

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

July 1 to 15, 2022

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Chronic Wasting Disease Samples: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb collected numerous samples for Region 1 Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) testing efforts.

Waterfowl Brood Surveys: Biologist Lowe conducted three waterfowl surveys in Lincoln and Whitman counties to check for productivity. Adults of many species but very few broods were observed; they included mallard, cinnamon teal, and green-winged teal. Conditions are very dry in the Columbia Basin already and most potholes and small lakes on the survey routes were disappeared.



Condition of many waterbodies observed in Lincoln County during late June waterfowl brood surveys

Bureau of Land Management Bat Bridge Project: Biologist Lowe collected bat guano from a roost site near Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land on Rock Creek in Whitman County. Guano was allowed to accumulate in plastic trays mounted to the underside of the bridge for several weeks and collected to test for white-nose syndrome and its causative fungus, as well as genetic testing for species identification. The bridge appeared to have very little bat use.



Painter trays mounted to the underside of bridge to collect bat guano for white-nose syndrome surveillance and species identification

Jackrabbit Sighting: Staff members at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area must have been doing something right when they replaced the old grass lawn at the new Swanson Lakes office with native vegetation in 2019. The newly seeded shrubsteppe plants survived the Whitney Fire of 2020, and just this month Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch spotted a young jackrabbit in the west yard.



Providing Recreation Opportunities

Hunting Access: Biologist Baarstad was contacted by a hunter who drew one of the two permits for the Lincoln Cliffs bighorn sheep hunt. Baarstad is assisting this hunter with access as this is hunt is almost entirely on private lands near Lake Roosevelt in Gam Management Unit 133.

Check Station Discussion: Biologists Prince and Turnock, along with other district biologists, and Ungulate Research Scientist DeVivo, met virtually to discuss check station locations and logistics for this year's hunting season. Check stations will be primarily run for chronic wasting disease surveillance.

Road and trail maintenance: Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer worked with his Natural Resource Technician Fure, mowing road centers and shoulders from side roads off Trout Lake Road at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. This reduces potential fire risk later this season. Grass was quite tall this year due to a very rainy spring and early summer. As Access Manager Dziekan wasn't using his mower the second week of July, they were able to use two for maximum efficiency.



Before, left. After, right. Mowing road off Trout Lake Road at Sherman Creek WLA

Water Access Area Maintenance: Access Area Manager Dziekan performed routine site maintenance duties at his water access areas, picking up litter and cleaning and restocking restrooms. With an important piece of equipment failing and repairs several weeks out, Dziekan purchased a new, more powerful string trimmer so he can keep the access areas looking nice for the public. Photo is before and after string trimming the restroom enclosures with the new piece of equipment at Rock Lake.



Before, left. After, right. Restroom surroundings at Rock Lake Access Area

Heller Bar Access site: Access Manager Heimgartner implemented changes to the Heller Bar boat ramp to address congestion issues between power boaters and rafters with the assistance of wildlife area staff members. Two out of the three lanes available for launching and retrieving boats were yellow striped by a local parking lot striping company and are indicated as ten-minute use only on a new sign. The sign and designation went through a lengthy district team and regional process for approval. There has been some blow back mainly from rafting outfitters over the new rules and personnel from Spokane areas weighed in to address comments received.



New striping and sign at Heller Bar Boat Ramp



Striping at Heller Bar Ramp

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Bear Concerns in Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett continued to address black bear concerns in twelve areas throughout the county. Information on securing attractants and how to address bear timber damage were discussed in all situations.

Cattle Ear Tag and Drone Pilot Projects: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett continued to work on a pilot project to assist range riders in locating cattle in wolf areas.

Range Rider Research Project and Contract Range Riders: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb continues to remain in contact with a potential contacted range rider (CRR) for the Blue Mountains area. Kolb will continue with weekly check-ins to determine if the individual requires any assistance from the Department on completing their pre-hire requirements. The potential CRR wants to hire a sub-contractor to ride under their contract and second sub-rider application was turned in this week. The potential CRR reports to have completed and turned in all applicable outstanding items and is now awaiting on the contract to be awarded.

Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement for livestock: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade met with two producers this week to complete and submit two Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for livestock (DPCA_L) invoices and range rider logs for the 2021-2022 grazing season. Wade also reached out to multiple producers with outstanding 2022-2023 DPCA_L contracts to remind them to sign and return their contracts so they can become active.

Grouse Flats Depredation Report: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade was contacted by a Grouse Flats area producer regarding three cattle carcasses found in one of his private pastures. Wade discussed the incident and location of the carcasses producer and determined that the carcasses were in Oregon near the state line. Wade provided the producer with contact information for Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Fladry removal: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb assisted a Columbia County producer remove fladry from a small pasture that had recently been vacated as cattle move to summer pastures.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Farm Bill: Biologist Baarstad worked with multiple landowners and the Farm Service Agency on Lincoln County Conservation Reserve Program- State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (CRP-SAFE) contract items. Biologist Baarstad completed another CRP-SAFE contract and signed all the plans for the current sign up at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Center in Davenport.

Conservation District Collaboration: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley shared information of previous site visits and recommendation of planting conditions and plant species with an employee from the Walla Walla Conservation District pertaining to a landowner who was seeking and inquiring information and assistance regarding Farm Bill programs that were mentioned that might be a potential fit for a piece of idle land. The landowner is enrolled in WDFW access programs.

Weed Spraying: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area staff members, Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch, and Natural Resource Technician Cody Wagner, have been busy again this month spraying weeds at Swanson Lakes, Reardan Audubon, and Revere wildlife areas. The wet spring has caused shrubsteppe weeds to really take off this year.

Extreme Grass and Weed Growth: Wildlife area staff members have been dealing with extremely high vegetation and weed growth as the growing season begins to slow down. Many areas around buildings and barns are overgrown from high rainfall amounts from spring. We are seeing extreme growth in driveways and other areas. Personnel are treating these areas accordingly as we move into fire season.



Driveway into the Halsey buildings on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area before mowing



Extreme growth near the George Creek barn on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area



Grass bottom area swallowing up an ATV near the Smoothing Iron Buildings

Spaulding's Catchfly Monitoring: Woodall along with Rimmelspacher and our interns have been conducting *Silene* monitoring plot visits on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. The *Silene* looks good according to Woodall.

Providing Education and Outreach

Staff Member Presentation: Natural Resource Technician Janowski gave a presentation on private lands hunting and CWD at a local hunting course in Kettle Falls.

Revere Wetlands and Neighbor's Cattle: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA) staff members met with Ducks Unlimited (DU) personnel from Spokane and a neighboring rancher at Revere Wildlife Area, to discuss how to provide some of the water-conserving benefits of wetland restoration for the neighbor's cattle on his land as well. SLWA staff members are working with DU on a new proposal for extending the wetland restoration already completed in the last few years at Revere.

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Explosive Training and Labor & Industries Inspection: McCanna held a six-hour explosive safety training in Walla Walla with Wildlife Conflict Specialists Kolb and Hand, Private Lands Supervisor Earl, and Private Lands Biologist Baarstad. McCanna and Hand met with Labor & Industries (L&I) inspector Mitchell for magazine inspections and follow up questions on 1.4 explosive storage.

National Rifle Association Certification Training and Agency Qualification: McCanna assisted with the two-day rifle and shotgun National Rifle Association (NRA) certification training in Ephrata, NRA and WDFW shooting qualifications. McCanna will work with two staff members to meet the WDFW rifle qualifications in the next couple of weeks.

Vehicle Maintenance and Repairs: Swanson Lake's Natural Resource Technician Wagner has been crossing off an extensive "to do" list of vehicle and equipment tasks, including getting new vehicle tires on a truck and having a rock-cracked windshield replaced on a different vehicle, working with Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch on minor repairs to the Swanson Lakes farm tractor, and traveling with Private Lands Biologist Baarstad to return Research Biologist DeVivo's camp trailer back to its storage location at Sherman Creek, after spring use by grouse surveyors at Swanson Lakes. Finch and Wagner also repaired metal siding at the shops at Swanson Lakes headquarters. High winds peeled some strips back earlier this spring.

Fire restrictions: Wildlife area and access staff members in north Region 1 posted emergency fire restriction signs on WDFW lands, for restrictions beginning on July 15, 2022

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

New Assistant District Biologists: Biologist Paula Clements joins us from the WDFW Pygmy Rabbit team where she worked as a scientific technician. Paula is District 5's new assistant district biologist, She brings important game and non-game wildlife experience to the team, extensive experience working within the Columbia Basin, and enthusiasm to make the most out of this position. Welcome Biologist Clements!

We would also like to welcome Johnna Eilers to the WDFW team as the new Assistant District Wildlife Biologist for District 7! She brings with her a diverse background s from teaching Ornithology and Mammalogy labs at Washington State University as well as from her five seasons as a wildlife technician with Utah Division of Wildlife working with birds, bats, pika, prairie dogs, and native fish. She is excited to have the opportunity to work with game species and looks forward to tackling issues and questions relating to harvest and game management.

Managing Wildlife Populations



Wild Northern leopard frog tadpoles – Photo by A. Haines

Northern Leopard Frogs: Biologist Grabowsky and the northern leopard frog team has been hard at work to prepare for the upcoming Northern Leopard Frog (NLF) release that should occur within the next month. Our partners, Oregon Zoo, and Northwest Trek, are currently caring for 450 tadpoles that are developing well. Technician Haines has been monitoring the wild site and tadpoles appear to be developing at a similar rate to those in captivity. The WDFW NLF team has been hard at work preparing for releases this summer. A proposal has been approved to construct a bullfrog exclusion fence around our release site to identify any sources of mortality that our reintroduced frogs have been facing since 2019. This project will include tracking both NLF and bullfrogs via telemetry, completing behavioral studies, and performing visual encounter surveys. We hope this will answer some of our questions regarding the efficacy of the reintroduction site and allow us to improve the habitat for future releases.



Captured geese ready for new bands

– Photo by S. Dougherty

Waterfowl: Biologists Dougherty, Clements, and Technicians Gerstenberg and Kleinhenz have been preparing for banding season! This preparation began much earlier this year than in May of past years, due to increased staff capacity and starting the technicians earlier in the season. The first day of banding will be on July 1 and will continue through September. The early focus will be primarily on mourning doves and then quickly incorporate waterfowl trapping. With the additional staff capacity we should well surpass past years' banding efforts. Additionally, all staff assisted Waterfowl Specialist Wilson to capture resident Canada geese as part of the ongoing banding and population monitoring efforts.

Grebes: Biologist Grabowsky has been monitoring artificial grebe nesting platforms over the past couple weeks. These nest platforms were constructed by Region 2 staff members and deployed at both Banks Lake and Potholes Reservoir where Clarke's grebe and Western grebe activity tends to be high. Based on observations in June 2022, no grebes appear to be using these platforms for nesting. Grebe nesting activity in general seems to be relatively low compared to 2021 around the same time. No conclusion can be drawn from these observations yet and the platforms will be monitored throughout the summer. This project was implemented to investigate methods to mitigate effects on grebe nesting activity due to fluctuating water levels.



Same nesting platform taken three weeks after the bottom photo and most material has been removed or fallen off
– Photo by E. Grabowsky



Artificial grebe nesting platform (made from PVC, wood pallets, and screening materials) taken on day of deployment – Photo by E. Grabowsky



View from the first cougar natal den – Photo by S. Fitkin



The secondary den with a bear scat in the foreground (right) – Photo by S. Fitkin

Wolverine Monitoring: Biologist Fitkin continued retrieving cameras deployed with scent attractants this past winter as part of the multi-state wolverine survey effort. This project is a repeat of a similar effort five years ago and is designed to detect trends in wolverine occupancy of modeled habitat in the western states. Unlike five years ago, the Rainy Pass site did not produce any wolverine detections this round, but other secondary target carnivores were detected.

Cougar Research: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen as well as Research Scientist Kertson assisted some Canadian colleagues in locating the natal den of a cougar in District 6 that was radio-collared in British Columbia.



Marten and Lynx visiting a wolverine survey station – Photo by WDFW remote camera

The young first-time mother had a primary and secondary den in shrubby draws otherwise embedded in a large tract of dry shrub-steppe. Unfortunately, we did not locate any kittens and it appeared from the evidence on site that they had been predated by a black bear(s). In fact, our group saw two black bears while searching for the den. In the past, Canadian biologists have followed up on a variety of our study animals that had dispersed north of the border, and it was gratifying to return the favor.



A black bear between the two cougar dens – Photo by S. Fitkin



Black bear scat with probable cougar hair – Photo by S. Fitkin



Intrepid international field crew – Photo by S. Fitkin



Nighthawk nest (of a sort) – Photo by S. Fitkin



Cougar country in the Upper Similkameen – Photo by S. Fitkin



Pygmy rabbit hiding under sagebrush in Grant County – Photo by N. Cook

Wildlife Surveys: Biologist Cook assisted the Pygmy rabbit crew members with the trapping of kits for translocation.

Pygmy Rabbit Release Effort: Kit capture efforts continue this period and productivity is looking good for the enclosure breeding season. We have captured 81 kits thus far (already surpassing last year's total of 70). We have released, 43 juvenile rabbits into the new areas Rimrock Meadows and Palisades, 16 have been retained as future breeding stock, and 19 were

too young to relocate and kept in their respective enclosure sites. Each juvenile is vaccinated against rabbit hemorrhagic fever (RHDV2). With above average spring precipitation and unusually cool temperatures, we are hoping this results in a sustained breeding effort.

Monitoring on the release sites is showing good results. The three Rimrock release/acclimation pens look to be doing very well. Rabbits are settling these sites and have begun to dig burrow sites. Rabbit activity and settlement is lower on the three Palisades release sites. We have set up several remote cameras at these sites to get an idea of what they are doing after release.



Two weeks of work for a pygmy rabbit to establish a burrow in an acclimation pen on the Rimrock release site



A juvenile pygmy rabbit checking out its new home in the Palisades



Canada geese are corralled for processing and banding – Photo by A. Pavelchek

Canada Goose Banding: Science Technician A. Pavelchek joined State Waterfowl Specialist M. Wilson and other WDFW biologists to capture and mark Canada geese in several locations across Douglas County: Rock Island Golf Course, Daroga State Park, and Lake Chelan.



A marked goose awaits release – Photo by A. Pavelchek

This effort is part of an ongoing study designed to assist WDFW in better understanding hunter harvest patterns and how geese use urban and rural habitat. Biologists recorded the age and sex of each captured goose and fitted them with numbered aluminum leg bands and white neck collars with number and letter codes. WDFW uses the information collected from hunters who harvest marked geese and birdwatchers who report sightings of marked geese to increase

understanding of the movements of geese relative to urban areas and hunting areas. Waterfowl hunters are asked to report leg band information if they harvest a marked goose. The highly visible collars can be reported by any observer. Reports of band or collar codes, along with locations and dates, should be made to the [U.S. Geological Survey Bird Banding Laboratory](https://www.fws.gov/birdbanding).



Science Technician A. Pavelchek pauses from wrangling adult geese to extract a gosling from the corral trap



A bumble bee approaches a lupine. Note the orange pollen stored in the “pollen baskets” on this bee’s legs, readily identifying it as a female worker bee. She will bring the pollen back to the nest to feed the queen’s young

– Photo by J. Eilers

Bumble Bees: Biologist Jeffrey and Scientific Technician Pavelchek conducted bumble bee surveys at Refrigerator Harbor on the shore of Lake Chelan by Lucerne. Although many plants were still flowering, only one bumble bee was observed in the survey grid. This bee was captured and identified as a yellow-faced bumble bee (*Bombus vosnesenskii*). Habitat data was collected for the grid including identifying and photographing flowering plant (food source) species. This disappointing lack of bumble bees was not limited to the area within the survey grid, as Pavelchek and Jeffrey observed only a couple of bees in the surrounding area throughout the duration of their stay. U.S. Forest Service volunteers staying at the Lucerne guard station noted that they had seen very few bumble bees there this year as well.

Despite the underwhelming results, the data collected from this survey were entered into the Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas online database. The Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas is a collaborative effort between WDFW, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation to track and conserve the bumble bees of Washington, Idaho, and Oregon.



Nevada bumblebee (Bombus nevadensis) captured by District 5 staff members – Photo by S. Dougherty

Biologists Dougherty and Clements took some time to conduct bumble bee surveys as part of the [Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas](#) and surveyed high priority grids near Ritzville, Washington. Despite lots of flowering resources, biologists were only able to capture one bumble bee.



View of Lake Chelan from the Domke Lake Trail

– Photo by E. Jeffreys

Common Loons: Scientific Technician Pavelchek and Biologist Jeffreys hiked from the Refrigerator Harbor campground at Lucerne up to Domke Lake to follow up on a report from a local that common loons had been breeding at that lake for decades, and had raised young again in the summer of 2021. This was exciting information as common loons, a WDFW Priority Species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need, have not been documented as breeding in Chelan County for many years. Upon arrival at the lake, Pavelchek and Jeffreys immediately spotted a pair of adult loons foraging very close together.

However, despite prolonged viewing through binoculars and spotting scope, no chicks were observed on or with the adults. At this point in the breeding season, loons that nested successfully would not be moving around the lake without their young, so it is likely that either this pair did not breed or they did breed but the nest failed. There are many potential causes for nest failure including predation, which seems especially likely given the presence of a bald eagle family nesting right on the south shore of the lake.



Promising location for a loon nest. Unfortunately, this particular nest appeared to have been occupied by Canada geese instead – Photo by E. Jeffreys

In an attempt to locate a nest and hopefully gain some insight into whether or not this loon pair did breed but were simply unsuccessful, Jeffreys and Pavelchek boated the entire shoreline of Domke Lake. Much of the shoreline appeared to offer optimal common loon nesting habitat, with plenty of emergent vegetation and many sheltered areas. No obvious nest was found, but it very likely could have been hidden from surveyors' view. Future years' surveys for breeding common loons in Chelan County will include Domke Lake.



An acoustic detector deployed in a Burch Mountain meadow – Photo by E. Jeffreys

Bat Monitoring: Biologist Jeffreys and Technician Pavelchek deployed four Song Meter (SM4) acoustic detectors at Burch Mountain and in Swakane Canyon as part of a joint effort between WDFW, Northwestern Bat Hub at Oregon State University, and other regional partners. SM4 acoustic detectors record the high frequency vocalizations of bats, allowing for call analysis and species identification. These data will be incorporated into the North American Bat Monitoring

Program, which seeks to monitor local and regional bat population trends across the continent and inform effective bat conservation efforts. Additionally, Jeffreys and Pavelchek conducted an emergence count from some bat boxes in Cole's Corner, determining that a colony of big brown bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*) occupied one box, and a smaller species, likely little brown myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), and/or Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*), occupied another. These sites may be used as part of WDFW's ongoing White-nose syndrome monitoring effort in the future.

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Addressing Deer and Elk Damage: Specialist Bridges continues to work with a multitude of landowners in assisting with attempts to decrease damage from deer and elk. Specialist Bridges has spent a considerable amount of time working with one landowner to construct a four-acre fence on the edge of town. As wildlife habitat continues to decrease, there will be an increase of deer needing to winter on private lands where they are tolerated.

Nuisance Bear Response: Specialist Bridges assisted Enforcement Program, while responding to a landowner experiencing acute bear conflicts.

Reducing Conflict: Specialist Bridges has spent a considerable amount of time working with the City of Leavenworth and various non-government organizations, coordinating an effort to fence off garbage dumpsters which are a continuous source of attractants for bears.

Domestic Sheep Fencing Project: Specialist Bridges has been working the last four months to address domestic and bighorn sheep disease concerns by working with a private landowner, Wild Sheep Foundation, and Asotin County Conservation District. Work will begin soon and will result in the construction of a fence to reduce the potential for disease transfer from domestic sheep to wild bighorn sheep.

Conserving Natural Landscapes



Blanket flower in a SAFE-CRP field – Photo by J. Morris

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement-Conservation Reserve Program: Biologist Morris met with a landowner and started evaluating fields for a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement-Conservation Reserve Program re-enrollment. He conducted field visits to assess the quality of the fields, presence of weeds, and value for wildlife/shrub steppe habitat. Biologist Morris will use this information to write a plan for management of these fields.



Sagebrush mariposa lily (Calochortus macrocarpus) on Burch Mountain

– Photo by E. Jeffreys



A cat's ear lily, also known as elegant mariposa lily (Calochortus elegans) on Burch Mountain

– Photo by E. Jeffreys

Lands 20/20: Lands Operations Manager R. Finger wrapped up Lands 20/20 proposals for Douglas and Grant Counties. Douglas County proposals included a phase four of Big Bend Wildlife Area which could add up to 4,063 acres for additional conservation habitat to benefit Columbian sharp-tail grouse from two different landowners on the western side of the Big Bend Wildlife Area. Additionally, a proposal was submitted to acquire several inholdings in the West Foster Creek area with remaining Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) funds from the original Big Bend acquisition. For Grant County, Finger submitted a proposal to address legal access issues to about 15 parking areas on Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. Historically, public use of farm roads was supported or at least tolerated. In recent years, that access has been in decline. And lastly, Lands Operations Manager R. Finger submitted a proposal for Columbia Basin Wildlife Area inholdings which are perhaps best categorized by three categories:

- 1) Traditional inholdings which threaten to impact mule deer habitat in the Desert Unit GMU 290
- 2) Properties existing between county roads and wildlife area with potential for habitat encroachment and disturbance impacts
- 3) properties which bisect heavily used trail systems and intact habitat, with risks to both recreation and habitat connectivity.

R. Finger also continued information gathering for the next round of Lands 20/20, when proposals will likely move forward for the properties in the Beezley Hills of Grant County which are very important for Pygmy Rabbit conservation and in the White River Unit of Chelan Wildlife Area where there may be potential to receive Priest Rapids Coordinating Committee funds for an appraisal; and then potentially acquisition, to acquire lands with significant potential for salmon restoration projects.



Potential 80-acre acquisition for the White River Unit – Photo by R. Finger

Providing Education and Outreach

Responding to Hunter Calls: Specialist Bridges has been responding to calls from successful special permit holders for the Peshastin and Malaga hunts.

Other

Meetings: Biologist Morris attended a Pheasants Forever board meeting with the Big Bend Pheasants Forever chapter. He met the recently hired Pheasants Forever Private Lands Biologist, who is working out of the Natural Resources Conservation Service office in Ephrata. He also coordinated with the chapter on potential habitat projects. This valuable relationship facilitates for numerous habitat restoration projects with private funding to match state and federal funds to increase the capacity for projects.

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Waterfowl Brood Survey: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra conducted annual Potholes Canal survey for duck broods. Fewer than average broods were detected, but water was higher with more flooded vegetation in some stretches of the canal that may have provided cover for some broods.

Dove trapping and Banding: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra coordinated with technician Kleihenz on Mourning Dove trapping sites and banding. Traps are being ran most days both morning and evening, with a high ratio of hatch-year birds indicating a productive breeding season locally.



Hatch-year mourning dove released after banding

Bumblebee Surveys: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra adopted a grid cell for the Pacific Northwest Bumblebee Atlas Project and surveyed part of the Mesa Lake Unit of the Sunnyside Wildlife Area. One bumblebee was seen and captured.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Planting: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin are completing planting of approximately 35 acres of food plots on designated agricultural field edges and near the wildlife area entrance. Native grasses, small grains, and pollinator mixes were planted this year.

Returning Monarchs: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber and Assistant Manager Rodgers have been observing an increased number of returning Monarch Butterflies within the Windmill, Mesa, and Hope Valley Units. Wildlife Area staff members have mowed areas in early spring to facilitate growth of the milkweed plant that Monarchs depend on for their

lifecycle. Several areas have gone from a few hundred Milkweed plants to over a thousand. Just recently staff have observed Monarch caterpillars.



Monarch (left) and caterpillar (right) at Windmill Unit

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Wenas Black Canyon Trough Removal/Replacement: Technicians Rodriguez, Stoltenow, and Assistant Manager Taylor removed the old spring fed watering trough along the Black Canyon trail which was rusted and pooling water throughout the immediate area. After the trough was removed and the area given time to drain/dry, a platform was constructed out of wood to give the users of the trail easier access to the new trough. The new trough was installed with a six-inch drainpipe, angled down at a 45-degree angle to help prevent clogging from debris entering the trough, allowing the water to drain freely. The team has plans to do habitat work downstream of the spring, planting trees and shrubs, for wildlife habitat.



Before picture of the old water trough on the black canyon spring



Newly Replaced water trough as a spring enhancement for wildlife and recreational users

Wenas Green Dot and Road Management Sign Replacement: Technicians Rodriguez, Stoltenow, and Assistant Manager Taylor replaced several of the green dot road rule management signs in the northern and southern portions of the wildlife area with the updated versions of them. The signs were riveted into place and will provide users information on how to responsibly recreate along green dot roads and the surrounding areas.

Wenas Manastash Ridge Trails: Manager Hughes continued to coordinate and build relationships with the different user groups who recreate on the Manastash Ridge Trails. Hughes met with an equestrian who rides up to the trails from her house on a regular basis. She went over the approved plan, background history on the area and discussed implementation of the plan while working with the different user groups. The neighbor has been added to a core committee, representing the group of neighboring equestrians. Hughes additionally met with a member of the committee who has been heavily involved in developing signs for the trails. Together they reviewed previously developed signs and information and worked on developing a plan to move forward with signage.

Tim's Pond Site Maintenance: Oak Creek Wildlife Area staff members cleared a fallen snag from the trail at Tim's Pond and conducted weed control within and around the parking area.

Oak Creek Emergency Restrictions: In conjunction with other wildlife areas in eastern Washington, emergency rules to mitigate risk of wildfire go into effect at the end of this period. These restrictions prohibit target shooting, driving/parking in tall grass, campfires, smoking outside of a vehicle, chainsaws, and open flame torches. In preparation the wildlife area was posted with signage to inform the public of this change.



Emergency Restrictions posted at beautiful Milk Lake on the Rock Creek Unit-Oak Creek WLA

Preparing for the Landowner Hunting Permit Elk Seasons: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett sent out hunter packages to state drawn hunters for the Blackrock Ranches Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP) elk seasons. Each hunter was sent a congratulatory letter with all the details about their upcoming hunts as well as a questionnaire to be filled out and returned after they complete their hunt. Hulett worked with the Silver Dollar LHP Program to submit their 2021-2022 hunting report. The report was sent to Olympia on July 14 and their 2022 tags could not be mailed out until this report was submitted. Hulett did send out the list of state drawn hunters to the Silver Dollar LHP and is waiting for each landowner to review the list before their hunter packages are sent out.

Hyde Street Yakima River Access Improvement: Access Manager Garcia and Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber made some improvements to the Hyde Street Yakima River Access site located near West Richland. Anglers had reported a large stump blocking the boat launch access at the site. Garcia and Kaelber used a compact excavator to remove the stump and smooth out delivered gravel and improve the grading of the boat launch area. This site provides the public access to the Yakima River and is a popular launch site for fisherman, rafters, and kayakers.



Access Manager Garcia removing a large stump



Access Manager Garcia spreading gravel



Hyde Street Access site after launch improvements

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Rattlesnake Hills Elk Damage Permits: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored hunting activity on damage prevention permits (DPP) in Elk Area 3721. Seven elk have been harvested so far during this damage permit season. Hunting activity during this unique opportunity provided benefits in pressuring elk away from valuable crops.

Franklin County Deer Damage: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received a deer damage complaint from a vineyard and orchard operation near the Snake River. Deer have been browsing on several newly planted cherry trees. Several non-lethal hazing techniques have been implemented but with diminishing results. The producer has a current Damage Prevention

Cooperative Agreement and has been proactive in minimizing damage occurrence. Two Damage Prevention Permits were issued to assist in addressing the situation.

Badger Mountain Deer: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand responded to a call concerning three deer (a buck, doe, and a fawn) that a homeowner wanted relocated because she thought they would be hit on a nearby road. The deer are residing in adequate habitat conditions, so no further response is warranted.

Rattlesnake Hills Elk Hazing: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to spend time this past week hazing elk near the top of Rattlesnake Mountain. Animals are continuing to leave the Hanford site to forage in winter wheat crops on the southern exposure of Rattlesnake Mountain. In addition to late night/early morning hazing activity, fox lights were also stationed along active access routes elk are using to enter wheat fields.



Fox Light near Active Elk Trail

Kahlotus Wheat Harvest: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored wheat fields in the Kahlotus area that experienced deer damage from last winter. With most crops being delayed from cooler and wetter spring conditions, no wheat harvest has occurred yet.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Blackrock Pilot Project Update: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett inspected the newest seeding of the Blackrock Green strip Pilot Project. Overall, the seeding was looking better than expected, with all six planted species growing and moisture still at the soil surface. Hulett will continue to monitor this project through the summer to see how long the green strip stays “green”.



Green strip along HWY 24 on July 6. Field is noticeably different from dry rangeland surrounding the strip.

Wildlife Connectivity Film Project: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra spent a day guiding a film crew working on a WDFW partnered project highlighting problems and solutions related to wildlife habitat connectivity in the Columbia Basin. Filming including pronghorn, shrubsteppe habitat, and irrigation canals.



Herd of pronghorn on videography project tour that included three fawns and one large buck

Lands 20/20 Application in District 4: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra worked with region 3 staff on a last-minute Lands 20/20 application, after he spoke with a landowner who indicated they plan to place their property on the market. The land holds excellent conservation value for several species of concern, including Ferruginous hawks, and important shrubsteppe habitat and could provide excellent recreational opportunities should the option to acquire it occur.

Audubon Partners and Renewable Energy Projects: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra and Habitat Biologist Ritter met with representatives of state and local Audubon leaders to discuss wildlife conservation, bird populations, and renewable energy projects.

Wenas McCabe Russian Thistle Control: Technicians Rodriguez and Stoltenow along with Biologist Daling sprayed the newly emerged Russian Thistle at the McCabe restoration site. The Russian Thistle has been continuously emerging throughout the end of this spring and the beginning of the summer.

Wenas Cereal Rye Control and Mowing: Technicians Rodriguez, Stoltenow, and Assistant Manager Taylor mowed various sites for the purpose of controlling cereal rye. In addition, the Wenas elk feeding site was mowed in order to remove mustard and other vegetation that would make traversal of the area difficult in the winter when feeding elk.

Oak Creek Operations: Oak Creek staff members continue to control noxious weeds, working primarily in the Cowiche Unit this period. A crew has also completed approximately 400 acres of pre-commercial thinning under contract in the Milk Creek drainage.



Left: Recently thinned stand Right: Thinned stand with Mt. Rainier. This pine has been pruned to reduce ladder fuels adjacent to an open road and reduce risk of disease transmission from understory hosts of white pine blister rust

New Natural Resource Worker Positions: L.T. Murray Manager Bates and Natural Resource Technician Blore interviewed and hired two fencing technicians who will build, repair, remove fencing, or perform similar projects, on wildlife areas throughout Region 3. The crew members will start the last week of July. Assistant Manager Winegeart assisted Blore with categorizing Quilomene unit pasture fences into sections of good, bad, down, or missing. This information will be useful when directing the new six-month fence technicians to areas of greatest need based on fence condition and need.



Varying condition of fences around Quilomene unit pastures

Grazing: Assistant Manager Winegeart completed the second required pasture evaluation for the 2022 cattle grazing year on the Quilomene Unit. Some soil and vegetation damage were noted around canyon bottoms, water sites, and salt sites, but the damage was within the scope of expectancy for the term of grazing.



Basin wildrye doing well in Vantage pasture ex-closure. Ex-closure was built to mitigate for habitat loss resulting from the spring enhancement

Providing Education and Outreach

Emergency Fire Restrictions: L.T. Murray Wildlife Area employees placed emergency fire restrictions signs at access points. The rules are designed to reduce risk of wildfire by regulating activities that involve, or could produce, fire.

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Labor & Industries Explosives Inspections: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand, and Region 1 Conflict and Private Lands Staff members, McCanna, Baarstad, Kolb, and Earl met an L&I Explosives inspector to conduct inventory and magazine storage inspections to maintain our annual licenses. All inventory paperwork, license documents and magazine conditions were approved. Additionally, staff members had a good question and answer session with the inspector on topics of new explosives storage requirements and adding new staff members as licensed explosives user/purchaser.

L.T. Murray Access Agreement: Assistant Manager Winegeart worked with State Parks to put an access agreement in place for accessing DFW property through State Parks near Vantage. This access point has been used by DFW employees to save time accessing remote property for years, but Parks managers have decided to initiate an annual access agreement.

New Trailer for Region 3 Private Lands: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett purchased a new 16' trailer for R3 private lands program. The trailer will be used to pull the new side by side as well as other equipment and supplies for habitat projects.



New 16 ft trailer for Private Lands work in Region 3

Private Lands Program Workshop Meeting Preparations: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett coordinated with Region 3 staff members to plan a field day showcasing WDFW projects around Ellensburg for the upcoming Private Lands Workshop. Two projects were selected to showcase the great work being done in the region.

Other

Bounds Pond Pump Repair: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and NRT Wascisin have completed repair of the water delivery line from the Wendell Phillips Rd pump to Bounds Pond, but as per Pacific Power, will need the electrical work to be certified by an electrician before power can be restored and the system tested.