

# Wildlife Program

Week of Jan. 7 – Jan. 13, 2019

## **REGION 1**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Deer Trapping:** Wildlife Biologist Ben Turnock assisted Ungulate Research Scientist Melia DeVivo and University of Washington students and technicians in white-tailed deer capture efforts.



*Clockwise from top left: A clover trap set to catch white-tailed deer. An enticing salad used to lure in deer. University of Washington, Kalispel Tribe, and WDFW personnel collar a white-tailed doe in GMU 117.*

**Predator-prey Study:** Biologist Lowe assisted DeVivo and Turnock with processing of a white-tailed deer fawn captured in a clover trap near Newport. The fawn was fitted with a radio collar and released.



*WDFW biologists release radio-collared fawn* - Photo by Rich Landers

***GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES***

**Hunting Access:** Natural Resource Technician Seitz and Biologist Baarstad met with a landowner in Pend Oreille County who is interested in provided public hunting access and starting habitat enhancement projects. Seitz and Baarstad will put together a habitat plan in the spring when the snow melts.

**Collaborate Meeting:** Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley met with the manager of the Walla Walla Conservation District to discuss the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP) and potential projects with local landowners in Walla Walla County.

***GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE***

**Turkey Damage in Stevens County:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett worked with a landowner in Loon Lake with concerns with the number of turkey in the residential neighborhood. Two site visits were conducted and several photos were shared. Bennett only noted a handful of turkeys, but had received pictures of a significant amount more from the landowner. Next steps are being outlined on how to assist the landowner.



*Turkeys in a residential neighborhood of Loon Lake*



*A photo taken by a landowner working with WDFW on turkey in Loon Lake*

**Dead Chickens:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman talked to a resident who had 29 dead chickens that they had since cleaned up and had questions about what may have killed them. With how everything was described, it sounded like domestic dogs may have been involved. None of the chickens were consumed and things in the barn were knocked over during the fray. Westerman gave advice about how to give them protection at night.

**Clarkston Injured/Sick Deer Calls:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade and Natural Resource Technician Heitstuman responded to two separate reports of sick or injured deer this week. The first call was a report of an emaciated mule deer that was frequenting a homeowner's yard in Clarkston Heights. Wade and Heitstuman met with the homeowner and looked at pictures that he had taken of the deer. Wade and Heitstuman attempted to locate the deer but were on able to find it due to the area being heavily

populated with homes. Wade spoke with Biologist Wik regarding the deer. The second call was of a mule deer yearling that had an arrow stuck in it. Wade and Heitstuman met with the reporting party and located the yearling. Biologist Wik was out of the area at the time so no action was taken at the time. Wade checked the area the following day in an attempt to locate the injured deer, but was unable to locate it. Later that day, Biologist Wik received a report of the deer in the same area. Wade, Heitstuman, and Wik traveled to the area, but the deer had moved from the reported location. Wade, Heitstuman, and Wik searched the area for the deer. WDFW personnel will continue to attempt to locate the deer and remove the arrow as more calls continue to come in.

***GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY***

**Channeled Scablands Waterfowl meeting:** Private Lands Biologist Gaston attended a meeting to discuss the upcoming surveys for waterfowl in the channeled scablands. The group discussed data results from previous years, future presentations of the data, and protocols for the upcoming survey season.

**Policy Awareness:** Private Lands Supervisor Earl discussed protocols for working in remote areas with Region 1 Private Lands personnel to comply with WDFW Policy 2001. A system for checking in and out was developed for each biologist that would work well for them in their district.

**REGION 2**

***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Pygmy Rabbit Winter Surveys:** Coordinator Gallie and Biologist Zinke continue burrow survey efforts on the core occupied areas of the Sagebrush Flat population. Snow conditions have been highly inconsistent, not persisting long, making conditions and results difficult to work with. Despite difficult conditions, we have completed approximately one-third of the survey area, documenting about 100 active burrows. While it is still very early for comparisons, burrow counts are roughly the equal to last year, with minor differences in the distribution within each area. At each site, we collect fecal samples that will be analyzed for genetic population modeling by the University of Idaho.

The intensive transect surveys are fueled mainly by volunteer students from University of Idaho, Washington State University, and Wenatchee Valley College. Students enjoy the opportunity to assist in the recovery effort while we enjoy the free labor. Making this effort a little more attractive, the team and students stay at the Moses Coulee Field Station, operated by The Nature Conservancy.



*Where's Waldo the pygmy rabbit? See if you can find it!*

**Pygmy Rabbit Drone Effort:** Alongside the traditional approach of transect surveys for the wild population, we have been attempting to utilize drones to survey rabbit distribution on the Beezley Hills and Burton Draw recovery areas. The goal is to demonstrate drone imagery can detect the rabbit tracks/burrows in the snow and determine the distribution and survivorship of our release effort this past summer.

The same weather problems are plaguing our ground effort and limiting the drone effort. The lack of snow being the biggest limiting factor, followed by near constant low clouds and patchy fog that sit over the Columbia Basin during the winter months. We have completed about two-thirds of the Burton Draw release area, but are still waiting on the data to process to see if the imagery is suitable (very little snow and dense overcast).



*Drone operator preparing for takeoff on pygmy rabbit survey*



*Drone operator monitoring the drone as it covers the survey transect on autopilot*

**Methow National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant:** Assistant Manager Brasier spent much of the week piecing together components of a grant application for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Brasier worked closely with Manager Troyer and Maintenance Mechanic Wottlin to design a restoration project that will restore 56 acres of abandoned agricultural fields on the Golden Doe Unit to a healthy shrub steppe ecosystem. If funded, the project will remove non-native vegetation on over 200 acres of land, sow native grass seed on 56 acres of fields, and install approximately 3,700 shrub seedlings in the area. This project is being packaged along with three other projects from wildlife areas across eastern Washington in the hopes that it will increase our likelihood of receiving funding. Although the grant applications are due this week, it is unclear how the federal government shutdown will affect the selection process.

**Wetland Projects Site Visit:** Lands Operations Manager Finger and District Wildlife Biologist Dougherty toured the Winchester excavations and Winchester regulated access area ditching project to observe outcomes first-hand. A large dozer and an excavator work in tandem to push material to the shoreline, where it is either left or hauled a short distance.



*Pushing muck* - Photo by Brian Heck



*Winchester excavations* – Photo by R. Finger

**Pygmy Rabbit Safe Harbor:** Private Lands Biologist Hughes met with a landowner who had sold all of her property that was enrolled in Safe Harbor. Hughes provided technical assistance for the landowner in writing a letter stating the property was sold and in filling out a permit application to transfer to the original permit to the new landowner. Hughes had a new site plan signed by the new landowner this week. All paperwork to finish the permit transfer is complete and has been sent to USFWS for processing.

**Douglas County Fence Marking:** Private Lands Biologist Braaten spent most of week identifying fences and met with a Douglas County landowner to look at maps to assist with documenting fence locations to discuss which fences can be marked this year. Fences directly adjacent to grouse leks will be marked. Braaten hopes to begin marking critical fences if area is accessible.

**Columbia Basin Russian Olive Treatments:** Assistant Manager Bechtold and Private Lands Biologist Hughes burned a pile of Russian olive trees near the Gloyd Seeps Road 20 area. These invasive trees had been cut, treated, and piled several years ago to remove them from irrigated tree and shrub rows that had been established decades ago.



Photo by M. Hughes

***GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES***

**Methow Wildlife Area Winter Recreation:** Manager Troyer took time to meet up with several volunteers who groom winter recreation trails at the Lloyd Ranch. In short, the trails have been a big hit this year due to the early season wet snow that fell on the valley. This snow was highly compactable and set the foundation for a strong, rock solid base. This has proven very popular with the fat tire biking community. Discussions are currently active on how to expand and improve these winter recreation trails in and around the Lloyd Ranch vicinity, which is only a few short miles from downtown Winthrop.



**GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE**

**An Example of Habituation to Non-Lethals by Elk:** South of Wenatchee, eight large bull elk have learned to cross an 8-foot wide cattle guard associated with a large elk fence. Conflict Specialist Bridges has tried many nonlethal deterrents to discourage the elk from this behavior. These elk quickly became habituated to each of the following methods: six motion sensing alarms, two motion sensing lights, a motion activated Scary Man, a bottle of Liquid Fence and other scents, radios, domestic dogs, a Master Hunter waiting at the guard to scare elk, deterrent feed sites, and last but not least a stuffed cougar. A camera was used to document any response.



On the very first night, the lead bull elk immediately noticed the cougar and took extreme measures to avoid the stuffed cougar. This resulted in the elk jumping about eight feet to his left, and running off, not to return for the night.



Bull elk 1 second before noticing the stuffed cougar



Bull elk just noticing the stuffed cougar



Bull elk 1 second after noticing the stuffed cougar and jumping 8' out of the way!

On the second night, after multiple approaches, and a good foot stomp within two feet of the cougar, the bulls realized that the stuffed cougar was not going to do any “cougar stuff” and proceeded to cross the cattle guard, but on the opposite side of the guard from the cougar (just in case!).



Bull elk checking to see if the stuffed cougar is still there



The same bull elk, challenging the stuffed cougar



Might as well cross, since the cougar is not doing anything...

The third night the elk showed up at the cattle guard, they did not hesitate to cross the cattle guard. The last bull to cross, took the time to smell the “thing that looks like a cougar, but doesn’t do cougar stuff.”



There is no “silver-bullet” nonlethal deterrent for wildlife conflict. Every animal has its own tolerance to disturbances. Some elk would never come back after a close encounter with a cougar, and some elk quickly habituate. While we have not been able to permanently deter the bulls from crossing this guard, we have had small wins of one or two days reprieve as we change nonlethal techniques.

### Bug Blog:



Photos by A. Bell

In the last Bug Blog, we highlighted some of the more interesting aspects of the smallest insect that can be found in our North Potholes pond sites. Today we will examine one of the largest. The aptly named giant water bug (pictured above, family: Belostomatidae), lives up to its namesake. The larger members of the family (see *Lethocerus*) are the largest taxa in the speciose insect order Hemiptera (true bugs). The pictured specimen is a young nymph, measuring only

around 5mm, while the adults of some species can get up to around 12 cm (however, species in the United States often *only* reach a length of about 65mm). These bugs can be found in varied freshwater habitats all over the world, with 19 species occurring in North America.

Belostomatids are voracious predators, eating almost anything that moves in their aquatic habitats including other insects, snails, amphibians, small reptiles, and even young ducklings! These bugs slowly stalk their prey and use strong raptorial forelimbs to capture and grasp their unsuspecting quarry. Then, belostomatids use their pointed beaks (upper right photo) to pierce into the bodies of their victims, inject saliva (filled with powerful digestive enzymes), and finally suck out the liquefied tissues. If harassed, belostomatids will even bite humans, which is apparently one of the most painful of all insect bites. Because of this, this insect has another delightful common name: the toe biter.

These bugs also have a gentler side. Uniquely, many belostomatids engage in paternal care of their offspring—a behavior that is incredibly rare among insects (and animals in general). After mating, females will lay eggs on the backs of the males, who will then protect and carry the brood until they hatch. A practice that is equal parts enthralling and unsettling to the casual observer.

**Methow Wildlife Area Volunteers:** Volunteer/Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey reached out to Manager Troyer this week to discuss a potential group of volunteers. After a thorough discussion with Dazey and the inquiring group, Troyer committed to hosting 25 volunteers sometime in the latter part of June. Most of the volunteers are middle school students accompanied by about five adult chaperones. This group will work in the Methow Valley for five days and most of that work will be on the Methow Wildlife Area. Seeing as these kids raised their own money to go on this volunteer trip, Troyer decided to reach out to different groups in town to see if they'd be interested in taking the group so as to expose them to a variety of conservation based projects. In fact, Troyer talked to a local naturalist who plans to take the group on some sort of edible plant walk on one of the afternoons. The plans are still being finalized, but it sounds like middle scholars from Idaho are ecstatic about their upcoming trip to the Methow Valley

**Recreational Use Data on Columbia Basing Wildlife Area:** Lands Operations Manager Finger met with Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to document recreational user data. Using car counter data, we have a crude estimate across Region 2 south water access sites. These data are updated annually, as new car counter data is available. Currently, an estimated 227,985 vehicles access these water access sites and 26,840 are estimated to be for camping. Additional recreational data comes from Real Estate and the Inland Fish Program. Forty-eight fishing tournaments are held with participation from 2,222 boats on waters we manage for BOR.

## **REGION 3**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Oak Creek Wildlife Area - Manager Greg Mackey**

Manager Mackey and Biologist Bernatowicz coordinated with a local landowner that was willing to get their domestic goats tested for MOVI bacteria given their proximity to the Cleman herd. Samples were collected and sent to Washington State University for testing.

Oak Creek staff members began feeding elk at the Cowiche feed site on Jan. 10 following accumulated snowfall of about three inches over the area. Nearly 800 elk were counted that first day with a peak of over 1,200 by the end of the week.



*Interesting color on this Cowiche elk*

Oak Creek staff members also began feeding bighorn sheep at the Cleman feed site after snowfall early in the week.

Oak Creek staff members continued feeding operations at the Nile feed site, seeing a slight increase in elk numbers with a peak elk count of 238 animals. Elk continue to remain scarce during the weekends when there is peak recreational traffic, but continue to clean up hay presumably at night.

#### **L.T. Murray Wildlife Area - Manager Melissa Babik**

Manager Babik hosted an L.T. Murray Forest Planning meeting. Babik and Biologist Moore modeled mule deer distributions on the Murray and made recommendations to thinning prescriptions. They were able to prioritize many of planned thinning units in the L.T. Murray forest plan draft. The planning team is comfortable with the draft plan and realize there will be tweaks to individual project prescriptions in the future.

Assistant Manager Winegeart assisted enforcement officers with moving a cougar trap from one property to another in Cle Elum. A cougar had killed a domestic goat that had been allowed to roam a wooded area at night.



*Domestic goat covered with debris by cougar*

Natural Resource Technician Nass took the Human Resources crew from Olympia out to feed the elk. There was none on the feedlot due to warm temperatures when we began. However, it started snowing while we were out at Robinson and by the time we returned to Watt there was a small herd so they were able to feed a few and thankfully their journey was worth the effort!



*WDFW Human Resources crew braving wintery conditions to feed the elk in the L.T. Murray*

**Wenas Wildlife Area - Manager Cindi Confer Morris**

Manager Confer Morris prepared a power point presentation for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) Production Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting in Ellensburg, presenting a proposal requesting funding for a portion of the Buffalo Fire Winter Range Restoration.



*RMEF PAC meeting*



Feeding continues with a few new elk still showing up. We had five inches of new snow this week at the feed site.



*Elk on feed site Saturday morning*



*Elk heading for the hay*

#### **Sunnyside Wildlife Area - Manager Phillip Buser**

Assistant Manager Ferguson checked and greased the Giffin Lake and Snipe's Reserve pumps, and maintained water levels on the rice paddies. Giffin Lake water level mysteriously decreased about 8 inches Ferguson checked the outlet on east end to find no apparent issues. He also checked the Sulphur Creek diversion to Bridgeman Pond/Johnson Unit; water is flowing well and slowly filling the Johnson Wetlands.

#### **District 4 Wildlife Biologist - Jason Fidorra**

District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra, Habitat Biologist Ritter, and Wildlife Area Manager Buser completed a National Fish and Wildlife Federation grant proposal for restoration of mule deer habitat. The proposal focuses on about 110 acres of riparian corridor habitat and upland shrubsteppe plantings at the Thompson Seeps Unit of the Sunnyside Wildlife Area. The proposal was submitted to the Game Division group for review and inclusion in the statewide project proposal.

District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra worked with partners in coordinating the upcoming pronghorn survey. The survey will occur over two days when fog and weather permit, hopefully in early February 2019.

District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra spoke with Waterfowl Section Manager Spragens regarding proposed changes to the snow goose hunting season, supporting a hunt season in February.

District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra assisted in preparing for the second year of short-eared owl survey across western states by reaching out to potential volunteers and responding to volunteer inquiries. Almost all of the surveys are conducted by citizen science volunteers, and most of the available survey slots have been taken.

**Yakima Canyon Bighorn Sheep Project:** Biologist Bernatowicz checked two sites and found minimal use of bait. Some snow arrived this week and a few deer used the bait, but no sheep.

**Clemans Bighorn:** Wildlife area staff members started feeding sheep with the arrival of snow. Biologists conducted a ground count with the help of Natural Resource Technician Kass. One hundred eighty-five sheep were classified with 130 ewe, 40 lambs and 15 rams (low because of lack of winter). Based on 2017-2018 counts, harvest and recruitment; the population is likely about 240 animals on Clemans proper. There has been a group of sheep wintering west of the main mountain in recent year. The goal for Clemans is 170-220, so ewe permits will be issued this year.

**Domestic Goats:** Manager Mackey notified Bernatowicz of a domestic goatherd very close to Clemans bighorns. The landowner was very cooperative and allowed testing of the goats for the bacteria *M. ovipneumoniae*. The samples were sent to the Washington State University lab and management action will depend on the results.

**Black Bear Surveys:** Biologists Bernatowicz attended an agency meeting to discuss a proposed black bear survey. The effort will be very time consuming (at least 40 person days per survey).

## ***GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES***

### **Sunnyside Wildlife Area - Manager Phillip Buser**

Assistant Manager Ferguson checked all hunter registration boxes for the Sunnyside and Glover units. He removed filled-out cards, added blank card notebooks. Assistant Manager Kaelber did the same for the Snake River units. The Windmill Ranch, Mesa Lake, and Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch units have remained very busy with waterfowl and upland bird seasons.

### **Region 3 Private Lands Biologist - Seth Hulett**

Private Lands Biologist Hulett assisted nine hunters interested in gaining hunting access on areas enrolled in the Hunt by Reservation or Hunt by Written Permission program.

Private Lands Biologist Hulett worked through an issue at the Finley Hunt by Reservation sites brought to light by a hunter. The hunter called Hulett explaining that the access at the western gate was blocked off and that the sheriff had been seen writing people tickets. After many attempts, the landowner was reached and the situation was resolved. Hulett was informed that non-hunters were trespassing and dumping trash. This resulted in the sheriff coming out to the property and the owner closing the gate. WDFW Enforcement later located and cited the responsible persons. The landowner said hunters could now access all hunting sites through the eastern gate. Enforcement was informed of these changes and signs were moved to direct hunters to their reserved fields.

### **Region 3 Private Lands Technician - Ashley Rodgers**

Private Lands Technician Rodgers continued to visit and maintain Hunting Access sites in Franklin and Benton counties.

Private Lands Technician Rodgers assisted Private Lands Biologist Hulett with taking down signs on properties that were not re-enrolled into the hunting access program.

Private Lands Technician Rodgers changed signs at the Finley Register to Hunt to help direct hunters into the new entry point.

Private Lands Technician Rodgers continued organizing and entering hunter data from the Army Corp pheasant release sites, as well as sites enrolled into Hunt by Reservation.

### ***GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE***

### **Oak Creek Wildlife Area - Manager Greg Mackey**

There continues to be significant public visitation at headquarters even though feeding still has not commenced at headquarters. The help of the Washington Education Corps volunteers is greatly appreciated as they continue to staff the Oak Creek Visitor's Center on weekends to inform visitors about the status of the winter feeding program.

### **District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist - Don Hand**

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand spent one day conducting deer and elk hazing patrol in several winter wheat fields in the Kahlotus area. Over 50 deer were observed and hazed out of newly seeded fields. No elk were located, but tracks and scat from a large herd was located where several landowners reported.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored elk activity and met with landowners on Rattlesnake Mountain to coordinate late season permit hunting and hazing activity.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and responded to reports of several elk near the Highway 240 roadway near the Yakima barricade that could cause a traffic hazard. Over 200 elk were located in that vicinity, but none near the busy roadway.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand followed up with a homeowner who lost two goats earlier this past fall to either domestic dogs or coyotes. A “Critter Getter” was loaned and used as a hazing device, with favorable results along with improved fencing and monitoring. The homeowner was very appreciative to borrowing WDFW equipment.

### **District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist--Steven Wetzel**

Conflict Technician Leuck and Conflict Specialist Wetzel hazed elk in the Thorp area several days this week. Elk were found in several areas and hazed either north or south. New elk movements were observed this week in that area.

A crop grower near Wiley City reported elk some elk in his hay fields along Ahtanum Creek. The landowner hazed the elk south, onto the Yakima Indian Nation.

No wolf-livestock conflicts were reported this week in the Teanaway Pack territory. New wolf tracks were reported and documented in several areas of the Naneum and Colockum this week.

A wolf telemetry signal was picked up near Liberty this week. The battery on the Radio Activated Guard (RAG) was replaced with a fresh one at a location near Liberty. No incidents were reported.



*RAG location near Liberty*

***GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY***

**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area - Manager Melissa Babik**

Assistant Manager Winegeart worked with the Kittitas County Sheriff's office to get a Junk Vehicle Affidavit form filled out so a tow truck would be allowed to remove a 1976 Datsun pickup from Beacon Ridge. Winegeart and Natural Resource Technician Daling pulled the vehicle from its semi earthly resting place to near the Wind Farm boundary for easier tow truck access.



***1976 Datsun pickup being pulled to a tow truck access point on Beacon Ridge***

Assistant Manager Winegeart attempted to keep the purchase process of a new L.T. Murray feed truck moving forward but was hit with a major roadblock. A couple months ago, there was a three to four month wait for building the truck. Now, the wait is 10 to 11 months, which takes us beyond the June 30 deadline for spending the money that was to be used for the purchase. Other options are being considered. There is an industry backlog on building the chassis for trucks of the size being ordered.

Assistant Manager Winegeart and Natural Resource Technician Daling walked into Quilomene Canyon to locate an old vehicle that will remain in place for the foreseeable future. The vehicle is about a quarter-mile from a road and the risk to habitat outweighs the benefit of removing the rubbish.



*Junk vehicle in Quilomene Canyon*

**Wenas Wildlife Area - Manager Cindi Confer Morris**

Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor met onsite to look at the Mellotte feed road and bridge. Significant amounts of water continue to flow over the feed road just south of the North Wenas Creek bridge crossing. Traveling through around one foot of water to and from the feed site is wetting down the brakes on the feed truck, causing them to freeze during the night. There is also a recently fallen tree, just above the bridge that, if mobilized by a high water event, is too large to go under the bridge. They will be in touch with Area Habitat Biologist Bartrand in the next week to discuss options to address both issues.



*Water over feed road, looking south towards feed site*



*Water over feed road, looking north towards bridge*



*Looking upstream from bridge at new tree across creek*

Assistant Manager Taylor spent a day with the CAMP fence inspector checking for substantial completion of Segment B for payment. They found some minor things that the contractor will need to correct. They were, however, concerned with the design and installation of the breakaway sections of fence in the draws. As currently done, the woven wire won't be able to break away from the fence during a gully washer, increasing the risk a new channel being cut and a section of fence being washed out. Taylor and Manager Confer Morris are working with CAMP to get this addressed. Confer Morris sent an email to CAMP Engineer Knechtel discussing corrections needed on the breakaways and CAMP is looking at drafting a change order to the contract. Given the soft soil conditions over the past week, the contractor is considering finishing Segment A and then waiting until soils firm up before starting Segment C.



*Breakaway in large draw with multiple t-posts pounded in on the downstream side of wire*

## **REGION 4**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Black Bear Workshop:** Region 4 staff members attended a two-day black bear workshop in Ellensburg. Department biologists and law enforcement personnel discussed new methodology to estimate bear populations and various bear management issues.

**Swan Collection:** Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo assisted District 14 Wildlife Program personnel with collecting multiple dead swans throughout Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties.

**Ebey Island and Snohomish Delta Grant Application:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw worked with Habitat Program and The Nature Conservancy personnel to draft a grant pre-proposal for submittal to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The application includes several projects, including a planning process for Ebey Island and Spencer Island on WDFW land that will consider recreation, agriculture, and habitat improvements.

### ***GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES***

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** All Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program sites are open for hunting. Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo along with Private Lands Biologist Wingard toured Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program sites to assess site use and identify issues.



**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program Site Maintenance:** Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo delivered and spread wood chips and gravel at various Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program parking sites that required maintenance.



*Repairing potholes at a Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program parking spot*

**Big Game Units:** Natural Resource Technician Otto checked status and user compliance of two Whatcom County game management units along with GMU 418 late archery hunt unit where recent heavy snow was found.



*Heavy snow in GMU 418 during the late archery hunt*

**Wind Storm 2019:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports a combined seven trees blew over along access roads and parking lots at Stillwater, Cherry Valley, and Crescent. Two of the trees damaged an access gate to the middle entrance at Stillwater Unit. Some cleanup has been started.



*Damage to an access gate at the Stillwater Unit by a recent windstorm*

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Tour with Ducks Unlimited:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Wildlife Area Manager Boehm toured Ducks Unlimited personnel around the Cherry Valley and Stillwater units to discuss conceptual plans to enhance habitat, improve drainage, and water retention infrastructure.



*Brian Boehm explains the layout and goals of the Stillwater Unit to Ducks Unlimited engineers and biologists*

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**Public Questions:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard and Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo were contacted by many hunters regarding hunting opportunities for waterfowl and wildlife viewing.

**Hunt by Reservation Double Bookings:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard and Natural Resource Technician Deyo worked extensively on addressing double bookings in the Hunt by Reservation system for Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program sites.

**Dead Vehicle Removal:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard worked with Sierra Pacific Industries personnel to remove abandoned vehicles from their property. Funding for this work was provided by a Department of Ecology grant.

**Planning Site Visit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm joined Project Coordinator Loren Brokaw, staff members from Ducks Unlimited, and the Drainage District 7 commissioner to visit Cherry Valley and Stillwater units to discuss further plans for wetland, drainage and farm land improvements. Ducks Unlimited received funding last year to conduct maintenance and conservation work on these units.

## **REGION 5**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Winter Swan Surveys:** This week, biologists across the state conducted the annual coordinated winter waterfowl surveys with emphasis on brant, seaducks, Puget Sound migratory species, Skagit-Fraser snow geese, and winter swans. As part of this effort, District 9 Biologists Bergh, Wickhem, and Burlingame conducted swan surveys at several locations along the Columbia River Gorge and in Clark County. Over the past three winters, biologists have documented an expansion in trumpeter swan distribution in western Washington and a shift or displacement in the distribution of tundra swans. Waterfowl biologists asked for a special emphasis on swans during this year's winter waterfowl survey in order to document distribution of each species, species composition of large swan flocks, and age class information (juvenile vs adult). With all sites combined, Bergh, Wickhem, and Burlingame documented 1,127 swans, the majority of which were found in Clark County.



***Biologists Bergh and Burlingame conducting winter swan surveys***

**Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey:** Biologists Stephens, Burlingame, and Holman conducted mid-winter waterfowl surveys in Cowlitz, Lewis, and Wahkiakum counties. This year's effort was an abbreviated version from year's past and focused on detections of swans. During the survey, 108 trumpeter swans, 16 tundra swans and 93 unidentifiable swans (either tundra or trumpeter) were located. Data will be compiled and provided to Olympia game management staff members for submission to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



*Biologist Holman conducting mid-winter waterfowl surveys*

**Dusky Canada Geese:** Biologist Burlingame surveyed areas in Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties for dusky geese. Small flocks of duskies were observed, along with large flocks of cackling, taverners, western, and snow geese.

**New Fencing:** Assistant Manager Hawk and Technician Fox completed work on a new fence in the Shillapoo North Unit. The fence will exclude cattle from grazing along a seasonally flooded channel that drains into the Shillapoo lakebed. The excluded area will be populated with native trees and shrubs later this winter and is the third native planting along this drainage channel.



*New fence in the Shillapoo North Unit*

**Fuel Break Maintenance Planning:** Assistant Manager Steveson continued planning efforts with the Eastern Washington, Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew project coordinator to arrange for a crew to work on fuel break maintenance. Confirmation was also secured that part of the project would be supported by funds for forest management work, which is a statewide priority for WDFW.

***GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES.***

**Southwest Washington Goose Management Area 2-Inland:** Biologist Burlingame checked goose hunters in Clark County to collect goose harvest information and monitor for any dusky harvest violations. In total, eight cacklers and three snow geese were checked, with no violations observed during monitoring. The total number of dusky harvest violations this season is two, both of which were found at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge check station. The goose season in GMA 2-Inland closed on Jan. 13. The season will re-open Feb. 9, with WDFW wildlife areas and national wildlife refuges being closed to goose hunting. Please review the goose section of the Migratory Game Bird Seasons in the regulations book for details.

**Contract Renewal:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist/Private Lands Biologist Jacobsen worked on a three-year contract extension for a Register to Hunt access site for waterfowl hunting in Wahkiakum County. A second Register to Hunt waterfowl access site in Wahkiakum County was also uploaded and posted online to the WDFW Private Lands Hunting Access page: [https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting\\_access/private\\_lands/search.php](https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/search.php)

**Master Hunter Assistance:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist/Private Lands Biologist Jacobsen provided information regarding land access and elk damage to Master Hunters participating in the ongoing special-permit hunt for Elk Area 5062.

***GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.***

**Cougar Sighting:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted about a cougar sighting near residences in Klickitat County. Jacobsen provided advice and contacted nearby landowners with goat operations. Information was also passed along to WDFW Enforcement personnel.

**Cougar Concerns:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to cougar concerns from a landowner in Clark County. Animal scat had been found on the property, and the landowner was concerned for the safety of this family and his horses. Advice and cougar deterrent recommendations were given.

**Youth Elk Hunts:** WDFW Conflict Specialist Conklin deployed a youth hunter to an agricultural area in the Castle Rock area. She was successful her first day!



***Successful youth hunter on the Boultinghouse Farm.***

In addition, Wildlife Conflict Specialist and Master Hunter Greg Glass teamed up to escort two youth hunters on separate farms in the Randle area. So far neither harvested.

**Cougar:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to a call regarding a citizen concerned about pets missing in the neighborhood and believed it was due to cougars.

**Elk Fencing Cost Share projects:** Fencing materials were delivered to two farms in Lewis County. The truckload of fencing bound for several locations had shifted in transit and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin had to seek out a forklift from a nearby vendor to stabilize and re-load the materials prior to the WDFW fencing being unloaded.



*Shifted truckload of fencing*



*Dunn Christmas Tree Farm fencing. Cost share fencing materials stored at Timber Wolf. Feed in Morton.*

***GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY.***

**Ranching and Conservation:** Wildlife Conflict Specialists Jacobsen and Caldwell, along with Conflict Section Manager Brinson, attended an all-day seminar in Oregon titled, “Strategies for Ranching and Conservation on a Landscape with Wolves.” The seminar was extremely beneficial, and staff members learned valuable information about stockmanship and livestock operations in wolf country.



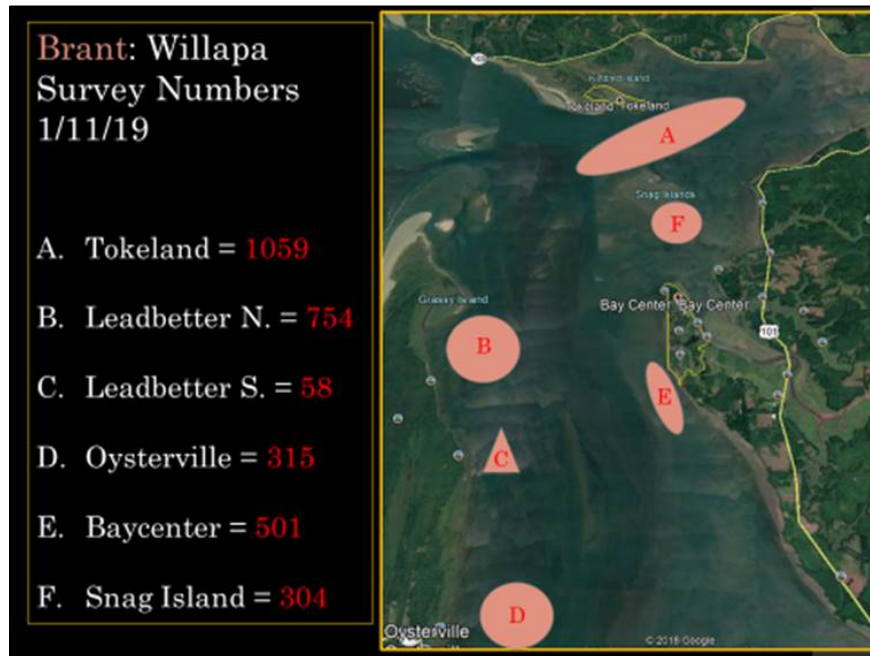
**Statewide Black Bear Management Meeting:** Biologists Bergh, Wickhem, Holman, Stephens, and Conflict Specialist Conklin travelled to Ellensburg to participate in a meeting on black bear management across the state. Carnivore Section Personnel held the meeting in preparation for the upcoming update to the Game Management Plan, which is reviewed every six years. Input from district wildlife biologists, conflict specialists, and enforcement captains was heard on topics including harvest management, human-bear conflict, bear timber damage, and overall bear population management. It was very valuable to hear opinions and experience from across the state and across programs regarding all topics. Further meetings may be planned and smaller groups formed to tackle specific issues.

**Remote Elk Deterrent:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen completed the circuitry and construction of an elk-hazing device that can be deployed remotely without the need for an 110v AC power source. The device will employ both motion and flashing light components. Some final changes are needed before the device can be fully deployed. Its first task will likely be to assist a golf course owner with keeping elk off the delicate putting greens.

## **REGION 6**

### ***GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES***

**Brant Survey (Willapa):** Biologists Novack, Sundstrom, and Michaelis conducted a ground count for brant in Willapa Bay just prior to the opening day for hunting brant in Pacific County on Jan. 12. The total count was 2,991 birds, slightly above the multi-year average of 2,683 birds since 2010.



**Goose Hunter Checks:** Biologist Michaelis and Sundstrom continued field checking and goose hunter contacts in Goose Management Area 2. Michaelis primarily operated in the southern portion of Pacific County. During the second reporting period, (Jan. 6 through 12) hunters field checked in Pacific County reported greater success than the prior week and thought that perhaps more birds had moved into the area at this time.

Date	Location /County	# of Hunters	ii' or phoned in	<i>December 30<sup>th</sup> – January 12<sup>th</sup> Goose Hunter Checks Goose Species Reported or Recorded</i>								
				Cackler	Aleutian	Taverner	Lesser	Dusky	Western	GWF	Snow	UK/Other
12-30	SW PA	3	ii'			3						
1-5	SW PA	3	ii'	5		2						
1-9	SW PA	1	PI	2		3						
Totals		7		7		7						

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

**Waterfowl Forage:** Biologist Harris met with a producer to verify cover crop seeding on Feel Free to Hunt lands for reimbursement. This producer also has a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) with the WDFW. He stated that due to the fast response this year damage to corn by elk was minimal so he did not need to file a damage claim. The producers spouse is very active with local and statewide agricultural groups. She stated that many producers are still reluctant to work with the department due to past experiences. That is slowly changing and she is sharing their farms positive experience.



*Swans enjoying winter wheat purchased with state duck stamp funds*

**Parking Lot Cleaning:** The water access team spent several hours in Thurston County, concentrating on cleaning up limbs and asphalt after the recent storms. Several trees also blew down and property fences were damaged, all of which were documented and will be repaired after all sites are inspected and the first stage of cleaning up is complete.

*Ward Lake*



*Munn Lake*



*St. Clair Lake*



*Offut Lake: Before*



*After*



**Clearwater Cabin:** Biologist Harris and two Eyes in the Woods volunteers who happen to also be Master Hunters spent the weekend at the Clearwater cabin preparing for upcoming Matheny Habitat Project work parties. Several tasks were completed with the replacement of chicken wire on the steps being the most important. Due to the climate, the steps can get very slippery. While not the most aesthetic, chicken wire works great and provides very stable traction. It is also time consuming being installed correctly.



*Steps are now safe again!*



*One of the local Clearwater elk groups was using the Donkey Creek field*

***GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE***

**Private Timberlands Request for Assistance:** Biologist Harris received a call from a private timber company taking him up on his offer to assist when needed. Most of their land is on the north end of the region with a few thousand acres spread out on the southern end. They had received a report of two mystery barrels being dumped on an access road. This road is open for people to access a WDFW water access site. They were very concerned and asked if he could respond and send them some pictures, as it would take several hours for their personnel to look at. He did as requested and determined that the barrels were actually dumped on a different timber company's property. Based on his observation he determined that nothing good was in these barrels, but one was leaking. He communicated his observations to all landowners involved. Last report the Department of Ecology was in route to remove.



*Drums of an unknown substance dumped along a private timber company road that is open to public access*

**Satsop Elk:** Natural Resource Technician Tupen continued to check on the whereabouts of the herd of elk hanging around near Highway 12. The herd has finally been reduced, as two master hunters with permits for the area were able to harvest. Efforts to manage group size and behavior are continuing. Biologist Harris is in the process of renewing and developing Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements (DPCAs) with some landowners in the area and will be issuing damage permits. Master Hunters will soon be harvesting for a tribal senior nutrition program.