfield

Paterson Vineyard Patrols: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored several large wine grape operations along the Columbia River between Paterson and Crow Butte for deer damage. Some minor deer browse was observed on new vine growth and bud clusters, but at tolerable levels at this time. Non-lethal hazing strategies are being employed including LP gas cannons and pyrotechnics.

Trail Camera Deployments: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand deployed two trail cameras in areas on Rattlesnake Mountain that elk have historically used to leave the Hanford Monument for winter wheat crops. Small groups of cows and young bulls have been showing up on camera during the very early morning hours and retreating back to Hanford prior to sun-up. Information is being relayed to landowners to assist with their hazing activities.



Deployed Trail Camera on Rattlesnake Mountain



Young Bull Elk Headed for Wheatfields

Rattlesnake Hills Expiring Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to meet with landowners with expiring agreements to get updated contracts renewed. Several contracts have been mailed to Olympia Headquarters, but never arrived at the Contracts Office, so new contracts were re-signed and sent in.

Crop Damage Eligibility: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received a request of information from a landowner concerning a parcel of farm ground being converted from Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) back into wheat production in a location likely to receive elk damage from Hanford elk. The landowner will be filing separate Federal farm documents and was unsure if the newly seeded land would be considered separate from other property where claims are considered eligible. Thanks for clarification on the rule from our Olympia Headquarters staff members.

Kittitas County: Conflict Specialist Wetzel and Technician Leuck patrolled the Thorp, Kittitas, Badger Pocket, Naneum, and Lauderdale areas for elk activity. Elk appear to be under drought stress in many areas and are persistently using irrigated crop fields for feeding. Many areas that normally do not have elk conflict are seeing significant increases in elk use. There will likely be damage claims this year due to the drought and elk use of private lands.

Elk and Wolf Issues: Elk and wolves entered a private irrigated pasture and calving area in the Naneum, elk to access green forage and wolves to utilize one of many bone piles in their territory. Hazing of elk and wolves is ongoing at that location.



Fused rope in a barrel resonator to deter elk and wolves from irrigated pasture

Damaged Elk Fence: Elk used a hole in the exclusion fence to feed in the Heart K riparian protection area. The fence is under repair and will be functional soon.



Break in perimeter fence utilized by elk at the Heart K

Yakima County: A crop grower in the Nile called to report elk had broken down the elk fence around his hay field and he needed posts to repair the elk fence. Some fence posts were provided for elk fence repair.



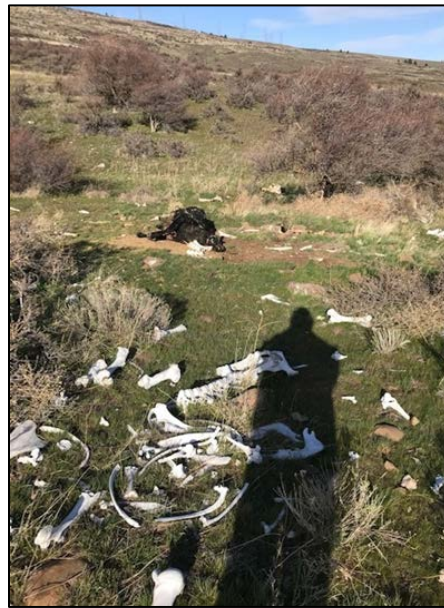
Fence posts for repair of elk fence in Nile

Animal Dumping: A homeowner in Cowiche Canyon reported a large amount of carcass dumping on the Wildlife Area below his home. The dump site was located, and all manner of carcasses littered the area, some identifiable, some not. A new game was thus invented, called “What is that dead thing?” [WAC 246-203-121](#) put the responsibility on the property owner to properly dispose of dumped carcasses. Doing so in District 8 would require equipment, archeological surveys, and either multiple new employees or a major change in job duties.



One of many carcasses dumped along Cowiche Canyon Road

Wolf Activities: Teanaway wolves appeared to be expanding their traditional range this year in a slightly eastward move but staying mostly out of private lands. The Naneum wolves appear to be focusing heavily on spending time in livestock areas littered with dumped carcasses on mostly private land. Often, wolves mix with cows and new calves in these agriculture areas and are becoming quite comfortable with vehicles, humans, and livestock. Hazing is becoming less effective as the wolves have adapted to humans in a relatively short time.



One of multiple carcass dumps in the Naneum Pack Territory

L.T. Murray Kiosk Installation: L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart partnered with Mountains to Sound Greenway staff members to guide volunteers in building a new kiosk at the Pump House road access point to the Whiskey Dick unit. Winegeart worked with Natural Resource Technician Blore to finish the kiosk and install a green dot rules board. Winegeart received a lot of positive feedback from users while building the kiosk. Interpretive panels and header boards will be installed this summer.



Mountains to Sound Greenway staff members and volunteers at the Pump House parking area



The classy Pump House parking area with new kiosk and green dot rules board

High School Project: L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart partnered with Selah High School to router the header boards for kiosks. Shop students are in the process of routing and painting the letters. The signs are turning out wonderfully.



Selah High School's progress on Kiosk header boards

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Green Strip Project: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett inspected the seeded vegetated green strips in the Blackrock Pilot Project with other Region 3 Wildlife and Habitat Program staff members. Sites were very dry, but chemical applications worked well last fall on annual grasses and did not affect any of the planted species. Seeding looked positive in spots and poor in others.

Klickitat County Conservation Reserve Program: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett met with a landowner in East Kilckitat county and Region 5 Private Land Biologist Farris to discuss habitat options on land the landowner did not want to return to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Multiple sites were visited and Hulett gave input on where to begin habitat projects.

Prescribed Burn Prep: Colockum staff members walked fire lines and freshened up unit flagging in preparation for building more containment lines for our upcoming prescribed fire forest treatments. Depending on crew availability and favorable weather conditions, we hope to burn this spring.

Weed Spraying Season: Colockum Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hagan spent several days prepping spray equipment and then spraying weeds (whitetop). He treated patches that we can reach with ground-based equipment in the Stray Gulch and Brushy Creek areas. We will also be treating whitetop by air in the coming weeks.

Livestock Grazing Management: L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik and Natural Resource Technician Nass put up all the cattle enclosures in Parke Creek on the Quilomene Unit to prevent destruction from trespass cattle. Staff members rebuilt gates and added signage to reduce the pressure of trespass cattle in all four of the pastures. Conditions are very dry in the Quilomene and many of the spring-fed water troughs are already dry.



Hot wire to keep trespass cattle out of a wet meadow in Parke Creek



Staff members setting up laydown fences around the pond to keep cattle out. The stock watering access is already dry



Natural Resource Specialist replacing an obsolete gate to keep trespass cattle out of the Vantage pasture



Gates are being left open allowing trespass cattle access to all pastures

Reusing Wildlife Guzzlers: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett helped Richland Rod and Gun Club pick up some older guzzlers that were pulled out of land moving from CRP to Wheat production. These guzzlers were then taken to Private Lands Biologist Thorne-Hadley in Walla Walla. Hulett additionally helped inspect and maintain two guzzlers on land in Benton County with Richland Rod and Gun Club.

Noxious Weed Control: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin are continuing to spray problem areas for noxious weeds including poison hemlock, kochia, whitetop, pepperweed, teasel, and goosefoot.

Food Plots on Sunnyside Unit: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin are documenting soil conditions in the irrigated habitat plot areas with photos and small dig tests. This will hopefully show improvements to conditions with no-till seeding and heavily diversified plantings of perennial grasses, annual wildflowers, and annual food crops that we are planting this year. There will be upwards of 40 species planted throughout the habitat plots and wetlands this summer, with many areas growing 15-20 species in one area. The array of species will add disease and insect resistance, break up compacted soils with plants having varying root depths, and the introduction of perennial plants should help increase microbial activity throughout the year. Staff members will follow up with testing later in the summer and next year.



Compacted clay soil in habitat plot in 100 Acre Field (note lack of organic matter below surface)



Healthier, looser soils with subsurface organic matter in triticale field with deeply penetrating roots (photo 20 feet west of first soil photo)

Pollinator Mix Planted: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber and Assistant Manager Rodgers have been busy preparing and planting approximately 10 acres near the Windmill Unit headquarters with a flowering pollinator mix that contains 16 species of plants that will provide forage for many species of bees and butterflies. The area will also be planted with sunflowers and wheat for many bird species like doves, quail, and pheasants.



Honeybee at the pollinator plot



Assistant Manager Rodgers planting sunflowers

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Sunnyside Snake River Story Map: The [Storymap](#) of the Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area was recently released on social media. To date it's been shared 28 times and liked by 150 people. It's a wonderful resource to learn about the Wildlife Area. Thank you to everyone who made it happen!

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Seasonal Staff: Colockum Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky worked to process paperwork to hire summer seasonal employees. One or two temporary employees are hired each summer to repair fencing, replace signs, pick up litter, spray weeds, and do other field work as needed.

Bonneville Power Administration Contract Prep: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson completed making GIS maps for our Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) liaison Mandy Hope, showing locations and outlines of ongoing and new 2021 field season projects on the Sunnyside unit.

7) Other

Large Party on L.T. Murray: L.T. Murray’s Manager Babik responded to reports of a rave in Moonlight Canyon over the weekend. Law Enforcement reported over 400 people were in attendance without a permit or proper sanitation. Many were driving off road and parked more than 100 feet from a green dot road. At least nine illegal campfires were observed by law enforcement. An area along Taneum Creek became the “over flow Parking area.” The group removed a 15-year-old buck and pole fence that prevents people from driving into a meadow, left significant trash, and cut down a few trees.



The remains of a buck and pole fence that prevented motorized vehicles in the meadow



Lots of beer cans left over from the rave

Continued Vandalism on Sunnyside Unit: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin continue to pick up trash one or two mornings a week at Wildlife Area (WLA) parking lots, with the McGee lot remaining the most heavily abused area. The signs have all been “tagged” and replaced in the last couple weeks, all the eco-blocks that were painted (three times!) last fall have been tagged, and someone lit the greasewood on the north side of the lot on fire, burning about half an acre and catching the power pole and kiosk on fire. The most effective solution to this ongoing, persistent issue is going to be seasonal closures – opening the lot around early September or October and locking it up at the end of January (end of goose season). For special events or if birders would like access, we could open the lot temporarily or figure out another parking arrangement for them.



Current conditions at McGee parking lot

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Oregon Spotted Frog Breeding Survey: District Biologists C. Moore and Waddell conducted Oregon Spotted Frog (OSF) breeding surveys in Whatcom County. This effort is part of an annual population monitoring project for this state endangered species. During the survey, biologists search shallow wetlands for frog egg masses. Biologists count egg masses and record environmental parameters at the site, like the water and depth temperature. Biologists surveyed two new locations this season, one of which yielded many detections of breeding OSFs.



Biologist Nyman from the [Whatcom County Amphibian Monitoring Project](#) measuring the water's depth around an Oregon Spotted Frog egg mass found during a joint survey in the Samish River Watershed

Sea Duck Capture Preparation: District Biologists Hamer and C. Moore assisted with preparing equipment for upcoming sea duck captures at Cherry Point in Whatcom County, with biologists from the Waterfowl program. Some activities involved painting decoys, fixing capture crates, and servicing boats. Captures are scheduled to begin next week and will run for several weeks.

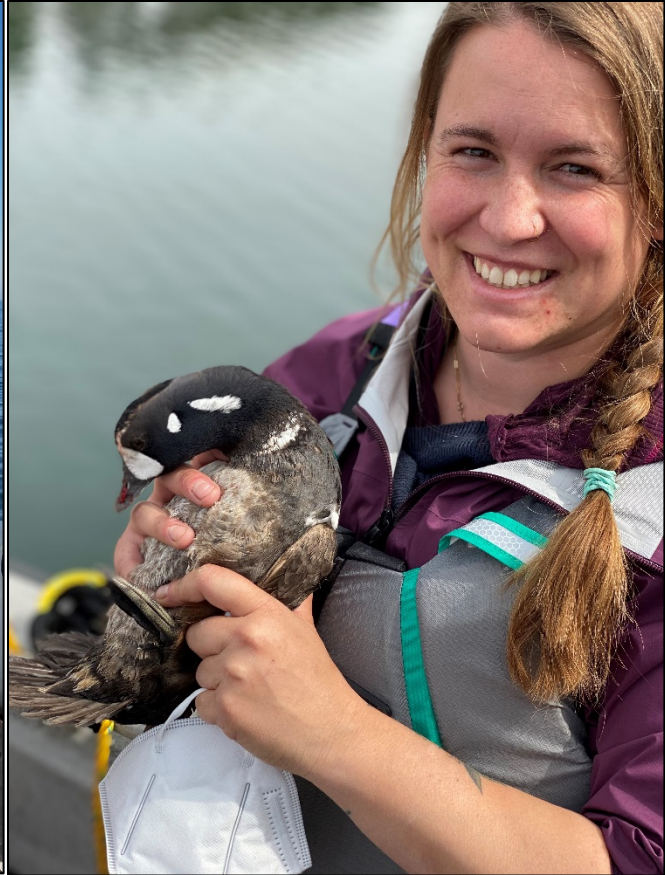


Decoys were repainted to look like surf scoter females (brown) and males (black with the colorful bill)

Sea Duck Captures: District Biologists Moore, Murphie, Michaelis, Hamer, and Waddell assisted Waterfowl Program Manager Spragens and Specialists Evenson and Wilson with sea duck captures at Cherry Point. The successful captures targeted surf scoters, but white-winged scoters, harlequin ducks, and long-tailed ducks were also captured using floating mist nets. All captured sea ducks were banded, and fecal samples were collected from the surf scoters for diet composition analysis.



The floating mist net and scoter decoys



*(L) Biologist Hamer holds a surf scoter captured in a floating mist net at Cherry Point
(R) Biologist Moore prepares to release a banded harlequin duck*



Biologist Michaelis bands an adult male surf scoter

Site Visit: District Biologist C. Moore met with landowners on a property within the Oregon Spotted Frog (OSF) habitat buffer to look for and assess if a culvert replacement project with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on the property would have any adverse effects on the frogs. Moore assessed the stream on both the upstream (east) and downstream (west) sides of the proposed culvert project. Moore concluded that the project would likely have "no effect" on the area's frog population. The site lacked the necessary slow and shallow water and full sun of typical OSF habitat.



Habitat downstream of the proposed culvert replacement

Common Loon Management and Survey: Biologists Anderson and Smith deployed loon platforms at area territorial lakes. Adult loons were noted – a pair at one site and a solo AD at another. This is the earliest birds have been seen on territory in the past 15 years or longer, so it was surprising but welcome to both biologists! We look forward to confirming nesting in the next steps of loon survey. Anderson also worked with the Wildlife Science group to have external partners gain access to survey forms (if they desired and have ability to help monitor this year). Thanks to Gretchen Blatz and Bill Simper for their assistance! More information on breeding common loons in Washington [here](#).



Adult resident common loon in King County, WA

Management of Protected State Wildlife: Biologist Anderson consulted with Port of Seattle (POS) and Seattle City Light (SCL), separately, regarding safety and property damage concerns related to osprey nest starts on infrastructure. Empty nests of Protected wildlife often require some form of permit or consultation to meet state regulations. Permits to destroy the inactive nests were issued to both SCL and POS; given the safety and property damage scenarios. POS is erecting a platform to manage the situation long-term – this is not an option given the situation for SCL. Hopefully those birds stay out of the adjacent construction site once they vacate the energized line attempts! Related, Biologist Anderson worked with city of Kenmore to avoid any state take authorization regarding active killdeer nesting on a city construction site. Anderson also worked with Habitat and the city of Renton and King County regarding drainage issues and degradation of a new paved trail at a great blue heron colony. Renton and the county had concerns regarding disturbance and impact to nesting regarding this slope/drainage need and status of colony breeding. Similarly, Sound Transit contacted Biologist Anderson regarding geotechnical boring work directly adjacent to an active peregrine falcon nest – they were concerned over take. The consensus is to wait until July once young have fledged to avoid any potential permit need. It is that time of year!



Osprey just starting to set-up a nest on energized powerline in Seattle. We like to keep electricity available and birds from any electrocution or fire situation! – Photo by Seattle City Light



In the Puget Sound area, always lower your crane boom when not in use (yes, even at end of day until next morning work initiation) during the osprey breeding season! This should be standard worksite operational need – Photo by Port of Seattle

Species of Greatest Conservation Need Management Assistance – Western Purple Martins:

Biologists Anderson and Smith assisted in final 2021 season effort in ongoing collaborations to manage the bulk of known King County colony sites (Duwamish, Elliot Bay, Point Shilshole). One hundred or so gourds have now been refreshed and maintained due to partnerships that includes King County, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and WDFW. WDFW helps to work higher tides with boat for over water marine sites. This helps maintain these long-occupied over water sites in Puget Sound for the population. Given these sites are so public, they also provide many residents and tourists in Seattle with excellent Watchable Wildlife opportunity and outreach by partners who often are at these sites to provide just that. More information on the Western Purple Martin [here](#).



Biologists Smith replacing a natural gourd with a sturdier super gourd as Biologist Anderson hugs the dolphin piling with the boat. Thanks to Region 4 Fish Program (Justin Spinelli) for once again proving borrow of their Hewescraft for this effort. Perfect vessel for this work! –

Photo by Kim Stark

Waterfowl Forage Planting: The warm and dry weather of early April lead to good field conditions to start preparing fields for waterfowl forage. The new tractor is being put to work enhancing properties with additional forage for wintering waterfowl.



New tractor for Region 4 at work on a Wildlife Area unit in Skagit County, prepping fields to grow forage for migratory waterfowl to consume next winter

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt: The North Skagit Spring Bear hunt is off to a slow start with low snow levels and little bear sign. As we have more warm days, more of the unit will become accessible and more bears will be moving.



Fresh black bear scat in the North Skagit Spring Bear unit

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Seattle Urban Duck Management: Biologist Anderson discussed and met with multiple Seattle Parks and Recreation employees regarding their efforts to manage urban ducks at the historic ponds found in Volunteer Park. Birds' waste and related get into the filter system and cause major operations and damage. Complicating things, Volunteer Park is one of the Olmstead Parks in Seattle. It is on the National Register of Historic Places, within a National Historic District, Washington State Heritage Register, and a formally designated Seattle Landmark, so taking measures to exclude or dissuade wildlife from these special sites can often mean less options. This is due to needing to retain historic characteristics on these sites. Anderson instructed Seattle to allow ingress/egress (in order to avoid entrapment of state game birds) to the pond until Seattle finds a remedy that either keeps all ducks out of pond (in working with professionals that provide such services) and/or learn to live with it/alter pond filtration and horticultural use. We have urban ducks and always will, so this will be an "issue" that will not go away. [Here is a story](#) of the ongoing duckling saga. Seattle had enclosed the pond so that the adults could get in and out, but the young could not get out (either due to being placed back by a well-intended effort, most likely, or they got in at one spot that had a small gap). Either way makes for a stressed hen and ducklings and public watching while feeding them profusely. Remember: don't feed waterfowl! It is bad for them and not good for immediate area of feeding due to waste and related potential pathogen load with that.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Improving Habitat: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports native vegetation planting is in progress at the Cherry Valley Unit. Last summer, a ditch cleaning project was completed and now the work area is being replanted with a variety of native trees and shrubs to provide shade for the ditch network.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Estuary Videos: WDFW hired a video production company that will produce two short documentaries focusing on estuary restoration at Leque Island and the Stillaguamish Chinook salmon population. The company is called Caravan Labs, based in Seattle.



The videos will likely include footage of monitoring Leque Island after restoration, such as scientists capturing salmon in the area last week shown here – Photo from Jenny Baker

Wildlife Interviews: Biologist Anderson was interviewed by KIRO Radio regarding coyote activity in Seattle. Coyotes have been in King County since the mid-to-late 1930s. More information on living with coyotes, regulations, how to avoid habituation in coyotes, and what to do if coyotes are too close for comfort [here](#).

Crosscut Interview: Biologist Anderson, along with colleagues in Headquarters Diversity and Habitat, were interviewed for a piece in Crosscut regarding state efforts in [amphibian conservation](#).

Interview on Salmonellosis Outbreak: Biologist Anderson and WDFW Wildlife Veterinarian Mansfield provided interview and information in two media requests regarding salmonellosis in songbirds and the epidemic Washington and other lower 48 states had this past winter through early spring. To see one in the Seattle Times, click [here](#).

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Cherry Valley Upgrades: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that the hazard tree removal project continued this past month. Approximately 30 trees were either removed or trimmed. The trees were growing over a pedestrian walkway and towards State Highway 203, resulting in a growing safety hazard. While that was occurring, the south access road was re-graveled to rebuild the deteriorating road.

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that the Agricultural Field Enhancement Project was completed this past week. The project focused on removing dozens of alder saplings and blackberry patches that had overtaken a field while it laid fallow for over ten years. The cleared field will provide added acres for raising crops and increased recreational area for the public.

Island Marble Butterfly Support: Biologist Hamer coordinated with Diversity and USFWS staff members to establish monitoring protocols for Island Marble Butterfly habitat patches and to support San Juan County landowners enrolled in the Island Marble Butterfly Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA).

Pollinator Specialist Interviews: Biologist Hamer joined Diversity staff members on an interview panel to fill the Pollinator Specialist position.

New Watchable Wildlife Grant: Biologist Anderson provided review and comment regarding development of a new Watchable Wildlife Grant that will be available to appropriate applicants soon. Great work by Alex Biswas, Watchable Wildlife Coordinator, in getting this grant opportunity going! More to come, but many partners are interested in it already.

Bat Monitoring Needs: Biologist Anderson is training and setting-up a new “lead volunteer” to coordinate a group of volunteers to conduct emergence and new roost/maternity colony reconnaissance efforts this summer, as time allows them to.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 5

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Townsend's Ground Squirrel Surveys: In the past few weeks, Biologists Bergh and Wickhem have been conducting surveys for Townsend's ground squirrels in appropriate habitat on public land in eastern Klickitat County.

The survey grid cells are 400 x 400 m square with parallel transects spaced every 40 m. Surveyors walk the transects listening for alarm calls as well as looking for burrows and squirrels. Only one colony has been found in the county so far this spring. Townsend's ground squirrels are a State Candidate species for listing and are impacted by habitat loss due to the conversion of shrubsteppe and grassland habitats to agricultural and other development. For more information on this species, see our [webpage](#).



Townsend's ground squirrels seen through the spotting scope

Annual Conboy National Wildlife Refuge Sandhill Crane Survey: Biologists Bergh and Wickhem and volunteers Flick and Anderson assisted Conboy National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) staff members with their annual survey of breeding greater sandhill cranes. The purpose of the survey is to estimate the number of cranes on and directly surrounding the Refuge along with identification of any nests. Sandhill cranes are a State Endangered species and Klickitat and Yakima counties hold the only breeding population of cranes in the state. For more information on this species see our [webpage](#).



Annual Conboy NWR Sandhill Crane Survey

Ferruginous Hawk Surveys: Biologist Bergh and Volunteer Flick completed occupancy surveys for three ferruginous hawk territories in eastern Klickitat County. The surveys consist of two separate visits to any historic nests as well as time spent walking around the territories looking for raptors in flight. One of the territories had a recently repaired nest that appeared to be the correct size and shape for a ferruginous hawk but was presently occupied by ravens. The other two territories did not have any intact nests. Ferruginous hawks are a State Threatened species and are impacted by habitat loss and a decrease in prey availability due to the conversion of shrubsteppe and grassland habitats to agricultural and other development.



(L) Surveying for ferruginous hawks in Klickitat County
(R) Repaired ferruginous hawk nest that is occupied by ravens – Photo by Cathy Flick

Bat House Installation: Biologists Holman and Stephens installed two maternity bat houses, constructed by a WDFW volunteer, at the home of a landowner in Onalaska. This landowner has had bats in the attic space of his shop for many years. WDFW has been monitoring the site since 2018 and has counted over 650 bats exiting the attic in one evening. The landowner is interested in eventually excluding the bats from the shop given the large amounts of guano that have accumulated over the years. However, he would like to provide alternative housing for them prior to doing so. Biologists will monitor the site over the summer and see if bats take up residence in the newly installed bat houses.



Maternity Bat Boxes Mounted on Shop in Onalaska

Checks of Hunter Killed Wildlife: Spring is typically a slow period for Regional Wildlife Biologists and Customer Service staff members involved with checks of hunter-killed wildlife. However, the new requirement for hunters harvesting bears on spring permits generated one such check. For bears, the checking requirement allows for inspection of the animal's sex as well as reproductive status and for collection of a tooth for ageing. Thank you to the successful hunters for bringing their animals into WDFW for the various checking requirements and for sharing their photos.



Sub-adult female black bear harvested in Game Management Unit 684 (Long Beach)

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Turkey Hunter Contacts: Wildlife Conflict Specialist/Private Lands Supervisor Jacobsen talked to several turkey hunters on the phone and in-person during the opening week of turkey season regarding turkey opportunities on private lands in Klickitat County. Hunters were appreciative of the advice.

Access Sites: Access staff members Rhodes and McKinlay worked at completing several painting projects such as at the Oneida access depicted below. Rhodes and McKinlay have also started their annual spring herbicide applications at multiple access sites. An unfortunate event happened at Turkey hole Access when Mckinlay discovered a deceased person in a car. He handled the situation very professionally, followed instructions from enforcement officers, and stayed on scene until authorities arrived.



Painting at Oneida Access



Continual spring herbicide application

Vancouver Lake: With the help of the Department of Ecology, staff members loaded and hauled 600 lbs. of trash from the Shillapoo "drag racing strip" to the dump. Lots of household furniture had been dumped resulting in two loads to dump from one access site. Unfortunately, the Vancouver Lake restroom was also tagged with graffiti again this week. Graffiti is becoming an increasing issue at access sites.



Loading garbage dumping at Vancouver Lake

Mineral Lake: Access staff members repaired a partial broken curb and small section of washed out asphalt this week at Mineral Lake Access. It appears that the pavement started washing away but was then helped out by someone who decided to remove the curb and throw it in the lake. A form had to be built for the concrete to be poured.



Broken curb at Mineral Lake



Repair of curb at Mineral Lake

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Deer with Arrow: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen, along with Biologists Holman and Stephens, made multiple attempts to locate and tranquilize a young male deer with an arrow lodged in its hind leg. Unfortunately, the deer has not presented itself for capture when needed. Staff members will continue to monitor the deer and may attempt to capture it again in the future.

Clark County Cougar Sightings: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted by multiple landowners regarding a three-legged cougar with her two kittens. The cougars were observed walking down a driveway, across properties, and even up onto one landowner's porch. Jacobsen gave advice and asked that the reporting parties share WDFW and cougar biology information (provided by Jacobsen) on the local community Facebook page. The three cougars subsequently came back the on next two days, likely returning to a deer carcass that may have been cached in the woods. WDFW Biologists, Conflict staff members, Enforcement staff members, and a houndsman attempted to locate the three cougars in an effort to haze them out of the area but were unable to find the cats. Landowners will contact WDFW if the cougars are observed again.



A three-legged female cougar and her two young kittens – Photo captured by the reporting party

Discarded Domestic Ducks: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted by a local landowner regarding an extremely unfortunate situation where 13 domestic ducks had been dumped on the Conboy Lake National Wildlife Refuge by an irresponsible pet owner. Jacobsen contacted the Refuge Manager regarding the ducks, and it was agreed that the ducks needed to be removed from the Refuge to prevent potential disease spread to the breeding native waterfowl in the area. Jacobsen was unable to capture the domestic ducks, so all the ducks were euthanized by Jacobsen at the site. Ironically, WDFW and the Washington Invasive Species Council announced an art contest earlier this week titled, [“Don’t Let It Loose”](#) in an effort to raise awareness regarding invasive species that are introduced into the wild by members of the public, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Please be responsible and humane; seek out other avenues of parting with domestic animals, such as pet adoption, rather than releasing them into the wild where they can negatively affect native wildlife and where they will likely suffer.



Thirteen domestic ducks standing on a roadway in the middle of Conboy Lake National Wildlife Refuge

“Stuck,” “Stuck,” Goose: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen followed up with an individual who reported a goose sitting on a nest. The individual had observed the goose earlier in the week and observed it in the same spot a few days later. Believing that the goose was stuck, the individual reported the goose to see if it needed assistance. While it was a little odd that the goose was sitting on a nest on a raised platform, Jacobsen believed that the goose was not stuck or in distress. Jacobsen requested that the reporting party check on the goose from time to time.

Elk Damage to Crops: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with a landowner in east Klickitat County regarding elk damage to grain and alfalfa crops. The landowner was enrolled in a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement. Jacobsen discussed different deterrent measures and issued the landowner a box of cracker shells to help haze the elk off.



Wheat and alfalfa field where elk damage is occurring

Coyote Depredations on Sheep: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with a landowner who had been losing lambs to an unknown carnivore in Clark County. Jacobsen inspected one of the depredation scenes (the carcass had already been buried) and walked the perimeter of several of the landowner's pastures. During the walk-through, Jacobsen identified over a dozen areas where coyotes either could get through the fence or had gotten through the fences already. Several holes under the fence were identified where coyotes had dug under to enter the pastures. The landowner was previously unaware of these entry points and was going to work on reinforcing his fences. Jacobsen provided advice on deterrent lights and strongly recommended night penning as well as getting livestock guardian dogs, as the landowner has close to 100 sheep roaming across 40 acres. Jacobsen installed a trail camera to help determine how many coyotes were likely roaming the pastures.



One of several holes where coyotes had been digging under the landowner's fence to access the sheep pasture

Possible Cougar Sighting: A local police chief contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen regarding a trail camera video that had been submitted of a possible cougar. After reviewing the video several times, Jacobsen determined that the animal in question on the video was a domestic house cat. Advice was provided.



Reported cougar walking in front of a homeowner's trail camera – Video submitted by the reporting party

Depredation on Geese 1: A concerned landowner contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen to report that his three geese were killed by an unknown carnivore. Jacobsen scheduled a site visit to inspect the scene, install a trail camera, and to provide recommendations on how to protect the remaining livestock. However, the landowner later cancelled the site visit, expressing that he would rather move on rather than dwell on the loss of his pets. Jacobsen was contacted by another landowner whose geese were recently killed by a cougar. Initially, the landowner thought a bobcat had killed the geese and set a bobcat trap the first night to catch the animal. He also installed a trail camera over the trap, which quickly revealed that a cougar had been responsible for the depredations. The landowner had originally contacted the Klickitat County Sheriff's Office, but they were unable to locate the cougar. Jacobsen met with the landowner at his request and reviewed various structural modifications, husbandry practices, and deterrent measures that the landowner could implement to help prevent future depredations. Jacobsen deployed a fox light next to the landowner's chicken coops. At Jacobsen's recommendation, the landowner also had a radio playing next to the coop to simulate a human presence by the pens at night.



Cougar investigating one of the goose carcasses and removing the placed inside the bobcat trap

Cougar entering the bobcat trap goose carcass from the trap

Sick Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to a report of a yearling elk calf in a landowner's yard. The elk calf didn't stand up when approached by the landowner's dog and didn't seem disturbed by people in the yard, either. Jacobsen decided to tranquilize the elk to evaluate its condition. After the elk was sedated, Jacobsen determined that the elk was in extremely poor body condition and overall health and needed to be euthanized. Jacobsen euthanized the elk and disposed of the carcass.



Sick yearling elk calf in a landowner's back yard – Photo taken by the landowner

Injured Owl: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey picked up an injured great-horned owl at a softball field in Clark County. The owl was transported to a rehabilitation center by Officer Moats who had picked up a different injured owl at the same time. Thanks to Officer Moats for the transport help on this one!

Baby Owl: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a residence where a baby owl was found on the ground. It is not uncommon for owls to leave the nest before they are capable of flight, and their parents will continue to tend to the owls when on the ground. However, with some of the circumstances at this particular property, it was determined that the owl needed to be transported to a rehabber to be raised to maturity before it will be released.

Bear Concern: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a report of an abandoned bear cub. After conversations with the reporting party, it was determined the bear was likely a yearling and not a cub. Aubrey was able to observe the bear near the last known location and confirm it to be a yearling. Given the location and time of year, it was decided to leave the bear alone and monitor the situation. Aubrey followed up on the bear concern and there had been no further sightings or issues with bears in the area since the initial sighting.

Cougar Seal: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with a successful cougar hunter to seal the hide and take biological samples from the animal.

Injured Beaver: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey received a report of an injured beaver in one of the marinas along the Columbia River. It was reportedly struck by the propellor of a boat. Aubrey arrived to find the beaver in the same place it was reported earlier in the day. The behavior of the animal and the extent of the injury resulted in the beaver being captured and transferred to a rehabilitation center.

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey continued to work with landowners experiencing elk damage to agricultural crops. With natural food sources really beginning to green up, some hazing efforts on the landowners' part should encourage the elk to vacate agricultural areas for the spring and summer. Supplies were dropped off to assist the landowners with their hazing.

Sick Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey was contacted by a forester with one of the timber companies in the area who came across an elk that was no longer mobile and suffering from treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD). The elk had not moved in the time it took Aubrey to respond and was euthanized.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Forest Health Thinning Project Revisit: A forest health enhancement project was undertaken in 2018 on the Soda Springs Unit within an area occupied by western gray squirrels, which are a state-listed species. The intent of the project was to improve the health of the forest that is a critical component of western gray squirrel habitat, thereby promoting conservation of this habitat in the long term. Saw logs and pulp logs were removed from the stand while avoiding disturbance of squirrel nest trees. Prior to harvest, western gray squirrel nests were identified, and trees marked for retention to protect the nests. Additional trees were protected where clusters of nests were found in close proximity to each other. The harvest work was done in fall after juvenile squirrels have dispersed from their natal nests and after the fire season had passed, to avoid unnecessary risks to the habitat and squirrels. Of the three units treated in 2018, one of them has been resurveyed for presence of western gray squirrel nests. Two more units remain to be surveyed. The project planning group visited Unit 1 of the area that was thinned in 2018 to view the results of the work, discuss what follow-up work might be done, and consider current market conditions and how that might influence the next phase of the project that is tentatively planned to be done in 2022. The first phase of work is still being evaluated but appears to have yielded good results. The next phase will probably be done in a similar fashion but with a few adjustments to fine-tune for the desired outcome.



Forest Health Thinning Unit 1 Review in 2021

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Wildflower Update: Dry spring weather has subdued the wildflower show somewhat, but there are flowers to be found. Manager VanLeuven could not resist photographing an impressive patch of shooting stars on the Soda Springs Unit. Ballhead waterleaf, prairie stars, Oregon grape, and at least two species of desert parsley are also blooming.



April Shooting Stars

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Simcoe Mountains Unit Boundary Marking: The Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager and Assistant Manager marked the property line between WDFW land and adjacent private land with new flagging at the east end of the Simcoe Unit near Box Spring Road. This will help visitors be aware of important boundaries in that area. Paper maps and Upland Game Bird Hunting pamphlets were also placed in a box on the reader board at the east entrance. The WDFW team followed up on a report of a “No Trespassing” sign on state land and removed the errant sign.

Klickitat Wildlife Area – New Road Signs: Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven and Assistant Manager Cochran put up new wooden road signs on the Soda Springs Unit this week. Signs were placed at the major intersections of roads. Most of these locations formerly had signs, but they disappeared over time. More people will be recreating on the Wildlife Area as the weather warms up, and better signage will help visitors with navigation as they explore the outdoors.



Installing New Road Signs

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Landowner Site Visit – Klickitat County: Private Lands Biologist Ferris visited private lands in eastern Klickitat county to observe progress of habitat restoration plantings and discuss re-vegetation germination challenges such as precipitation in this arid region. Ferris was accompanied by local Region 3 Private Lands Biologist to provide additional insight and guidance.



Seedling juniper planted with sheeting that collects water and funnels it towards the plant. This is particularly important in dry regions



Arrowleaf Balsamroot, a flowering plant in the sunflower family and is common in cold, dry areas of this region

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Natural Resources Contest: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen worked with the Washington State Future Farmers of America (FFA) Association to develop several components of the 2021 State Natural Resources Competition, which was being held virtually this year. The competition occurred on April 19, and the Cashmere FFA team took first place at the state competition.

Professional Development: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey (virtually) attended the 19th Wildlife Damage Management Conference. Topics were vast and included damage from ungulates, bears, birds, and zoonotic diseases. Presentations were given by a mixture of graduate students, university professors, and wildlife professionals from state and federal agencies.

REGION 6

Nothing for this installment.