

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

August 16 to 31, 2021

DIVERSITY DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Ferruginous Hawk Nest Surveys: The ferruginous hawk was recently reclassified as an endangered species and occurs in shrub steppe habitats in 11 eastern Washington counties. In 2021, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) conducted nest surveys for the ferruginous hawk in Regions 1, 2, 3, and 5 to determine status. Based on a database of 284 nesting territories, those territories occupied by adults since 2000 were prioritized for survey. Although preliminary survey results indicate that occupancy rates remain low (17%) for the hawk, with only 39 territories occupied out of 230 surveyed. Range-wide surveys would not be possible without the participation of many agency partners and volunteers. The 2021 surveys were made possible with participation from agency partners that included Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS), Hanford, Yakima Training Center, and volunteers that included participants from the Woodland Park Zoo.

District	Territories Surveyed	Territories Occupied	Territories Fledged ≥ 1 young	Number of Young Fledged
2	26	8	4	10
3	26	12	12	35
4	124	11	8	21
5	46	8	4	10
8	6	0	-	-
9	2	0	-	-
Total	230	39	28	77

Monitoring the Effectiveness of Regulations Designed to Benefit Southern Resident Killer Whales: The recovery of the critically endangered population of Southern Resident killer whales (SRKW) has received much attention and support at local, state, federal and non-governmental levels in recent years, and WDFW has played many roles in that recovery effort. One aspect is regulation of small activity around SRKW. This included restrictions around speed and proximity of small vessels in 2019, and development of the Commercial Whale Watching Licensing Program in 2021. Wildlife Diversity, in cooperation with the Director’s Office, is working to evaluate the new rules and their effectiveness on SRKW behavior and health. There are many interacting stressors affecting the population, so teasing out any single cause-effect relationship is nearly impossible. We are actively designing research and compiling data to address this complicated question.

Providing Education and Outreach

Birds, Bikes, & Burgers Event: WDFW staff members, Seward Park Audubon Center, and Bike Works participated in an event that took Seattle locals on a bike ride to view birds. We showcased how biking can be an accessible and affordable way to connect to wildlife close to home, while also connecting participants to local partners they can utilize for resources and skill-building. The feedback for this event was extremely positive!

Top Two Demographic Survey Responses:	
<u>What is your birding skill level?</u> 44% – Usually view birds at home 35% – I have been birding once or twice	
<u>Age</u> 35% – 36-45 23% – 26-35	<u>Race</u> 43% – Asian 39% – White

Post Event Survey:
100% – felt “more confident finding local resources about birding” 75% – felt “more confident finding local resources to rent or repair a bike” – the remaining 25% felt “about the same” 100% – felt the event was helpful for them

Watchable Wildlife Grant Program: This was created to support wildlife viewing opportunities and foster an appreciation for stewardship of wildlife. Funds to support the Washington Watchable Wildlife Grant come from the [Wild on Washington: Eagle license plate](#), one of WDFW’s [specialized license plates](#). We received 56 proposals!

LANDS DIVISION

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Water Access Agreement: Lands Division staff members are working on a water access agreement in Pierce County. Since this county's water access areas may soon be managed by Region 6, there is a two-region Approval Sheet happening.

Peninsula Trails Coalition Project: A letter of support for the Peninsula Trails Coalition project to build recreational facilities on Jefferson Land Trust property has been worked on by Lands Division staff members. The letter was written from a regional perspective since Division Manager Wilkerson is on leave. The letter involved our legislative affairs office, which was an opportunity to bring them up to speed on real estate processes.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Acquisition Projects: The Acquisition Team received letters of intent from landowners on three projects in Regions 2 and 3, which allows us to move forward with our appraisals and other due diligence. The Acquisition Team received appraisal reports for two acquisitions in Region 3 and is preparing to order appraisals on an acquisition and a conservation easement (CE) in Region 6. An offer was presented in Region 5 but was not accepted.

Grazing Permits: Range Ecologist Burnham completed visual obstruction monitoring on Big Bend Wildlife Area and summarized ecological integrity data. In addition, he conducted the third-round of 2021 grazing monitoring on the Teanaway Community Forest leases and notified the grazing committee and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) of the results.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Biologist Burnham met Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Hughes in the field to review grazing permit administration procedures. Together they also began a Grazing Evaluation Framework process to assess the potential benefits, risks, and costs of grazing proposed by a member of the public. The Evaluation was forwarded to division and region management.

City of Tacoma Contract to Treat Flett Ponds: Biologists Heimer and Nunez treated swamp marshpepper in Ponds 1-3 at Flett Ponds. They did this over two days, using a canoe and using 2,4-D (herbicide) under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit. Heimer returned 4 days after treatment and paddled Pond 3 to look at coverage and preliminary symptoms. Heimer collected marshpepper samples to try different herbicides on.

Lake Management District Meetings: Biologist Heimer attended the North and Steel Lake Management District meetings via Zoom. He addressed a question from the North Lake meeting and found a phytoplankton taxonomist to identify an epiphytic algae that is covering much of macrophytes in the lake, concerning the board members. Heimer sent the contact information and sampling methods to Emile Ancelot, the Federal Way Lake Management District coordinator.

Weed Treatments: The Puget Sound Weed Crew treated weeds at Debays, Jensen, and Fir Island Farms. They also surveyed for butterfly bush and treated knotweed along the Skagit River, treated cattail at the Steamboat site, and surveyed the Milltown habitat plantings from 2020. The crew surveyed and treated *Spartina anglica* with the Skagit Weed Board at multiple locations. Biologist Zimmerman and Natural Resources Technician Noteboom assisted the European Green Crab team with trapping efforts in Drayton Harbor, using the airboat for three days.

The Willapa Weed Crew also treated knotweed at Satsop Ponds and Fry Creek for Grays Harbor Public Utilities District (PUD) under contract. They surveyed and treated *Spartina* in Willapa River meadow from the highway to Tower Slough, where nothing was found. They also surveyed and treated from Tower Slough towards Johnson Slough, where one plant was found.

Prescribe Fire Teams: Teams are preparing for fall burns. Staff members are also assisting state wildfire suppression efforts under an interagency agreement with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This allows team members to receive valuable fire suppression experience and advance fire qualifications while contributing to suppression, during a period where state suppression capacity is spread thin.

Providing Education and Outreach

Pierce County Library Teen Volunteer League: Program Specialist Trenda was interviewed by the Pierce County Library's Teen Volunteer League about his job at the Department, his work history, and his education history. The Teen Volunteer League allows young people to conduct interviews with individuals and learn more about the variety of career paths available. Trenda discussed what brought him to the department, what his daily responsibilities look like, and what makes him stay with WDFW over other organizations or state agencies.

Northwest Youth Corps: Program Specialist Trenda and Environmental Education Coordinator Althausen visited the Capitol Land Trust NW Youth Corps group to talk about natural resource career options and public land jobs and responsibilities. They discussed job skills, various positions within the department, and how natural resource agencies have changed over the past few decades. They also answered questions about WDFW and public lands in Washington.

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Wildfire Risk Management: Section Manager Dahmer coordinated input from a cross-program team to develop WDFW Staff Protective Measures to Reduce Fire Danger. Measures correspond to wildfire danger levels designated by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and are intended for use by WDFW staff members, contractors, and volunteers when working on WDFW lands. Dahmer presented the package to the Executive Management Team (EMT), receiving direction to add content including roles and responsibilities, a communication plan, and training requirements. Dahmer also coordinated weekly meetings to review existing fires, fire risk, fire suppression capacity, and land use restrictions implemented by DNR, USFS, and others to discuss any needed wildlife area unit closures, where closed units can be reopened, and any proposed changes to WDFW's land use restrictions currently in place.

Coordinated work to revise WDFW's day use only rule expanding allowable hours of use from 6:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. in order to allow archery hunters to get set up earlier in the morning and stay later.

Bonneville Power Administration Fund Distribution: Vegetation Ecologist Merg coordinated work to distribute new Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) mitigation dollars to eight wildlife areas. A large portion of the funds will go toward the increase in indirect dollars required for grant management. Additional dollars will be used for habitat monitoring efforts and to purchase equipment for habitat restoration.

Lands 20/20, Land Acquisition Strike Team, and More: Real Estate Administrative Assistant Coffman is working on the Lands 20/20 policy and procedure and revitalizing the Land Acquisition Strike Team. Coffman also developed the monitoring report for Real Estate Manager Edwards' presentation to the Habitat and Lands Coordinating Group.

Other

Border Patrol Request: Region 2 Lands Agent Buck investigated a request from the Border Patrol to put a communications tower on land acquired with Section 6 federal funding. This has been determined to trigger a conversion of the federal funding. Response provided to Border Patrol with a request to look for alternative sites.

Landowner Request: Region 4 is working through a request from two adjacent landowners whose properties appear to be burdened with a streambank fishing easement. Program Specialist Belson and Property & Acquisition Specialist Woodruff have performed research and determined the former owner of the properties could not legally grant the easement due to the diking district superior rights. It will be going through an extinguishment process.

Land Trust Request: Region 6 Lands Agent Beals received a request from a land trust who is buying adjacent property to WDFW with Recreation Conservation Office (RCO) funding. Land trust is requesting an existing road easement (through WDFW property) be extinguished, per RCO request. This request must be investigated as this easement provides legal access to the property and would have a drastic negative effect on the property if extinguished. Beals also has five Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) projects requesting permits for highway work in Clallam, Pacific, Grays Harbor, and Mason counties.

Gloyd Seeps Unit Solutions: Regional Director Livingston continues to work with the Bureau of Reclamation to find a solution to their water delivery plan on the Gloyd Seeps Unit (it's called the "feed route") that doesn't put WDFW into conversion on several RCO and PR grants. Lands Agent Buck and Acquisition Specialist Woodruff are using original homestead and range riding patents to prove to the Bureau of Reclamation that they already have the easements they need, known as the ditches and canals reservation.

State Parks Negotiation: Region 2 Lands Agent Buck has an interesting partnership with State Parks at the Nunnally and Lenice Lakes Access Area parking lots. State Parks has offered to maintain the sites if they can serve double duty as trailheads for their Palouse to Cascades trail system. Chad has drafted an agreement and will begin negotiating with State Parks now that this concept has been approved by the Lands Division manager.

Issuing Permits: Region 1 Lands Agent Ploof is issuing yet another summertime permit on the Wooten Wildlife Area to the U.S. Forest Service so that they can set up camp to fight wildfire. Region 3 Lands Agent Carbary is working through the approval process for a restoration permit on the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area for a contractor working for the Yakama Nation, who is an agency partner.

Agency Hydrogeologist: Program Specialist Knudsen (RES Water Rights) is doing a very comprehensive job of talking with staff members from the Habitat, Fish, and CAMP Programs to build the case for hiring a hydrogeologist for the agency. With a hydrogeologist, the hatcheries and wildlife areas would be able to estimate their water use and understand the groundwater and surface water contributions to that use. This is going to be necessary if the agency is going to be able to protect its water rights because the agency can't meter its use in many areas. Knudsen is also sorting out the agency's water shares in the Chewuch Canal Company to develop a comprehensive picture of how WDFW has used the water since our acquisition in 2005. In addition, she is looking into how our rights affect those of State Parks at Pearrygin Lake.

Potential Olympia Hatchery: Program Specialist Knudsen and Property & Acquisition Specialist Beals are assisting the Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) with a project to investigate the potential for a new hatchery near an east Olympia housing development. CAMP is at the stage of applying for a water right permit. It is not yet known whether the site will be feasible for a hatchery given the nearby housing.

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Pre-Season Deer Surveys: Biologists Prince and Turnock completed the 2021 pre-season evening deer surveys. August surveys are conducted to get buck-to-doe ratios for Game Management Units (GMUs) 105-121. Biologists Atamian, Lowe, Westerman, and Gaston along with several Master Hunter volunteers completed the first month of pre-season surveys in District 2 that are similar to District 1. The August surveys are conducted to get buck-to-doe ratios; surveys will be run again in September to evaluate the ratios.



Mixed group of white-tailed deer in GMU 124



Mule deer bucks spotted during pre-season surveys in Lincoln and Whitman counties

Dead Deer Reports: Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock responded to multiple reports of dead and dying deer in Stevens County. Biological samples were taken from multiple deer in the Colville, Kettle Falls, Rice, and Fruitland area. The likely cause is bluetongue and/or Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD), but we are awaiting lab results to confirm.

Biologists Atamian, Lowe, and Westerman, and Ungulate Research Scientist Devivo responded to multiple reports of dead and dying white-tailed deer in Spokane, Lincoln, and Whitman counties. EHD has been confirmed in multiple locations and bluetongue in one location. We are awaiting lab results on several more samples but expect them to come back positive. The largest outbreak is currently centered around the town of Colfax in Whitman County where we have around 150 dead deer reported.



White-tail buck that is assumed to have died from EHD, still awaiting confirmation from the lab

Pheasant Brood Survey: Biologists Atamian, Lowe, Westerman, and Gaston completed three runs, each of two pheasant brood routes for the multi-state pheasant brood survey that Washington is participating in. Very few broods were seen on either route. On the best day, five broods were observed.



Pheasant hen and brood hiding in the grass during a roadside brood survey

Townsend Bat Colony: Biologists Atamian and Lowe visited the Eloika Lake colony for the biennial count but were disappointed to find no bats were present at the colony. We hope that this is just a product of the unseasonably warm weather we have been experiencing with the smoke. Several myotis colonies have also broken up early this year, presumably for this same reason. We will check the colony again in 2022 rather than wait two years to confirm it is still active.

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Bear Complaint: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb assisted Officer Slusher in addressing a bear complaint in Walla Walla County. Attempts to haze a large black bear boar away from an occupied barnyard were unsuccessful and the elderly property owners were risking their own personal safety to care for their numerous animals. With the assistance of Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley, a disabled hunter was contacted to harvest the bear from the barnyard area. The elderly property owners and the disabled hunter were appreciative of the coordination to address the matter.

Deer Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb spoke with a producer about damage they were experiencing in their commercial crop and wanted to receive kill permits. The requirements of a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) were discussed with the producer. The producer was not comfortable with the reasonable public hunting access requirements of a DPCA but stated they would call back if they changed their mind.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb also met with a Walla Walla County producer to document deer damage to strawberry fields. The producer employs numerous non-lethal deterrents, including a well-built electric fence. While the fence effectively keeps mule deer off the strawberry fields, white-tailed deer appear determined to go through the fence regardless of getting shocked. Kill permits were issued to assist the producer in saving their already drought stressed plants.

Cattle Producer Contact: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade continued speaking with most of the producers in Garfield and Asotin counties this week. Wade shared information regarding known wolf activity and recent possible sightings. No issues were reported by producers, but some did express difficulties with range riding activities due to fire area closures. Wade also assisted a producer with submitting a sensitive sharing agreement.

Cloverland Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade spoke with multiple producers in the Cloverland area this week to assure them that WDFW is taking steps to address what could be a worse than normal damage year due to loss of habitat to wildfires in the area. Wade and the producers are working to lay the groundwork for a coordinated effort to address the loss of habitat from the Lick Creek and Green Ridge fires. Wade will also be issuing permits to assist with hazing efforts through the damage season.

Large Canid Tracks: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb was contacted by a Walla Walla County sheep producer about possible wolf tracks around their pasture area. Before Kolb arrived on scene, the producer provided an update. The producer had discovered a large dog was hanging around their barnyard area. The dog was wearing a leather collar, but ownership could not be determined, and it eventually dispersed from the area. The producer had never seen the dog before.



A large domestic dog discovered by a producer near their rural sheep livestock operation. The large size of the tracks initially caused the producer to be concerned about a possible wolf in the area

Injured Calf: Staff members investigated a report of an injured calf in Columbia County. Based upon the attack signatures, geographical location of where the calf was discovered, and extent of the injuries examined, a determination of a confirmed wolf depredation was made. The calf is expected to survive its injuries. The producer currently implements numerous deterrent measures in an effort to minimize conflict.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Shrub Steppe Proviso: Biologist Atamian participated in the kick-off meeting for the shrub steppe proviso and had several discussions with other staff members regarding the proviso and its implementation.

Guzzlers: While out checking access signs, Private Lands Supervisor Earl found two guzzlers that were burned in the wildfire in Asotin County. Earl put together a cost sheet to rebuild them and contacted the Mule Deer Foundation for possible assistance with funding.

Providing Education and Outreach

Pend Oreille County Fair: Biologists Prince and Turnock worked with Wolf Biologist Roussin, Public Information Officer Lehman, Conflict Biologist West, and Officer Erickson to provide a booth at the Pend Oreille County Fair. The group focused on bear awareness with an emphasis on grizzly bears. They talked to folks about securing garbage, using bear spray, and identifying black bears and grizzly bears. The display and information were well received by fair participants.

Other

Watchable Wildlife Grant: Biologist Lowe participated on the evaluation committee for WDFW's new Watchable Wildlife Grant Program, including review and scoring of 57 submitted proposals.

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:



*Smoky sunset with the Chickadee Creek Fire in the background east of Tonasket –
Photo by Justin Haug*

Managing Wildlife Populations

Pygmy Rabbit Breeding and Vaccination Effort: Kit capture and release efforts are nearing completion for the year. To date, we have released 33 kits into the Beezley Hills (north) Recovery Area and retained 36 kits for future breeding enclosure stock. Most of the retained kits have been relocated to the newest mobile enclosure that was built back in June. Pending their genetic assessment, some could be relocated again among the existing enclosures to avoid inbreeding between siblings. There are a few remaining kits to be captured and those will occur later in the fall. All the kits captured so far have been vaccinated for rabbit hemorrhagic fever (RHDV2). We additionally administered booster shots to the breeding enclosure adults (who were vaccinated last year as kits). To date, RHDV2 has not been detected yet in Washington, but is present in every other western state, Canada, and Mexico.

Pygmy Rabbit Release Site Expansion: In response to losing much of the pygmy rabbit release sites, formally known as Recovery Emphasis Areas (REA), to wildfire, the recovery team is needing to establish additional release areas to continue reintroductions. Our goal is to reintroduce rabbits into suitable habitat that will be difficult for natural dispersal. Coordinator Gallie has been working with USFWS Biologist Veverka and The Natural Conservancy Land Steward Corinna Hanson to identify the best possible sites. We conducted field site visits to two main areas owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The Rimrock area, which is owned by the Rimrock Meadows Association, is held by TNC in a conservation easement. The second area is also owned by TNC and located in Coyote Canyon. We observed very good-looking habitat in both sites, but logistically the Rimrock site would be the initial focus. Gallie will delineate areas where enclosures/release pens could be established so that cultural resource evaluation can begin. We will additionally have outreach needed to both the Rimrock Meadows Association board and with the grazing lease who actively grazes all these areas.



Possible future pygmy rabbit release area

Fisher Reintroduction Monitoring: Biologist Fitkin responded to two credible and independent reports of two fishers traveling (and play fighting) together in the Hart's Pass area and installed a pair of remote cameras in the vicinity. Two animals traveling together is suggestive of reproduction in the North Cascades, an important measure of project success. To date, no fishers have been photographed but other mustelids including martens, a badger, and a possible mink have made an appearance.



Left to right: Marten and badger – WDFW remote camera

Wolf Monitoring: Biologist Heinlen checked remote cameras within the Beaver Creek wolf territory documenting at least three pups in the pack.



Three pups in the Beaver Creek pack – WDFW Remote Camera

Northern Leopard Frogs: Biologist Rowan spent numerous days completing metamorph surveys at ponds where vegetation removal had taken place over the past two years. Various methods for vegetation removal were used, including prescribed fire, herbicide, and mechanical removal. Potholes reservoir is very low this year and only one of over 18 ponds had any leopard frogs. Most ponds were completely dry or only remnant puddles compared to former years.

Ponds that dry during late summer kills invasive bullfrog tadpoles and fish that are detrimental to our endangered northern leopard frog population. Bull frog tadpoles take two years to go through metamorphosis. These same ponds are used for breeding by northern leopard frogs in the spring and go through metamorphosis within a summer and move out of drying wetlands. A reduction or lack of water in spring and early summer kills leopard frog egg masses and tadpoles.



Four frog ponds that underwent tall emergent vegetation removal over the past 2 years. Non-native invasive common reed (Phragmites) is rapidly invading where remnant patches remain and need to be managed to maintain appropriate habitat – Photos by Ella Rowan

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Waterfowl Banding: District 5 - Biologist Rowan, Technicians Mullen and Pavelchek, and Specialist Wilson spent time baiting, trapping, and banding ducks. We also built new traps, and Rowan purchased additional supplies for trapping. WDFW attempts to trap and band 500 mallards every year, which provides limited information about production, age and sex composition of the local population, migration, dispersal, and eventual harvest. A common problem in recent years has been getting ducks to take bait or enter traps, even with the guidance of our specialist with extensive waterfowl experience. As they say... you can bring a horse to water, but can't make them drink. Thankfully, we have added a trap to a new site that looks very promising and should be ready for trapping beginning August 30.

District 7: Scientific Technician Amy Pavelchek has been working with WDFW's Waterfowl Division and biologists from District 5 to identify and trap potential duck banding locations in Chelan and Douglas counties. This is a new effort for District 7, which is not one of Washington's primary waterfowl hunting destinations and has not traditionally carried out annual waterfowl banding as have many other districts in the state. Capturing and banding ducks prior to the hunting season is an important tool for wildlife managers because the data collected when banded birds are harvested and reported are used to determine annual waterfowl hunting regulations. Technician Pavelchek worked with biologists to build several swim-in traps and place them at potential trapping sites around Douglas County such as Rock Lake, Black Lake, and a couple of other small lakes in the Big Bend Wildlife Area. These were baited for several days before the actual trapping and banding ensued to habituate ducks to swimming into the traps. The primary target and most frequently banded species was the mallard, but biologists also caught and banded ducks from several other species including northern pintail and wood duck.



A male northern pintail – Photo by Amy Pavelchek



A duck trap in Rock Lake in Douglas County – Photo by Amy Pavelchek

Regulated Access Areas: Specialist McPherson continued treatments of Phragmites, Russian olives, and cockleburrs in wetland basins both at Frenchman and Winchester Regulated Access Areas. Seed production in desirable waterfowl forage has increased at both projects over the last week.



Wild Millet starting to head out with seed at Winchester Regulated Access Areas – Photo by C. McPherson

Winchester Regulated Access Area Water Delivery Cleanout: Specialist McPherson coordinated with Quincy Irrigation District to cleanout sediment from the water delivery system that feeds the project. This will significantly help get water to the southern portion of the project allowing for more available wetland habitat, future moist soil management, and increased recreational opportunities.



Delivery ditch cleanout at Winchester Regulated Access Areas – Photo by C. McPherson

Hunter Access Program: Private Lands Biologist Braaten continues reposting hunter access properties within Pearl Hill wildfire boundary. Hundreds of signs need to be replaced, and work is ongoing. Braaten answered several calls over the last few weeks from hunters regarding hunter access on private and public lands as well as wildfire closures on Department of Natural Resources (DNR) lands within Grant and Okanogan counties. Biologist Cook completed some administrative work for the Hunter Access Program including entering Hunt by Reservation information into online systems to make hunts available to the public. Cook completed a 10-year renewal of a Hunter Access contract in Adams County. Cook also started work on making changes to a current Hunter Access agreement including adding about 400 acres. Cook unfortunately cancelled one Hunt by Written Permission contract in Adams County due to landowner’s negative interactions with hunters including some driving into property where only walk-in access was available.

Cook finalized changes to an online form that will be used in a pilot program for collecting hunter information as they enter some Register to Hunt properties and Hunter Harvest data from those sites. Cook will be the point person in Private Lands working to get these forms changed over to administration by Wildlife Science Division.

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Treed Bear Cubs: Specialist Heilhecker received a call regarding two bear cubs that climbed a tree near a house. The cubs had been in the tree for the past 45 minutes “talking” to one another. There was no sow in sight. The reporting party asked if law enforcement was on their way to remove the bears. Specialist Heilhecker explained why the two cubs would not be removed and the best course of action was to keep all people and pets out of the area to allow the bears time to come down on their own. The sow was likely nearby. Heilhecker asked the reporting party to call the next morning if the cubs were still in the tree. She received no further calls regarding the cubs.

Gaggle of Geese: Specialist Heilhecker spoke to a farmer concerned about geese in his hayfield. The farmer stated it was normal to have geese in his field, but it is usually after he harvests his crop. The geese arrived early this year. She suggested a few nonlethal hazing options. She also gave the farmer a contact number for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Wildlife Services since geese are protected under federal laws.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Chickadee Creek and Muckamuck Fires: The Sinlahekin Unit was closed for a week due to the proximity of the Chickadee Creek and Muckamuck fires. The unit has been reopened for day use only. However, smoke from the Chickadee Creek Fire still impacts the area in the early mornings and evenings. The Headquarters has been a great place to watch the helicopters come into Conners Lake to get water for the fire.



Smoke rising from the Chickadee Creek Fire just west of Conners Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area – Photo by Wehmeyer

Sinlahekin and Scotch Creek Wildlife Area Noxious Weed Control Efforts: Sinlahekin staff members continued to treat noxious weeds by hand-pulling and clipping seed heads on Scotch thistle at the Chiliwist Unit. Maintenance Mechanic Boulger also spent some time at the McLoughlin Unit hand pulling patches of wild four o'clock plants (*Mirabilis jalapa*). With the cooler weather and recent rains, Scotch Creek staff members have resumed weed control efforts on the Chesaw Wildlife Unit. Staff members revisited sites that were treated in the spring. Thistle seed heads were pulled and bagged, and rosettes were treated.

Methow Wildlife Area Silver Side Channel Update: Over a year ago, beavers moved into the Silver Side Channel along the Methow River. There were concerns by some fisheries enhancement groups that beavers would diminish the fish habitat and the financial investment they put towards the side channel during a restoration project. After lots of deliberation, WDFW decided to let the beavers remain and enlist the expertise of the Methow Beaver Project (MBP) to help the agency install pond levelers and continually monitor the site for beaver and fish activity. As of last week, fish biologists from WDFW and Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation (MSRF) performed a snorkel survey at Silver Side Channel.

Preliminarily, it was reported that many hundreds of spring chinook and coho parr are utilizing the side channel and the water temperatures appear conducive to support these fish through late summer, which is a huge win during a year of drought and record setting heat waves. It appears likely these same fish may stay through the winter in the side channel, which leads us to believe the beavers haven't just created summer rearing habitat but have also created excellent overwintering habitat. We are awaiting more concrete data from the snorkel survey and may even employ a fall pit tagging effort in the side channel.

Overall, the beavers appear to be doing an excellent job at naturally restoring fish and riparian habitats along the Methow River. A big "thanks" goes out to MSRF and the MBP for their willingness to collaborate, support, and implement WDFW's mission centered around preserving, protecting, and perpetuating fish, wildlife, and ecosystems.

Critical Habitat Acquisition Discussion at Golden Doe Unit: Okanogan Lands Operations Manager Haug met with Methow Wildlife Area Manager Troyer, Acquisitions Specialist Woodruff, and District Biologist Fitkin to discuss the various pending acquisitions in the Methow valley. The group talked about next steps, communication with partners, and pre-acquisition options with landowners. The meeting was helpful in determining management objectives at each site and how best to proceed with each property. These acquisitions are funded through the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) under the Washington Wildlife Recreational Program (WWRP), critical habitat category.

Methow WLA Unit Fire Closure Updates: As of late last week, the Methow Wildlife Area has officially reopened most of the wildlife area that was temporarily closed due to the Cedar Creek and Cub Creek 2 fires. A small portion of the Methow Unit north of the Ramsey Creek campground will remain closed due to continued mop up operations related to the Cub Creek 2 Fire.



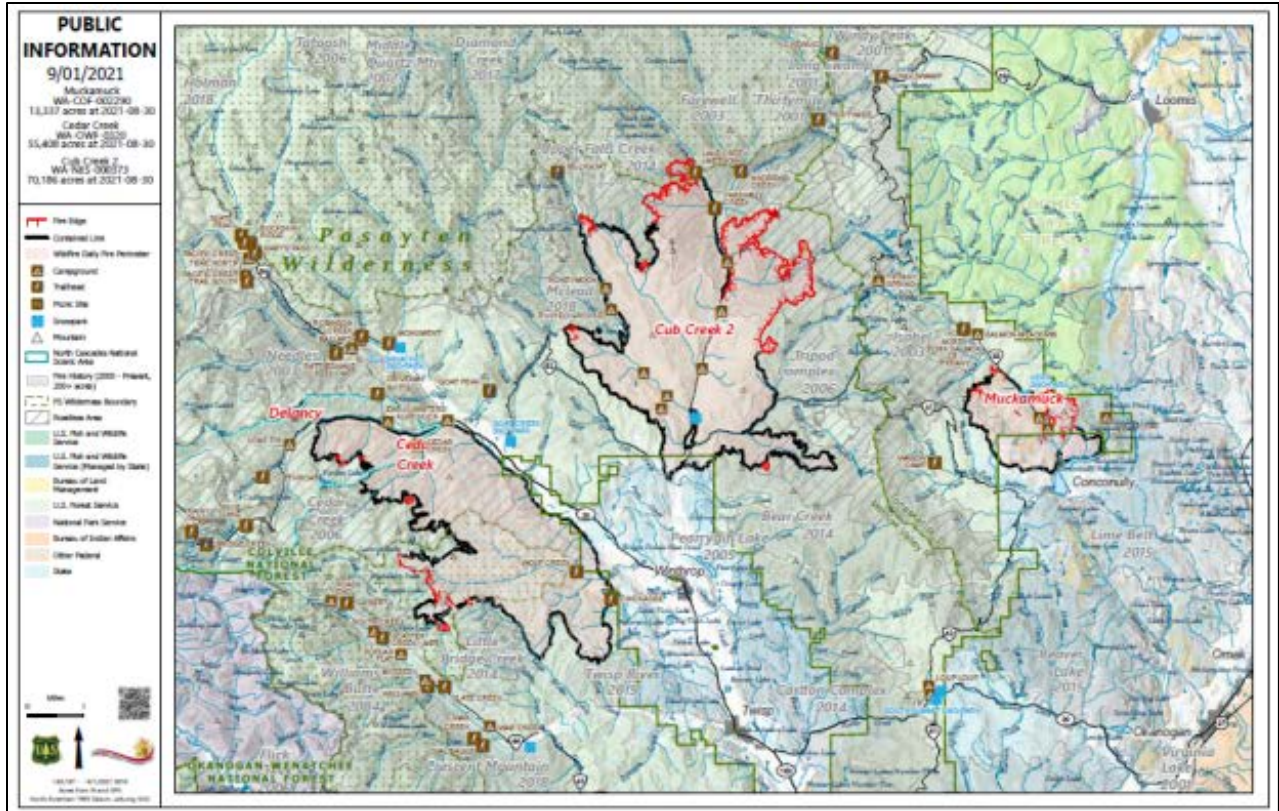
The Cub Creek 2 Fire burnt through several hundred acres of the northern Methow Unit near Ramsey Creek. Although the fire burnt moderately to severely hot in the area, it's likely the recently thinned WDFW lands in Ramsey Creek aided in crews being able to contain the heel of the fire, effectively keeping it from continuing south towards Winthrop. This is another proven case illustrating the benefits of forest restoration in dry pine ecosystems – Photo by Troyer

Okanogan Wildfires: The activity of all five major fires burning in District 6 has finally diminished substantially and none are expected to exhibit significant growth in the foreseeable forecast. The two largest (Cedar Creek and Cub Creek in the Methow) are officially about 75% contained. That said, these fires will likely continue to smolder well into fall. Combined they have burned ~180,000 acres of mostly forested habitat (an additional ~80,000 acres burned on the Okanogan portion of the Colville reservation as well). As large as these fires are, they are only a small fraction of the total acreage burned over the last 22 years. Impacts to wildlife will be difficult to assess until more information on fire intensity is available. As with any wildfire, habitat changes in the next few years to several decades will benefit some species and hurt others. Of immediate concern is the likelihood that several thousand acres of occupied lynx habitat have been rendered unsuitable for the next 25-30 years. We have now lost more than 50% of the high-quality lynx habitat in the Okanogan Lynx Management zone in the last 20 years. The fires have also burned considerable tracts of occupied western gray squirrel habitat in the Upper Methow, and this follows massive losses of similar habitat in the 2014-15 fires.

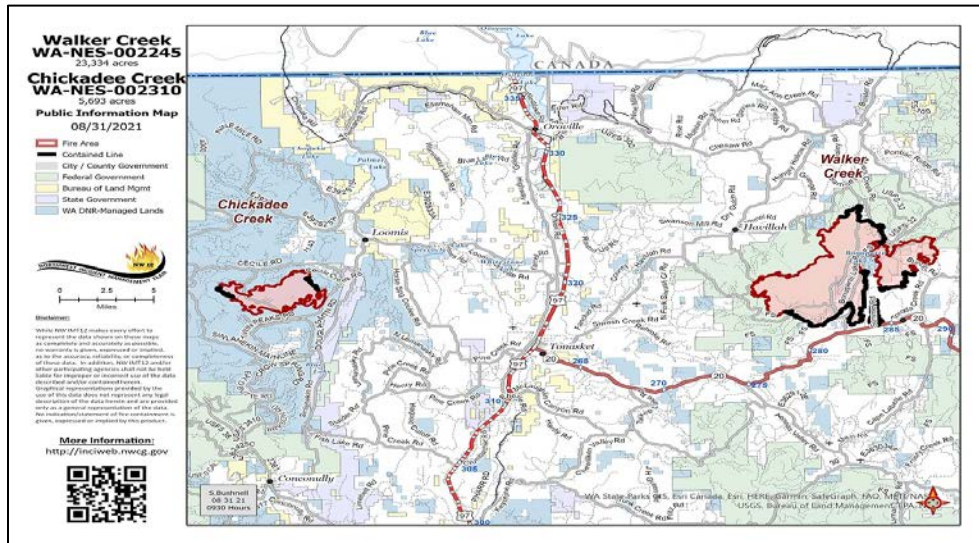
On the upside, the next few years will be a bonanza for several woodpecker species, and other species like ungulates and bears that prefer early-to-mid-seral vegetation will benefit for many years as soon as the forbs and shrubs return. Significant access closures associated with these fires are still in place so be sure to check with the appropriate land management agency for up-to-date information if you plan on recreating in District 6 this fall.

Wildfire and access closure information links:

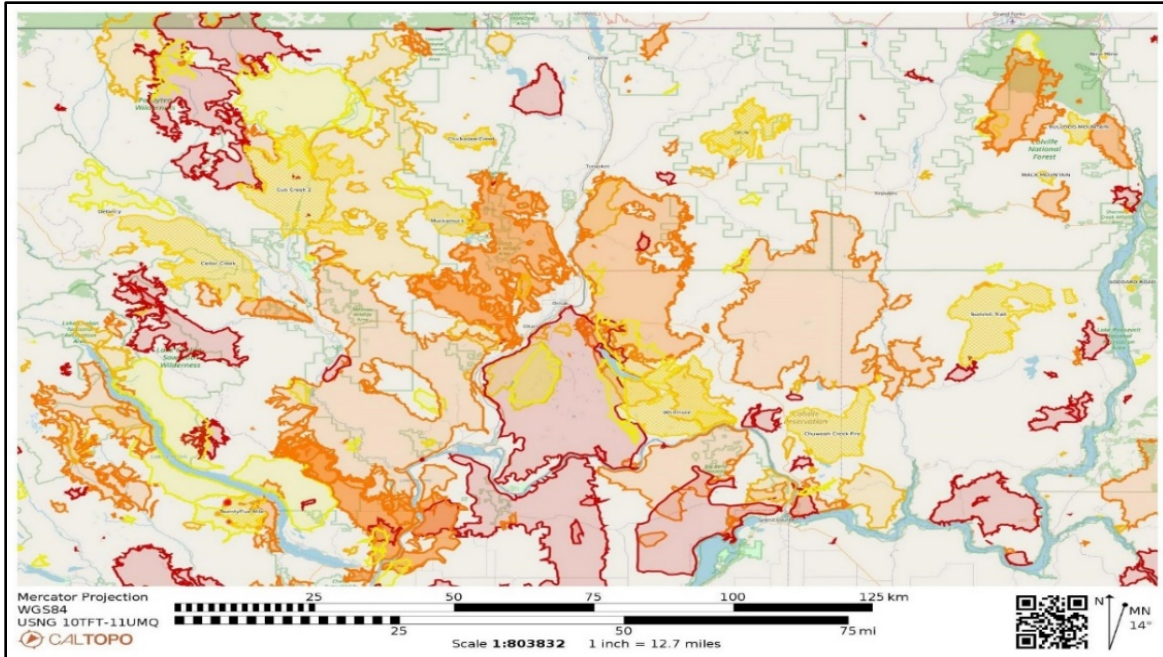
- [USFS Interactive fire closure map](#)
- [WDFW wildfire information webpage](#)
- [Okanogan National Forest, Methow Valley Ranger District](#)
- [Tonasket Ranger District, Colville National Forest](#)
- [DNR Regulated Fire Restrictions](#)
- [InciWeb Current Fire Status](#)



InciWeb map of the Cedar Creek, Cub Creek, Muckamuck, and Chickadee fires (09-01-21)



InciWeb map of the Walker Creek and Chickadee wildfires (8-31-21)



Composite map of the wildfires in an around Okanogan County over the last 20+ years

Emergency Grazing on Scotch Creek: Scotch Creek staff members installed a charge controller to the Happy Hill emergency grazing lease stock tank solar pump. The controller will allow the pump to use a 12-volt battery to deliver water during times when the sun isn't providing enough energy to power the pump. Keeping the stock tank full is beneficial, as it keeps the livestock disturbed across the landscape. Staff members also contacted Eder Emergency Grazing Lessor Wahl about cattle being in the Eder life estate. The cattle were removed from the life estate and returned them to the North Grazing Allotment. Both these temporary permits were issued to provide neighboring and partnering producers relief pasture due to the Cub Creek 2 and Palmer Mountain fires (2020) respectively.

Conservation Easement Monitoring near Mazama: Land Operations Manager Haug, Methow Wildlife Area Manager Troyer, Acting Region 2 Lands Agent Buck, and District Biologist Fitkin met on site of a conservation easement to inspect recent findings by a partnering organization. The group monitoring a significant portion of the property worked on a report describing what was observed. The easement was purchased in the late '90s to preserve riparian habitat in the upper Methow River.

Scotch Creek Water Birch Planting: Staff members spent time weeding water birch deciduous shrubs that were planted in the fall of 2020. Despite drought conditions the shrubs are alive and robust. Water birch, when mature, provide a valuable winter food source for sharp-tail grouse.



Photo by Dupont

2021 State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement Conservation Reserve Program: Private Lands Biologist Braaten assisted Private Lands Biologist Baarstad on writing 31 State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) plans in Lincoln County. Currently, 80% of conservation job sheets and plan documents have been signed by enrolled landowners and the remaining will be before the September 7, 2021 deadline. Braaten marked out several polygons for SAFE CRP cooperators field work this upcoming fall. Biologist Cook worked on recommendations to protect pygmy rabbits and their habitat in a few CRP fields that may be renewed in the next few years. These fields are in a CRP program that does not require sagebrush and may normally require some shrub removal to promote greater grass densities. These fields have some pygmy rabbit use directly adjacent and alterations to normal operations should be considered to leave sagebrush and allow for future expansion.



Douglas County SAFE CRP - Private Lands Biologist Braaten completed marking boundaries in several fields for landowners to begin field work this fall to reseed old existing CRP fields –

Photo by Eric Braaten

Jameson Lake Phragmites Treatment: Wildlife area staff members assisted access staff members in treating a small infestation of invasive phragmites (common reed) at the Jameson Lake fishing access area. This aggressive noxious weed was beginning to establish itself along a short portion of the access road. The treatment was performed in conjunction with the West Foster Creek Conservation District, who had secured a federal grant and was treating phragmites occurring on the federal and private ownerships of the lake.



Jameson Lake Phragmites (common reed). Note the runner extending onto the roadway, this is one method the plant utilizes to spread. Growth nodes capable of rooting and establishing new plants occur approximately every 8-10” – Photo by Cole

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Crater Lake and Frenchman Hills Garbage Cleanup: Specialist McPherson coordinated with Manger Eidson and Access program to have a Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew assist in the cleanup of Crater Lake Public Access Area west of Quincy. Access program has been having problems with substantial garbage dumping and the WCC crew took a trailer to the location for cleanup. Specialist McPherson also found two areas in Frenchman Hills that have large amounts of tires dumped. The WCC crew headed down there after cleaning up Crater Lake to fill the remaining space.



WCC crew doing great work on the Wildlife Area – Photo by WCC crew

Other



Mule deer buck on the Chesaw Unit – Photo by Dupont



Recovering shrub steppe following a much-needed rain in the Tunk Valley east of Riverside –
Photo by Justin Haug



Golden-mantled ground squirrel – Photo by S. Fitkin



Turtle enjoying the sun on Evergreen Reservoir – Photo by C. McPherson



White-fronted geese over Winchester Reserve – Photo by C. McPherson

REGION 3

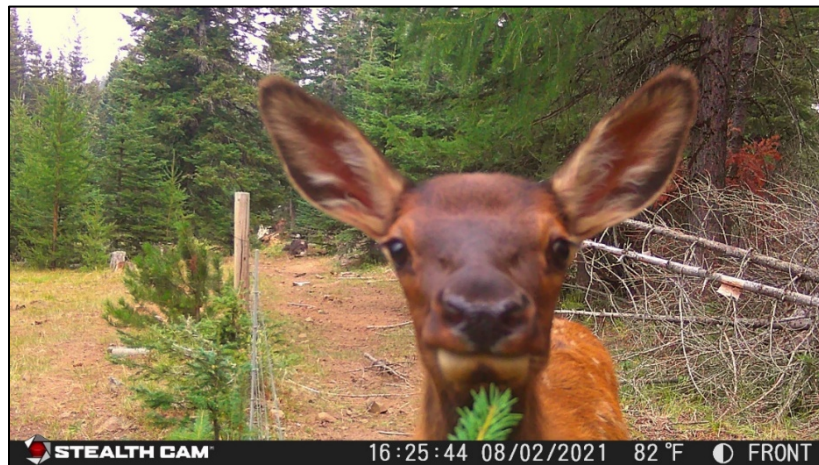
HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Predators and Prey on the Colockum Wildlife Area: A hunter sent the Colockum Wildlife Area manager some interesting trail camera photos from the Colockum Pass area this month. One camera captured photos of a cougar and an elk calf just days apart. If that calf could talk!



Cougar captured on a trail camera near Colockum Pass



Elk calf on the same trail camera, five days later

Duck Banding: Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz and Statewide Waterfowl Specialist Wilson continue to band ducks in District 8. To date, only the Moxee site is active and relatively few ducks have been present. About 150 mallards have been banded and >90% were juveniles. The youth season is late this year (October), so time remains to try to meet goals.



A mallard “mooning” the camera

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Bighorn Sheep Hunting Orientation: District 8 Wildlife Biologists Oates and Bernatowicz and Ungulate Specialist Moore hosted an orientation meeting for permitted bighorn sheep hunters in the Yakima Canyon to help with ongoing management of a pneumonia outbreak. Hunters with ewe permits will assist management efforts by reducing the overall population and targeting uncollared individuals that have not been tested for the bacteria but still may be carriers. Participating hunters will also swab the nasal passage and take a blood sample from their harvested sheep, which will be tested for pneumonia presence and antibodies, respectively. Biologists Oates and Bernatowicz are responding to abundant requests from hunters for information on the upcoming hunting season. The majority of calls are about fires and closures. WDFW does not control access to USFS or DNR lands, so most advice has been to monitor other agencies web sites for updates. The Schneider Springs fire closure area is currently changing weekly.

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Ongoing Crop Damage: District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel received calls about crop damage from elk in the Park Creek and Badger Pocket areas. This is an ongoing problem, and we are looking at possibilities of deploying hunters to deter elk. Appraisals in preparation for damage claims for have been completed for several fields.

Calls about crop damage from elk in Tieton, Tampico, Nile, and Naches have also been received. Various resolutions have been discussed with landowners, including issuing damage permits. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel attended a site visit to Simcoe State Park to discuss issues with aggressive bears with Yakama Nation staff members and WDFW enforcement. The park is leased Yakama Nation Land with the Reservation Boundary. WDFW does not have management responsibility on such properties. Advice on dealing with the bears was given.

Wolf Packs: Wolf activity has been focused in routine summer areas in District 8. Each pack is staying in its core territory and appear clustered around what may be rendezvous areas. Livestock producers have reported no issues for this cycle. Both range riders are active and have reported no issues.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Legoman Fence: The Wenas Wildlife Area staff members continued to work on building one mile of boundary fence along the newly acquired Legoman property. The team has been working on putting up this fence throughout this past summer. Manager Hughes continued to coordinate with adjacent landowners bordering the fence to explain the reasoning behind adding the boundary fence and discuss future management plans for the unit. Hughes followed up with a couple of landowners who want gates built into the boundary fence to be used as a fire escape. After coordinating with the Department of Natural Resources on plans to abandon specific roads, assessing fire escape routes and seeing current use on closed roads, no gates will be installed. Hughes followed up with the two landowners who were wanting gates installed in the fence.



Walkthrough gate as part of the newly constructed fence at the Legoman Unit

McCabe Habitat Restoration: Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Hughes, Assistant Manager Taylor, and Technician Kass met with a contractor to review management needs at the McCabe fields. About 30 acres was reseeded fall 2020 to a native grass and forb mix. Overall, the grasses sprouted on the majority of the 30 acres. A Russian thistle problem continues to persist at this site, but after years of management the thistle is starting to be controlled. There is about 16 acres currently in fallow that Kass has been managing. A plan was developed to broadcast seed throughout the 30-acre field to fill in sections where restoration plantings were unsuccessful and to drill seed the additional 16 acres this coming fall. The thistle will be mowed down this fall to prepare for herbicide treatment in spring of 2022. The site will be sprayed twice for thistle. The overall goal will be to leave the site alone after about two more years of thistle control. As the native grasses continue to develop, they should successfully compete with the Russian thistle.



Native grasses developing at McCabe through Russian thistle

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart and Natural Resources Technician Blore disced the Ragland field on Taneum Creek to eliminate scattered weeds. The field will be planted in the fall of 2022.



Natural Resource Technician Blore performing mechanical weed control at Ragland

Natural Resources Technician Blore picked up t-post and wire from the Whiskey Dick unit of the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area. The dump trailer made easy work for offloading at recycle yard.



Old wire removed from the Whiskey Dick WLA

Colockum Wildlife Area staff members spent time this month on boundary fence repairs, installing steel barrels, and filling the barrels with rock to support the fence in shallow soil areas.



Natural Resource Worker Haynes filling rock barrels on Colockum Wildlife Area

Colockum staff members also assisted a Department of Natural Resources grazing lease with removal of his cattle from West Bar on the Colockum Wildlife Area. Since the cattle were in such a remote area it takes riders two days to find and herd them home with horses. Colockum staff members assisted by boating camping gear to West Bar so the riders could spend the night.

Providing Education and Outreach

Vulture Nesting: As part of a local outreach to the public in the Kittitas Valley, Biologist B. Oates and Regional Habitat Program Assistant Manager L. Torrey checked a camera trap that was set to monitor nesting activity of vultures near the entrance of a cave on private land north of Ellensburg. Very little is known about the nesting behavior of vultures. The camera collected ample footage of an adult pair of vultures, as well as interactions with two nestlings.



Injured Deer: District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel responded to two injured deer reported in Cle Elum. One deer had been dispatched and removed by an unknown party. The second had a broken rear leg but was still mobile and left in place. Wetzel also responded to two injured elk calls in Cle Elum. One elk was caught in a fence but freed itself after the owner cut the fence. The second died before arrival from being caught in a fence and was removed from the location and brought to the Bullfrog Department of Transportation pit. Wetzel responded to two calls regarding injured elk near Yakima. Both were caught on fences but freed themselves.

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Sun Valley Shooting Park: L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart and Natural Resource Technician Blore took a few practice rounds with the Wildlife Area firearm at the Sun Valley Shooting Park in preparation for certification in September.



Natural Resources Technician Blore at the firing range

Deck Replacement: L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart and Natural Resources Technician Blore replaced the deck and fixed the wiring on the WLA 18' tilt trailer.



Left to right: 18' tilt trailer and Natural Resources Technician Blore repairing lights on 18' tilt trailer after new deck was installed

Other

Army Corps Facility Removal: A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers microwave facility was removed this month from the Colockum Wildlife Area. This facility was located at the top of Mission Ridge on Department of Fish and Wildlife Lands. The Army Corps had no further need for the facility, so it was removed, and the site was rehabilitated.



Left to right: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers radio facility building on Mission Ridge and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers radio antenna – Colockum Wildlife Area



Radio facility site after removal – Colockum Wildlife Area

New Kiosk and General Maintenance: Wenas Wildlife Area Technicians Stultz and Kass completed several projects addressing public outreach needs, safety concerns, and public use on the Wenas Wildlife Area. Stultz and Kass replaced the kiosk at the Buffalo Parking Area. They also filled in a hole from an old scale off Sheep Company Road. The area was filled in with gravel to address the safety issue of the public potentially walking or driving over the scale and falling through rotting wood.



Replaced kiosk at Buffalo Parking Area

Black Bear Sighting: L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Technician Tyler captured trail cam photos of a black bear cooling off in the Quilomene Wildlife Area's Parke Creek water trough.



A Parke Creek black bear beating the heat

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Sea Duck Demographic Study – Capture Preparation: District Biologists Hamer and C. Moore, Waterfowl Survey and Sea Duck Specialist Evenson, and Waterfowl Section Manager Spragens participated in a training and scouting day for the teams upcoming efforts to capture molting surf scoters on Padilla Bay.



Biologists Evenson and Hamer deploy capture nets for molting scoters during a crew practice day north of Anacortes

Sea Duck Demographic Study – Observational Molt Surveys: Region 4 staff members planned on assisting the Waterfowl Section with scoter captures during the month of August. Unfortunately, the arrival of molting scoters was delayed this year and there were fewer molting scoters in the area than during previous years. Because of this, molt scoter captures were cancelled for the year and staff members instead conducted observational sea duck surveys to document the year's delayed molt progression and low molting scoter abundance. District Biologists M. Hamer and C. Moore assisted Sea Duck Specialist Evenson with the surveys. The team conducted surveys in Saratoga Passage, Padilla Bay, Samish Bay, Bellingham Bay, Lummi Bay, near Cherry Point, and in the vicinity of Smith and Minor Islands. During the surveys, the crew photographed the scoter flocks for accurate scoter counts and for later analysis of molting sex and species ratios.



Molting surf scoters in Padilla Bay

Duck Banding: Wildlife Biologist C. Moore started scouting and baiting wetland sites in Whatcom County as part of the statewide duck banding effort. The banding process involves capturing wild birds and marking them with a uniquely numbered leg band. The bander records the band number, date, and location of banding, the birds age and gender, and other information, and sends that information to the Bird Banding Laboratory. Information from bands subsequently found are reported to the Bird Banding Laboratory. Banders may then learn about the characteristics of individuals and populations including movement, lifespan, survival, and other parameters. Mallards are the species targeted for this project, however, all species captured are banded.

Mountain Goat Surveys: District Wildlife Biologists Waddell, Hamer, and C. Moore and Ungulate Specialist W. Moore conducted helicopter surveys of mountain goats in the Mt. Baker and Boulder River survey units. The survey results will provide an estimate of the mountain goat population in the two areas as well as a ratio of the number of adults to kids.



A scenic view from the helicopter while surveying one of the Mt. Baker mountain goat survey blocks – Photo by R. Waddell



Sunrise over Baker Lake during an early morning flight to survey mountain goats near Mount Baker – Photo by R. Waddell

Bat Acoustic Monitoring: District Wildlife Biologists Waddell and Moore conducted acoustic monitoring for bats at four sites in Skagit County. Similarly, District Biologists Anderson and Smith conducted acoustic efforts in King County. This effort was part of the [North American Bat Monitoring Program](#), a multi-national, multi-agency coordinated bat monitoring program across North America. This collaborative bat monitoring program is made up of an extensive community of partners across the continent who use standardized protocols to gather data that allows assessment of population status and trends, informs responses to stressors, and sustains viable populations. A detector is left overnight at each site and records the acoustic signatures of each bat species within proximity to the detector.

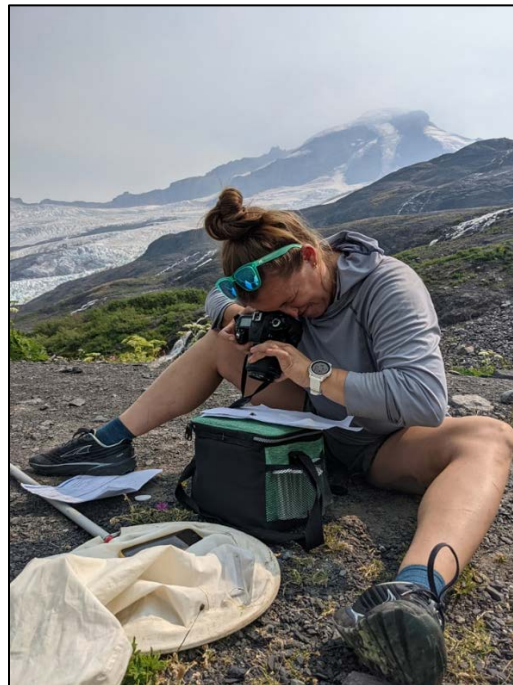


A bat acoustic detector is elevated above a marsh in Skagit County

Bumble Bee Surveys: Biologist Anderson surveyed for bees in Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area as part of a collaboration between the United States Geological Survey, Xerces Society, and many other state wildlife management partners. The survey is part of a species assessment effort for the western bumble bee. No western bumblebees were located but several others photographed will need confirmation of identification.



Possible two-form bumble bee found at 4600' in late August



Biologist C. Moore photographing a captured bumblebee with Mount Baker in the background

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Leque Island Vegetation Management: Wildlife and Habitat program staff members had a site visit at Leque Island to discuss ways to improve access for the WDFW's Noxious Weed Crew on the site. The crew monitors and manages invasive vegetation on the site, which is especially important at new restoration areas as native vegetation is still establishing.



An aerial shot of Leque Island taken in late August – Photo by Lindsey Desmul

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

North American Bat Monitoring: Similar to last year, District 16 biologists encountered challenges with securing permission to simply drive across private timber land ownership for deploying North American Bat detectors in their assigned cell. Some ownerships had changed since last year and permission to deploy two detectors in the north half of the cell was not obtained. Fortunately, more map review, contacting other private landowners, and getting Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff members involved finally led to implementing the project last week. The new Olympic Peninsula DNR Wildlife Biologist Nordstrom was instrumental in this success. She was able to obtain needed gate keys from Rayonier and Global Pacific timber companies in order to access three DNR parcels where detectors were deployed. The fourth detector was deployed on a private parcel within the cell where a small maternity colony was documented last season. Biologist Ament and DNR Biologist Nordstrom did spend August 19 reviewing road access and checking for suitable locations to deploy the detectors. They deployed the North American Bat (also referred to as NA Bat) acoustic detectors on August 26 and retrieved them the following day. There was some light rain during the evening but not enough to require the detectors to remain out another night. Biologist Ament will compile all data and submit to White-nose Syndrome Specialist Tobin.



Left to right: Nordstrom with bat detector at pond and NA Bat detector at new DNR creek location

Bat Colony Exit Counts: Biologist Ament served as lead by organizing volunteers and participating in conducting bat exit counts of known maternity colonies within the district during defined survey periods in June and July. The previous protocol of using two observers per exit was no longer implemented for the surveys. Fortunately, Fish Biologist Ollerman provided assistance for many of the surveys and dedicated volunteers were willing to help conduct surveys. The emergence counts were conducted to monitor the limited number of known bat colonies within Clallam and Jefferson counties. A total of five known bat colonies were surveyed:

1) **Three Rivers** on July 11, 2021. A total of 46 bats were counted. This number was higher than the 10 counted last season but significantly lower than bat numbers observed in the fall of 2020. The main roost structure was modified by the landowner last winter. Bats were excluded but have found a few new roost locations in other structures.

2) **Colville Road** on July 12, 2021. A total of 20 bats were counted compared to 77 last season. This landowner is also excluding bats from his roof and has had good success at having bats move into bat boxes on the residence.

3) **Hoko Bunkhouse** on July 12, 2021. Landowner reported that winds had blown some of the roof off structure since last season. No bats observed where seen in structure last year. However, Biologist Ament and landowner counted a total of 47 bats exit the structure from three areas (door and windows) on the front of the bunkhouse.

4) **Dungeness Fish Hatchery** on July 15, 2021. A total of 206 bats were counted using eight observers. Numbers were slightly higher than last years count. This site always presents a challenge due to the fact that the bats exit from a tremendous number of openings in the roof. No bats exited from usual exit sites along the chimney. Recent warm tempertures may have impacted the bat use of attic space near the chimney.

5) **Striped Peak Bunker** on July 26, 2021. A total of 94 bats were counted compared to 69 bats last year. There were 165 bats counted at this Townsend's big-eared colony on July 12, 2017. This site has five distinct exit areas. Unfortunately, vandalism has occurred for the second time at one of the gates installed at a bunker opening. The lower number of bats present may be related to human disturbance or habitat modifications from recent logging activity. Biologist Ament has been working with agency and DNR staff members to repair the gate and possibly install some signage. All data from the exit counts will be written up on Bat Colony Count forms and submitted to Olympia staff members.



Dungeness Fish Hatchery



Hoko Bunkhouse



Volunteers prepare to count Townsend's big-eared bats exiting the Striped Peak Bunker

Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Field Tour: Biologist Ament joined in a field trip held on July 29, 2021 to the two known Taylor's checkerspot butterfly (TCB) population sites west of Port Angeles. Habitat Biologist Bell and DNR Biologist Nordstrom also participated in the field excursion. The main purpose of the day was to get TCB Species Lead Linders more familiar with each site. Apparently, she had been to the area many years ago but it was really important to have her return. The habitat has changed significantly and it was beneficial to have Biologist Linders learn more about the timber harvests that will be conducted by DNR in the vicinity of the TCB sites. She shared some very helpful information regarding habitat monitoring conducted at TCB sites in the South Sound. Biologist Linders also gave some advice to the group on some simple methods to improve the existing habitat.



Biologist Bell describes buffer to remain on bald

Miller Peninsula Field Trip with State Parks Staff Members: Habitat Biologist Street and Biologist Ament participated in a field meeting at Miller Peninsula State Park on August 4, 2021. They met with several State Parks staff members to discuss the proposed future development of the park. Washington State Parks acquired Miller Peninsula State Park land many years ago from the Department of Natural Resources with the intention of developing it when funds allowed. State Parks is moving into the planning phase with the intention of creating a campground and other amenities in the future. Both State Parks and WDFW are eager to begin early collaboration so development can happen in a way that protects the natural resources on Miller Peninsula. Notes from the meeting are being prepared that will include suggestions for State Parks to consider as they continue with planning efforts.



Map of existing trails at Miller Peninsula



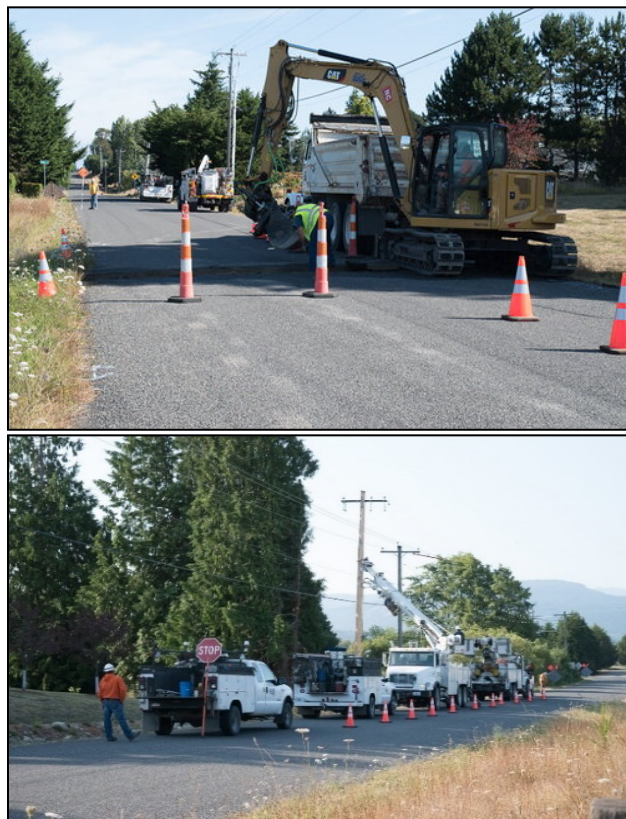
The variety of habitat types found at the Miller Peninsula



View of Protection Island (and recent fire burn area) from Miller Peninsula beach

Swan Safe Project Update: Biologist Ament is delighted to report that the Clallam County Public Utility District (PUD) initiated work on the Swan Safe Project earlier this month. The Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS) website reports the following:

“On Monday, August 9, construction crews completed the road cut across Kirner Road and utility crews began installing conduit through which power line conductors and WAVE cable would subsequently be pulled. By the end of Tuesday, the trench had been cut along the west side to the corner of Kirner and Woodcock, remaining conduit installed, and the excavation backfilled. About 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 11, Clallam County PUD switched electric power flow from the overhead lines on the east side of Kirner Road to new buried conductors. Early the next morning they removed the de-energized lines which had caused injury and death to swans. These acts achieved a major goal of Project Swan Safe, organized by the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS). Granted, the project is not quite done. Today, the WAVE broadband cable still hangs from unneeded power poles. The poles and WAVE cable line will be removed before the end of August. Final billing and accounting remain to be completed. But the underground lines now provide full service to users and the threat to swans from these overhead power lines is gone.”

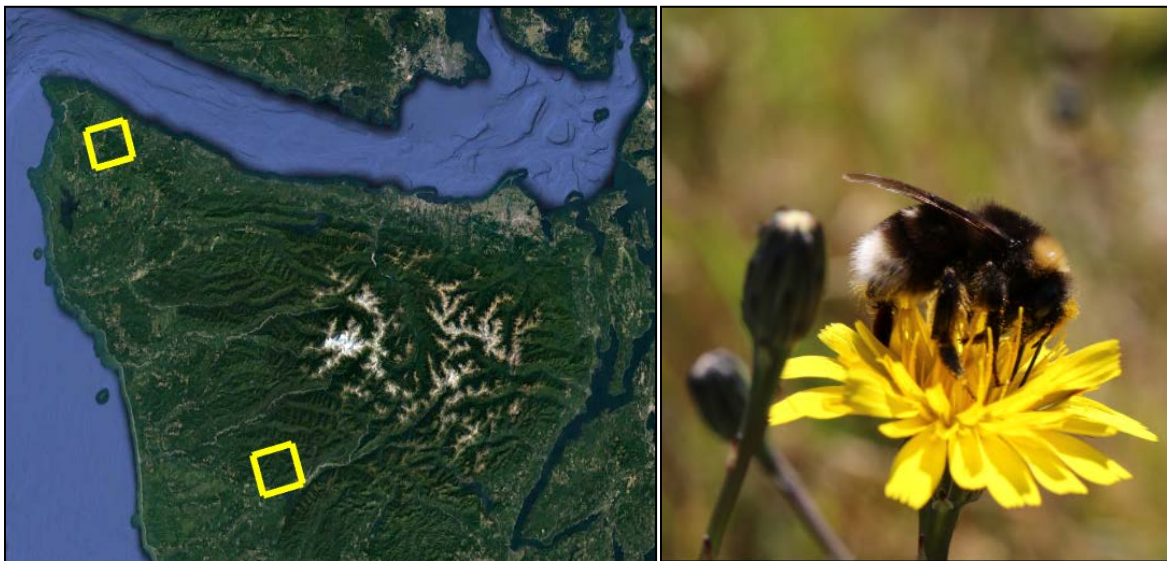


Top to bottom: Trenching across Kirner Road and installation of new power pole – Photos by John Acklen



Left to right: New pole and covered trench with lines and wave cable is only line remaining to be removed

Bumblebee Surveys: A survey effort is underway to collect information on the current distribution and habitat use of the western bumble bee (WBB). This survey effort included completing PNW BB Atlas Protocol Surveys in 41 grid cells in the state. Two of those grid cells were located on the Olympic Peninsula and were conducted by District 16 and District 17 staff members. The urgency for this monitoring is to contribute timely to the ESA status assessment presently underway. Staff members were mentored to build capacity in knowledge of bumblebee surveying and the PNW BB Atlas project. See the Bumblebee Watch website [here](#).



Bumblebee Graves Cells WA_19 (north) and WA_23 (south), and western bumble bee documented in Port Angeles vicinity



Habitat location where western bumblebee was documented near Port Angeles

Graves Grid Cell Assignment for Districts 16 and 17:

WA_23 Bumblebee Cell – Quinault Cell: Biologist McMillan coordinated with Biologist Michaelis and U.S. Forest Service Biologist Holtrop to complete the bumblebee surveys in the southern cell WA_23. The result was a completed effort by Biologist McMillan and Biologist Michaelis in WA_23 plus an additional Bumblebee Atlas Survey completed by Biologist Holtrop, Biologist Michaelis, and Biologist McMillan.





WA_19 Bumblebee Cell – Clallam Bay Vicinity Cell: Biologist McMillan conducted the surveys in the northern cell WA_19.



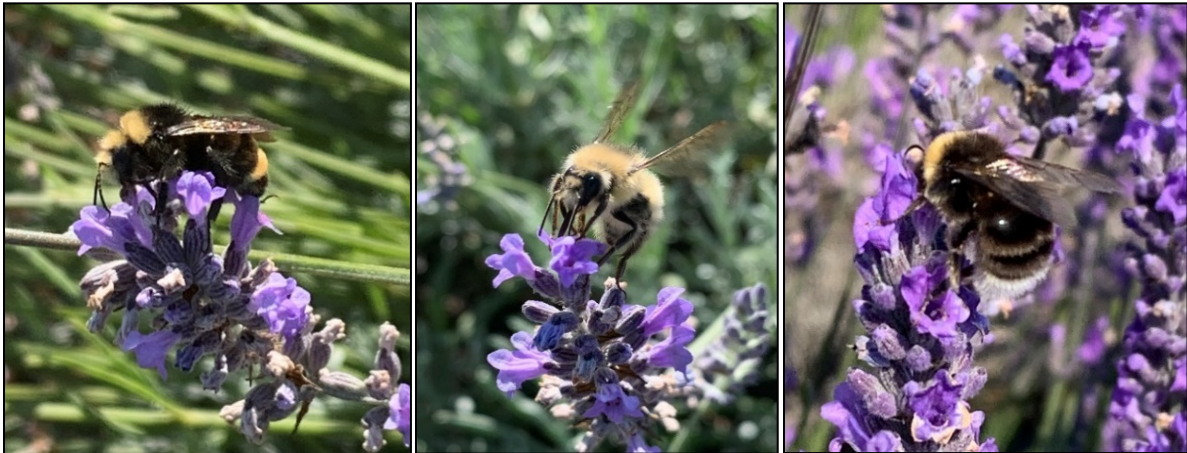
Bumble Bee Training with United States Forest Service Biologist: Biologist Ament was able to join United States Forest Service (USFS) Wildlife Biologist Holtrop for a few days of bumble bee training. On July 30, they conducted a bumble bee survey at Biologist McMillan's property. She had previously been observing western bumble bees (*Bombus occidentalis*) on her property. A total of four bumble bees were captured during the survey. One of the bees captured was identified by Holtrop as a queen western bumble bee. Photos were taken of all bees captured and data will be submitted in in the PNW Bumble Bee Atlas. Biologist Ament also joined Holtrop on August 2 at a lavender farm in Sequim to survey for bumble bees. A total of 12 western bumble bees (*Bombus occidentalis*) were observed and at least four other species of bumble bees were observed gathering pollen on the lavender plants.



Documenting bumble bees



Lavender fields in Sequim



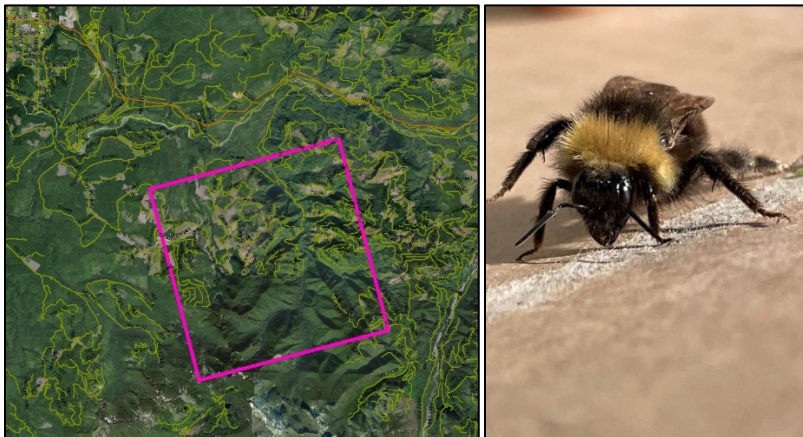
Various species of bumble bees gathering pollen on lavender plants

Common Loon Survey: Biologist Ament and a DNR biologist were able to conduct a loon survey at Wentworth Lake on August 19. This lake was listed as a potential loon site in the district to be surveyed this season. Private timber companies own most of the land around this lake so access proved to be problematic. Biologist Ament did survey the lake from the air on June 25, 2021 when in transit for a sea otter survey along the coast. Since the biologist pair was in the area to explore road access for the NA Bat Project so they took the opportunity to confirm access to this lake and conduct a loon search from an opening that provided a view of the lake. No loons or nests were observed.



Views of Wentworth Lake – identified as a possible common loon breeding site

Bumblebee Surveys: Biologists Butler and Tirhi completed assigned bumblebee surveys in the one District 11 survey grid assigned. Unfortunately the team did not locate the main target, the western bumblebee, but they did capture a variety of bees from several locations with flowering plants. All bee and plant photo samples were sent to the PNW Bumble Bee Atlas for identification.



District 11 assigned bee grid, Pierce County, and one of the many bees captured, photographed, and released

Bat Acoustic Survey: Biologists Michaelis and Novack deployed four bat acoustic devices within a grid cell located near Grayland and the Elk River unit. This is part of a much larger monitoring effort (NA Bat) throughout several states in cooperation with Oregon State University. One station had over 1,700 detections. Data is forwarded to Biologist Tobin, DFW white-nose syndrome coordinator, for further analysis.

Mourning Dove Capturing and Banding: Biologist Michaelis completed capturing and banding mourning doves in three locations. Biologist Butler assisted on a few sessions as well. A total of 161 doves were successfully captured, banded, and released.

Table 1. Age and number of mourning doves captured and banded to date.

Date	HY	AHY	Unknown	Total
July 26 - 31	28	4	1	33
August 1- 15	28	5	2	35
August 16 -31	61	26	6	93
Totals	117	35	9	161

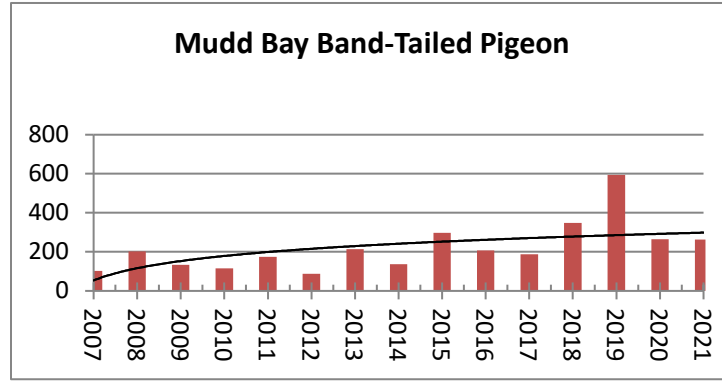
Hatch year birds (HY) are doves which were hatched this year and after hatch year birds (AHY) are birds at least one year of age and older. Nine birds captured were of an unknown sex and age. Plumage characteristics and plumage color are factors to determine age and sex of doves. One adult male captured had plumage characteristics Biologist Michaelis has not seen from nearly 20 years of capturing and banding mourning doves.



Photo of an adult male (AHY) displaying unusual white colorations along the tail feathers. The normal coloration in this area is a blend of light gray and light brown. No white on the dorsal side should be present. Banded doves are used to monitor harvest rates, movement information, and population demographics for the USFWS Pacific Flyway

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Band-tailed Pigeon Survey: Biologist Tirhi completed the band-tailed pigeon survey for the Mud Bay band-tailed mineral site. The 2021 total (263) was almost identical to the 2020 count (264).



Columbia River Knappton Site: Water Access Team members Mitchell, Reeves, and Freimund arrived on site to perform a full brush out of the area to include mowing, weed eating, and pole sawing. The purpose of this work was to open the area to accommodate additional parking. Regulatory signs and posts were also replaced. During this visit it was noticed that two illegal camps had been built. Live trees on the property were cut during the illegal construction. The team completely dismantled both camps, removing one boat top that was used as a roof, plastic, Styrofoam blocks used as bedding, and all garbage associated with these illegal camps. Additionally, all nails were removed from live trees and planks used for this construction.



Camp 1



Camp 2



Bogachiel River Thomas: The water access team worked together using a tractor, chainsaws, pole saws, and weed eaters to remove 30 feet of brush, ivy, and dead trees. This added additional parking to the site. Large barrier rock was installed on the property line. Next week the team will work with Clallam County Road Department for a total re-grade and new surface rock.



North Bay: In preparation for the upcoming shellfish opening, the access team brushed out the entire site and cleaned fence lines. They also blew the entrance road, the A.D.A. parking stall, and the trail leading to Puget Sound.



Clear Lake: Team member Reeves is working with enforcement to get this illegally dumped vessel and trailer cleared for removal.



Cougar Research Presentation: Biologist Ament attended a presentation in Port Angeles on July 29 regarding the cougar research being conducted by Panthera and the Elwha Tribe on the north Olympic Peninsula. The event was sold out and the attendees were obviously very interested to learn about the cougar study. Elwha Tribal Biologist Sager Fradkin requested that Biologist Ament respond to numerous questions asked about state cougar management. It was apparent that many in attendance were opposed to the hunting of cougars. They also wanted to know who to contact to express their concerns about how WDFW Enforcement deals with “problem” cougars. Biologist Ament responded to all questions and provided information on how best to convey public comments/concerns regarding WDFW cougar management.

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Injured/Sick Wildlife Response: Biologist Ament responded to the following sick/injured wildlife reports this past month or so.

July 3 – Doe with dead fawn (partially birthed, legs/hooves hanging out back end) near Sequim.

July 11 – Another effort to dart doe with dead fawn (above).

July 14 – Yet another effort to dart the doe with dead fawn.

July 16 – Final effort to try and assist doe with dead fawn.

July 31 – Great blue heron with broken lower bill on Bainbridge Island.

August 7 – Three young opossums reported in captivity in Bremerton.

August 16 – Doe with cutaneous fibromas – in Port Angeles.

August 22 – Dead golden eagle in pasture at Clallam Bay (ID as young bald eagle when photos were sent). It was not dead, just weak from being malnourished.

August 22 – Sick or abandoned young bobcat along road near Sol Duc River.

August 23 - Deer fawn with injured back right foot – in Sequim.

August 25 – Young buck with prolapsed rectum in Gardiner.

August 26 – Check on bald eagle from August 22 report. Fed salmon carcasses – now flying.