

# Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

June 16 to June 30, 2019

## **DIVERSITY DIVISION**

### ***HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:***

#### **1) Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Bat Monitoring:** WDFW biologists Tobin, Salzer, and Holman conducted emergence counts at a little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) maternity colony in Lewis County. WDFW is counting maternity colonies throughout the state as part of the response to discovering white-nose syndrome in Washington back in 2016. This allows WDFW to track the health and size of these colonies.



*Little brown bats roosting inside a barn in Lewis County - Photo by L. Salzer*

#### **2) Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this reporting period.

#### **3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this reporting period.

#### **4) Conserving Natural Landscapes**

**Western Working Lands for Wildlife Workshop:** Farm Bill Coordinator Mike Kuttel, Jr. and Private Lands Wildlife Biologist Eric Braaten participated in the 2019 western Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) workshop in Twin Falls, Idaho. WLFW is an initiative led by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), state fish and wildlife agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private landowners to conserve fish and wildlife habitat on private working lands. Farm Bill conservation programs provide funding for NRCS technical and financial assistance and the USFWS provides regulatory predictability to private landowners who implement fish and wildlife conservation practices. The Sage Grouse Initiative is the largest example of a WLFW program covering 11 western states including Washington. Over 200 people attended the workshop. The second day featured a tour of landscape scale sage grouse conservation projects in southern Idaho and northwest Utah. The primary focus of these projects was juniper removal from shrubsteppe areas. The take home messages were the power of partnerships, importance of

building and maintaining relationships, and the importance of maintaining large connected landscapes to provide fish and wildlife habitat. This is a challenge with human development pressures, but the low population and focus on ranching in this landscape make it possible.



*Portion of the Grouse Creek Watershed in northwest Utah viewed on tour*

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this reporting period.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this reporting period.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this reporting period.

**GAME DIVISION**

Nothing for this reporting period.

## **HUNTER EDUCATION**

### ***HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:***

#### **1) Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nothing for this reporting period.

#### **2) Providing Recreation Opportunities**

**Pheasant pens construction:** On June 29, a large group of master hunters assembled in Duvall to help construction on the pheasant holding pen for the Western Washington Pheasant Program. We ended up with 14 people who were vital to the project's completion. They spent six hours performing tasks such as digging then filling a 12 inch by 150 foot trench for ground wire, donating and running equipment used to move drain rock, hanging and stapling side wire, hog ringing over 500' of fencing, and nailing braces on support posts.



#### **3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Region 6 Coordinator Montgomery assisted Conflict Specialist Blankenship with finding volunteers for fencing projects in Pierce and Thurston counties.

Region 1 Coordinator Whorton helped a new regional master hunter representative facilitate master hunter programs within the region (i.e. coordination of test proctoring and assistance on wildlife damage issues).

#### **4) Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Regional Coordinator Elliott attended the Merrill Lake Project Dedication, celebrating our partnership with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) in securing 1,453 acres of prime wildlife and riparian habitat, with unique natural features and geology. The Merrill Lake Unit is part of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area and will be open to the public for hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, hiking, and other outdoor recreation under WDFW management. The event included WDFW personnel (local, headquarters, and retired), RMEF members (local and national), Recreation and Conservation Office staff members, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program members, a county commissioner, reporters, volunteers, and members of the public.





*Region 3 Coordinator Garcia sent several emails out for volunteer opportunities in Regions 1 and 3*

## **5) Providing Education and Outreach**

**Hunter Education Deferrals:** In June, the Hunter Education Program administrative assistant processed twenty-two deferrals. The hunter education deferral is a once in a lifetime, one year deferral from the hunter education requirement, and allows a new hunter into the field as long as they are accompanied by a qualified, experienced hunter. The idea is that after a season hunting on a deferral (try it before you buy it) the new hunter will complete hunter education and join the hunting community.

**LEO and Military Exemptions:** The Hunter Education Program administrative assistant processed thirty-nine military and four peace officer exemptions in June. This program allows qualifying active and retired peace officers and military personnel to obtain an exemption from the field skills portion of any hunter education course is completed online.

Region 5 Coordinator Elliott traveled to hunter education classes in Bickleton and Klickitat to observe and evaluate classes, deliver supplies, and hand out service awards. She also met with instructors from Castle Rock and Salmon Creek/Cougar to do inventories and help organize and prepare supplies for upcoming classes. After an event, she was able to present Scott Hageman with the Regional Coordinator's Award for 2019. This award is given to an instructor or a team who goes above and beyond and/or meets a critical need for hunter education. Scott is the chief instructor for a team in Vancouver and was recognized for his willingness to help in hunter education classes, trainings, and outreach events.





*Hunter education class held during the last week of school in Bickleton (left), Elliott presenting the 2019 Coordinator's Award to Scott Hageman (right)*

Regional Coordinator Elliott held a pre-service training for four new instructors at the Ridgefield regional office. All will now be partnered with a local team to assist with a class and complete their certification.

Elliott worked with Washington Outdoor Women (WOW) and assisted as an instructor for their Women's Shotgun Workshop at Sumner Sportsmen's Club. Ten instructors (seven of which are WDFW hunter education instructors) trained 18 women on shotgun basics, safety, and shooting technique in this seven-hour hands-on event. WOW encouraged further involvement by making sure all participants had information on where to find shooting ranges, how to take hunter education classes, and listing places they could get more training or take additional workshops.



*WOW shotgun workshop participants and instructors in the classroom and on the range*

Region Coordinator Montgomery visited several, hunter education classes in Raymond, Port Townsend, JBLM, and Bremerton doing evaluations, assisting with supplies, enjoying the fellowship, teaching, and delivering service awards.



*Instructor Jerry Bowman with his 15-year and Jim Martindale with 35-year awards*

Montgomery is also continuing work for National Hunting and Fishing Day, making a site visit with Volunteer Program Manager Redmond to evaluate site layout. The list of sponsors and partners is completed, and now we are working with marketing on prizes and general logistics.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia visited classes in Cle Elum, Quincy, and Wenatchee.

Region 1 Coordinator Whorton continues to assist new hunter education teams in Pend Oreille County with their organizational efforts, providing WDFW hunter education material to advance their success.

Coordinator Garcia assisted in a women only shooting event hosted by the Horse Heaven Hills Sportsmen Club, where over 60 participants were able to shoot rifles, shotguns, and handguns under the supervision of experience shooting mentors.

Coordinator Garcia attended a welcome event for Stacy Wilson at The Range in Yakima. Stacy is now the marketing and outreach manager for them. She has some great ideas for youth outreach events and plans to increase the number of hunter education classes offered at The Range.

**Master Hunter Permit Program Recruitment:** Program Specialist Kris Thorson worked with Hunter Education Division Manager David Whipple to reopen the Master Hunter Permit Program (MHPP). The MHPP was closed due to the budget challenges WDFW faced in the 2019 legislative session. Thorson updated the MHPP websites as well as requesting the new MHPP study materials post to the website. The MHPP open application period is from July 1 through August 15, 2019. For more information, please visit the MHPP website at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/master-hunter>.

Coordinator Montgomery assisted Dr. Rich Harris filling the final 20 driving shifts, for the Mountain Goat Relocation Project.

## 6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Regional Coordinator Elliott attended Conservation Communications training at the Region 5 office in Ridgefield.

The Hunter Education Division met with the marketing team to coordinate R-4 objectives.

## 7) **Other**

Regional Coordinators Elliott and Montgomery attended the memorial service of a long-time hunter education instructor in southwest Washington. Not only was the instructor a military veteran, but he was a dedicated educator of 25 years for WDFW and also gave much time back to youth shooting sports in his participation with the state and national Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC). His impact in the hunter education world was apparent. In addition to the coordinators, nine other instructors attended the service and several more reached out and had hoped to but were unable due to other conflicts.

## **LANDS DIVISION**

### ***HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:***

#### 1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Bumblebee Surveys and Habitat Evaluations:** Vegetation Ecologist Merg assisted wildlife area personnel on the Sinlahekin and Sherman Creek wildlife areas to survey three bumblebee communities and the habitats in which the bees are collecting pollen. The Sinlahekin site was improved last year with additional forbs, which already are attracting visits from the target bee species. The sites on Sherman Creek are tentatively scheduled for prescribed burns this fall, and then would be improved for bees by planting forbs this fall.





*A group of **Bombus nevadensis** queens before release*



*Team bumblebee members, clockwise from left foreground, Rich Hatfield (Xerces Society), Daro Palmer (WDFW) and Ann Potter (WDFW)*

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this reporting period.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this reporting period.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

**Emergency Restrictions to Prevent Wildfires:** Land Stewardship and Operations Section Manager Dahmer coordinated implementation of emergency rules to restrict activities on WDFW wildlife areas and access areas in eastern Washington. Campfires, target shooting, smoking outside of vehicles, the use of chainsaws and vehicle parking away from roadsides and parking areas are not permitted until further notice. The director has granted exceptions to WDFW staff members to continue land operations while taking extra precautions.

**Ventenata Field Tour:** Vegetation Ecologist Merg attended a field tour of four sites on which the herbicide indaziflam (Esplanade) has been used to control *Ventenata dubia*, a very problematic annual grass weed that has infested especially deep-soil, relatively mesic habitats in eastern WA, the panhandle of Idaho and northeast Oregon. Nevertheless, Ventenata recently has been detected in more arid environments of the Blue Mountains and in central Washington on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The tour highlighted research sponsored by Bayer, and showcased impressive levels of Ventenata control achieved with indaziflam applications by academic researchers from University of Idaho and Washington State University. Merg was able to discuss with Bayer's chief scientist for the western US States some trials with indaziflam on native, perennial grasses some of which are thought to be sensitive to this molecule. The sensitivity is not yet fully understood, but may depend on soil conditions.

**Wooten Wildlife Area Forest Thinning:** Thinning and piling is complete along Tucannon Road, and nearly finished off Mountain Road on the Wooten Wildlife Area Precommercial Thinning Project. Slash piles along roadways will likely be burned this fall. Trees are now free to grow and should make beautiful pine stands until the next management entry. Stands on this project ranged from very dense thickets to moderately dense planted ponderosa pine plantations to roadside fuels reduction under established canopy.



*Foreman on the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area precommercial thinning project is working in a particularly dense thicket of pine and hardwood brush*





*Recently thinned ponderosa pine stand that previously contained over 1,000 ponderosa pine saplings per acre*



*Light thinning around Wooten Wildlife Area campground removed some excess trees, while still providing screening to neighboring campsites*

**Ramsey Forest Restoration Thinning Project Completion:** Forester Mize continues to administer this harvesting services contract on the Methow Wildlife Area as thinning activities wind down after seven weeks. All harvest activities are complete with the final deliveries shipped on June 24. Forester Mize conducted a final inspection of the harvest area and all road maintenance on June 27. In addition, forester Mize collected all the ticket books and branding hammer assigned to this project. During the final compliance check, Forester Mize continued to take photos from designated locations to document the transition from pre-harvest to post-harvest conditions.





*Ramsey restoration thinning photo point two pre-harvest condition*



*Ramsey restoration thinning photo point two post-harvest condition*

**Mount St. Helens Thin Completed:** Forester Pfeifle did a final inspection of the Mount St. Helens Thinning Project on the Mudflow Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area on Monday, June 24. Work on the project began last summer, took a break for the winter, and resumed in late March of this year. The contractor fulfilled all contractual obligations and will be purchasing grass seed for abandoned roads to complete the sale closeout process. The purpose of the project was to thin over-stocked Douglas-fir industry plantations that are approximately 40 years old, releasing dominant trees in the stand to accelerate the growth of residual leave trees.

This in turn will lead to a healthy mature forest that will eventually develop into a late successional forest condition that is severely underrepresented in the area. Additionally, small five to 10 acre patch cuts were created in red alder dominated groves to improve browse production on the wildlife area. Thanks to everyone who helped to make this another successful forest restoration project.



*Forest prior to thinning in 2016*



*Thinned forest (June 24, 2019)*

**Prescribe (Rx) Burn Season, Spring 2019:** Spring prescribed burning officially ended on June 11, 2019 on WDFW lands due to warm dry conditions. Rx fire crews will continue to monitor sites that received treatments to confirm no heat is remaining. During the spring, 1445 acres received prescribed fire treatments to eliminate decadent brush, unwanted and invasive plant species, and forest debris to improve wildlife habitat and reduce wildfire potential. WDFW fire crews will now focus to prepare for the fall burning season in previously thinned forest areas. Staff members anticipate burning on the Sherman Creek, Rustlers, L.T. Murray, Oak Creek, Grouse Flats, and 4-O wildlife areas this fall, said Fire Program Manager, Eberlein.



Just because there is fire doesn't mean the animals have to leave. There are concerns that prescribed fire chases away wildlife and destroys habitat. Actually, the prescribed burns we conduct are lower intensity burns with short duration. Wildlife have been seen coming back into burned areas overnight and between operational shifts. Other animals just move outside the area and return later to graze on the newly regenerated vegetation, said Fire Program Manager, Eberlein.



*Ground nesting bird eggs located inside prescribed burn area three weeks after the burn (Methow Wildlife Area)*



*A cow and calf grazing in a wet area just outside of the prescribed fire unit as the unit was being burnt. Sherman Creek Wildlife Area*

**Klickitat Wildlife Area Grazing Monitoring:** Range Ecologist Burnham monitored long-term plots on the Kayser-Davenport permit on the Soda Springs Unit. The permit will be up for potential renewal next year. New monitoring plots were established on the Fisher Hill Unit to better reflect where future grazing utilization can be expected in the event of permit renewals next year.





*Vigorous Oregon white oak (and poison oak) understory in Oregon white oak woodland, Wide Sky Canyon, Fisher Hill Unit*

**Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex Grazing Monitoring:** Range Ecologist Burnham monitored long-term plots on a grazing permit on the Weatherly Unit. This permit will also be up for potential renewal, next year.



*Steppe, old agricultural area, and pond, Weatherly Unit*



## 7) Other

Nothing for this reporting period.

## **SCIENCE DIVISION**

### *HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:*

#### 1) Managing Wildlife Populations

##### **Puget Sound Ecosystem Monitoring Program (PSEMP) Winter Seabird Aerial Survey**

**Data Preparation:** As part of the final efforts to process and distribute data from 18 years of the winter seabird aerial surveys in Puget Sound, IT Specialist Simper worked on converting analytic survey results into raster GIS format (around 1200 raster layers) for display in a public-facing web map. Simper coordinated with IT Specialist Kreuziger to develop an enterprise spatial database to store this data as well as the geo-processed vector data (survey routes and observation points). After creating and applying metadata, web services were published from this data so that they could be used by the custom web map as well as being made available to the public or external organizations as a downloadable file-geodatabase on WDFW's Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) based, GIS Open Data portal (<http://data-wdfw.opendata.arcgis.com/>).

**PSEMP Winter Seabird Aerial Survey Webmap:** IT Specialist Whelan completed development of a custom web map to display 18 years of seabird population estimates generated from winter seabird aerial surveys in Puget Sound Puget sound aerial surveys. This web map allows users to explore the abundance estimates (grouped by 36 basin-depth spatial units) for approximately 60 seabird species or species groups. A WDFW website "landing" page is being created to describe this project in further details and provide links to this web map (<https://gispublic.dfw.wa.gov/WinterSeabird/>)

**Ferruginous Hawk Periodic Status Review:** Biologist Blatz concluded work on a long-term project to analyze ferruginous hawk breeding and distribution data from around 40 years of available survey information. Analyses requested by Wildlife Diversity included: 1) summary statistics for territory occupancy and productivity, 2) county-based territory activity per year, and 3) distribution objective outcomes in each of three Washington recovery zones defined within the 1996 recovery plan. Recent ferruginous hawk breeding activity between 2006 and 2016 showed an average of 21.8 active territories per year over five non-consecutive years. The recovery plan set the threshold for down listing the ferruginous hawk as an average of 60 active breeding pairs per year over five consecutive years.

#### 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this reporting period.



3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this reporting period.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this reporting period.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this reporting period.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this reporting period.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this reporting period.

**REGION 1**

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Bumblebee Conservation:** Assistant District Biologist Vekasy submitted the final bumblebee survey data for the two high priority cells in western Walla Walla County. Vekasy also submitted a number of incidental bumblebee sightings collected during other activities.



*Central bumblebee and Metallic green bee from near Touchet, WA*

**Blue Mountains Elk Plan:** District Biologist Wik continues to work with the deer and elk section manager to make the final edits to the Blue Mountains Elk Plan. The plan should be finalized within a couple of weeks and available to the public. This plan will be the guiding document for elk management in the Blue Mountains for the foreseeable future.

**Cougar Management:** District Biologist Wik participated in a two-day meeting of Wildlife Program management staff members tasked with reviewing how cougar harvest is regulated. This process will result in a proposal(s) that will go out to the public for comment and then to the commission this coming fall, with accepted changes going into effect during the next hunting season.

**Golden Eagle Monitoring:** Assistant District Biologist Vekasy joined Research Scientist Watson, Habitat Biologists Karl and Schirm, Wildlife Area Manager Dingman, and four interns from the University of Idaho to tag golden eagle fledglings near the Wooten Wildlife Area. Tagging eagles along the Tucannon is part of an ongoing project to monitor adult territory use near wind power development areas, and assess fledgling survival and dispersal patterns.



*Blue Mountain Wildlife Area Complex University of Idaho interns with two golden eagle fledglings near Marengo*

**Bat Monitoring:** Wildlife Biologists Wik and Vekasy reviewed the monitoring plan being submitted to Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for surveys related to Highway 730 safety work, stabilizing and protecting the roadway from rock fall in an area that is part of McNary National Wildlife Refuge. WSDOT will be contracting WDFW to conduct the surveys on USFWS property.

## **2) Providing Recreation Opportunities**

**Hazard Tree Removal:** Access Manager Daniel Dziekan removed dead hazard trees, including one that had already fallen over, from the Newman Lake and Deer Lake access sites. He also worked with volunteers and Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer to remove a dying tree at the Beaver Creek access site at Rustlers Gulch Wildlife Area.



*Newman Lake cottonwoods, before and after*



*Palmer operating wood chipper at Beaver Creek, with limb removal help from volunteers*

**Hunter Contacts:** Wildlife Biologists Wik and Vekasy responded to numerous hunter calls and emails related to permit hunt opportunities across District 3.

### **3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

**Deterrence Patrols:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Weatherman conducted patrols in the Old Profanity Territory (OPT) pack home range. One patrol was conducted on an off road vehicle to better locate the cattle. Three large groups of cattle were discovered around salting areas and an older water hole. Fox Lights were placed at these sites as a deterrence measure. Weatherman conducted one patrol within the Smackout pack home range. During the patrol, it was discovered that the Smackout pack had moved the rendezvous site closer to a USFS grazing allotment occupied by cattle. The producer will be contacted to advise of the pack change and discuss grazing options if any. The producer has an on-site range rider.



**Producer Contacts:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade made calls to producers who are on private and public grazing pastures and allotments to check on preventative measure implementation.

**Non-Lethal Deterrence:** Natural Resource Technician Seitz, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman, and Natural Resource Technician Fish hung fladry around a federal grazing allotment in District 1 to prevent wolf-livestock conflict. Natural Resource Technician Seitz set up several game cameras in the OPT wolf pack territory.

**Eight Raccoons in Dayton:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley worked with a homeowner who was complaining about too many raccoons that are living in the neighbor's empty house. Rasley set four live traps and was able to trap and remove five in the first night. Thanks to Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade's secret bait....marshmallows!



**Clarkston Raccoons:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade assisted Wildlife Area Manager Dice with a raccoon trapping effort. Dice and Wade successfully trapped four raccoons that were living under a resident's porch. Wade also responded to a report of a raccoon getting into a garden shed nightly and eating the resident's cat food. Wade discussed with the homeowner that leaving pet food outside would only continue to draw unwanted wildlife to their property and agreed to help the homeowner set a live trap in an attempt to remove the raccoon.

**Skunks and Chickens:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley was called out to a farm on the edge of town regarding "mean skunks harassing chickens." Rasley set a live trap and was able to very carefully trap and remove two skunks this week. So far no more problems with "mean skunks."

#### 4) Conserving Natural Areas

**Cross-Program Coordination:** Wildlife Biologist Baarstad and Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Finch met with Habitat Biologist Kunz to discuss implementation of the Imbler Creek Restoration Project on the Revere Wildlife Area. Funded by the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA), the project will establish new shrub plantings to stabilize the riparian area and provide wildlife habitat. Baarstad, Kunz, and Finch will visit the site next week.

**Fire Break Inspection and Maintenance:** Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch toured firebreaks along county roads on and near Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area, with Lincoln County Conservation District (LCCD) Manager Elsa Bowen and Outreach Coordinator Val Vissia, on June 25. These roadside strips were cleared of vegetation between 2013 and 2019, and vegetation has grown high in the older sites. LCCD Manager Elsa Bowen will draw up a proposal for herbicide-based vegetation control, to keep the strips fire-resistant. She will run the plan by U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) area Fire Manager Richard Parrish for approval and funding, using federal fire management money.



*Lincoln County Conservation District Manager Elsa Bowen alongside rabbit brush regrowth at firebreak cleared in 2013*

**Blue Mountains Wildlife Areas Stock Fences:** Wildlife area staff members along with interns from University of Idaho continue to perform maintenance and rebuilding of stock fences in the South Fork of Asotin Creek and Grouse Flats areas. Rough terrain makes the task tougher when materials and tools need to be on site. So far, all fences along USFS boundaries are up at South Fork and at Grouse Flats wildlife areas.

**Blue Mountains Wildlife Areas Agricultural Activities:** Technician Wynn Stallcop has had a busy spring planting crops for holding big game on the wildlife areas. Most of the work has been at Smoothing Iron Ridge and where a few hundred elk are consistently hanging out on WDFW fields. A 20-acre alfalfa field is especially a big success for elk. Spring wheat patches planted

along Joseph Creek are looking good. Wynn recently moved a District 4 tractor and disk to the 4-O Wildlife Area for disking in ditches at the Mace fields where we are working with the leaseholder to establish grass cover on the fields.

**4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Field Inspections:** Biologist Woodall and 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Permittee Doug Jones looked at a field restoration project to come up with a plan to get the Stucker Field out of the weeds and more functional for wildlife and lease operations. They looked at other fields the lessee is managing. They also came across a lightning struck tree that was still smoking. They dug a line around the tree and called DNR firefighters with its location. WDFW engineers had been there recently smoothing the road, adding water runoff drainage, and putting gravel on the road.



*Lightning struck tree still smoldering after a storm*





*Permittee Doug Jones helping to contain fire*



*New gravel laid down by WDFW engineers*

**Chief Joseph Wildlife Area Maintenance Work:** Biologist Woodall and interns spent majority of the week at Joseph Creek. They performed some field mowing, lawn mowing and weed eating around the bunkhouse, watering the yard, setting up of irrigation for two fields, and spraying some skeleton weed.

#### **5) Providing Education and Outreach**

**Lands Camp at Whitman College:** Assistant District Biologist Vekasy checked the information display for the 2019 Northwest Lands Camp at Whitman College. Unfortunately, there were no attendees present during the times Vekasy was staffing the display.

**Asotin Creek Wildlife Area Back Country Horsemen Kid's Kamp:** The Twin Rivers Chapter of Back Country Horsemen (BCH) hosted their annual Kid's Kamp at the buildings at Smoothing Iron Ridge. The goal is to teach young people horseback riding skills in mountainous areas, environmental awareness, and camping/survival skills. There were about 25 participants who camped out in and around WDFW's buildings. BCH members used the Schlee house for preparing meals as well as having a place where participants could shower up after a long day on the trail.



*Kid's Kamp participants sorting used t-posts for reuse or disposal*



*One of WDFW's barns being used by camp participants for housing horses*



*Cleaning up after their horse*

**W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area and State Parks Support:** Wildlife Area Access Manager Dingman wrote a letter of support for State Parks to include in an application packet for a Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) grant they are applying for. The grant funds will be used to purchase an Emriver 2 portable stream table to use for educational talks in showing children and adults how rivers function and how floodplains are formed.

#### **6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

**Training:** Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley attended and participated in Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Health training in at the Washington State University Plant Material Lab in Pullman. Field visits, including landowner testimonials and soil sampling were done in evaluation of soil condition of the varied tillage practices.

**Stevens County Commissioner and GIS Staff Meeting:** Supervisor McCanna and eastside GIS and Data Analyst Whelan met with Stevens County Commissioner Dashiell and two Stevens County GIS staff members regarding wolf data sharing information, priority habitat species and staff log in requirements. McCanna and Whelan will update Regional Director Pozzanghera on the meeting and next steps.

#### **7) Other**

**Cultural Resources Training:** Private Lands Biologist Gaston completed his Cultural Resources Training in Wenatchee as part of his requirements to become an Natural Resources Conservation Science Certified Planner.



## **REGION 2**

### *HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:*

#### 1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

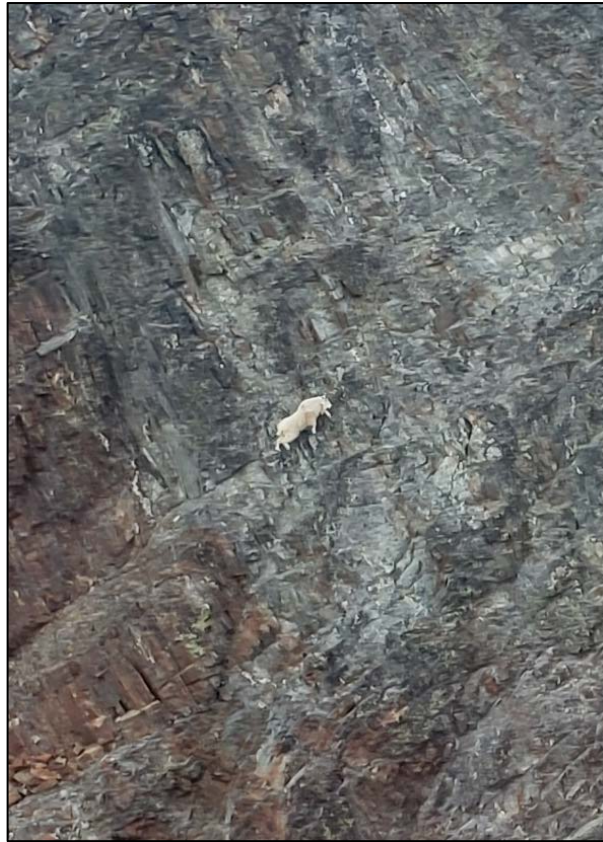
**Common Loon Surveys:** Biologist Fitkin and USFS Biologist Rohrer surveyed the Hidden Lakes chain in the Pasayten Wilderness for nesting loon activity. The over 40-mile trip was well worth the effort yielding a pair of loons with a chick on Big Hidden Lake and a territorial pair on Middle Hidden. Loons were foraging on all lakes in the chain. This is the first recent verification of chick production at this site following public reports of reproductive activity for several years.



*From top: Common loon pair and common loon pair with a chick* – Photos by S. Fitkin

**Mountain goats:** Acting District Biologist Comstock and Conflict Specialist Bridges conducted two days of aerial mountain goat surveys for the South Shore Lake Chelan population. After a difficult first day of intensive surveying, which yielded few goat detections, Biologist Comstock decided to try a different strategy with exploratory flights in high alpine habitats to the west, which yielded higher detections. However low cloud layers impeded further exploration of survey areas further to the north towards the North Cascades National Park. Historically the

Chelan Public Utility District (PUD) has conducted winter surveys from a boat, which have had variable results due to challenges with rugged terrain and visibility. In order to better assess the mountain goat population, WDFW and the Chelan PUD entered into an agreement in which the PUD provides funds to conduct annual aerial wildlife surveys within the Lake Chelan Basin. A final report will be completed and submitted to the Chelan PUD by the end of the year.



*Billy goat scaling a rock wall in Glacier Peak Wilderness* - Photo by Devon Comstock

**Western Gray Squirrel Surveys:** Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen, and volunteers Fisher and Machowicz continued with western gray squirrel surveys. Biologist Fitkin got gray squirrel hits on two transects this period bringing the number of positive detections to four so far this year. This is year two of a three-year effort to assess occupancy across the range of the animal and inform the five-year status review of this state threatened species.



*Positive hair sample from a western gray squirrel survey tube* – Photo by S. Fitkin



**Wolf Monitoring:** Biologist Fitkin checked several cameras deployed in the Upper Methow Watershed to monitor possible wolf activity outside of the territory of known packs. To date the cameras have not detected wolves, but many other critters are making an appearance including a lynx with a blue ear tag from an earlier study indicating it is at least eight years old.



*From top: Pair of cougars out for an evening stroll, curious black bear, Canada lynx* – Photos by WDFW remote camera



**Lynx Surveys:** Biologist Fitkin in partnership with Washington State University (WSU) and the Woodland Park Zoo deployed the season's first set of lynx survey cameras in the Pasayten Wilderness. This is an extension of Professor Dan Thornton's lynx occupancy model work to the remote backcountry environment. This effort will help refine the lynx occupancy model for the Okanogan Lynx Management Zone and assist in developing a long-term monitoring strategy for this species. The project is funded in part by a Seattle City Light research grant.



*Lynx country in the west fork of the Pasayten River drainage* – Photo by S. Fitkin

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Bear Creek Prescribed Burn and Ramsey Creek Commercial Logging:** The Ramsey Creek timber sale was completed this past week. Additionally, the WDFW burn team and Brothers Firefighting have completed the Bear Creek prescribed burn. The 250-acre Bear Creek burn unit was commercially thinned in the winter of 2016. Thank you to Matt Eberlein, Greg Saltsman, and their crews for helping the Methow Wildlife Area enhance habitats for our wide array of native wildlife species.



*Crews working the log decks on the Ramsey Creek timber sale* – Photo by Haug



*Burning the final acres on the Bear Creek Rx Burn Unit* - Photo by Haug





*Before and after photos within the Bear Creek prescribed burn unit – Photos by Haug*





*White-headed woodpecker foraging after the Bear Creek prescribed burn* – Photo by Haug

**Coulee Creek Trail:** The Coulee Creek trail begins at the Hess Lake parking area on the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area and runs north for 7.5 miles to Fish Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. The Coulee drainage burned in the Okanogan Complex fire in 2015, and then followed by three years of extremely high water flows through the canyon has prevented us from maintaining the trail. This year the conditions moderated and the crew at Scotch Creek spent this week clearing the route of excess trees, shrubs, grass and weeds (including a flush of poison ivy). The trail route only climbs 300 feet in the 7.5 miles, making it an easy walk or bike ride. Many on horseback also enjoy this route.



*Crew clearing the Coulee Creek trail route* – Photo by Olson

### **3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

**Range Rider Coordination:** Specialist Heilhecker communicated with the Tonasket Ranger District wildlife biologist and range staff members regarding cattle turnout and wolf locations. Range personnel mentioned livestock producers expressing interest in range riders helping to monitor livestock. Specialist Heilhecker requested that range staff members have livestock producers contact the range riders.

Specialist Heilhecker coordinated range rider activity for other allotments as well. One ranger rider will be monitoring livestock near the Loup Loup pack and another range rider will be monitoring livestock around the Beaver Creek pack. However, range rider contracts end June 30. She reminded both range riders that new contracts have not been issued so they are not allowed to work past June 30 until further notice. Specialist Heilhecker contacted headquarters personnel regarding the status of new contracts.

#### 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

**Working Lands for Wildlife Conference:** Private Lands Biologist Braaten participated in the first Working Lands for Wildlife conference in Twin Falls, ID. Attending were over 200 professional conservation agency personnel representing many states in the west.

Working with landowners was the highlight of the tour and included a visit to Della Ranch in northern Utah to observe juniper removal and watershed restoration projects. Many great discussions took place that will enable future on the ground efforts in several states. Washington was well represented at the conference with two WDFW staff members and several Washington State Natural Resources Conservation Science (NRCS), Sage Grouse Initiative, and Pheasants Forever staff members.



*Southern Idaho juniper removal project* - Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

**Scotch Creek Weed Control:** Leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) is a deep rooted, non-native perennial plant capable of vigorous vegetative growth. Dense infestations of the weed often create biologically sterile monocultures that exclude desirable vegetation. The root system can penetrate as deep as 29 feet which allows the plant to survive extreme droughts, yet it can also tolerate months of flooding. Leafy spurge infests many habitats such as roadsides, other non-crop areas, riparian wetlands, wildlands, rangelands, and pastures, and has infested several sites on the Chopaka Wildlife Area. The staff members at Scotch Creek gathered this week to treat the island



on its eastern border. High flows this time of year generally make the trip across the Similkameen River quite exciting, however this year the river has already started to retreat. We successfully treated approximately 40 acres of the weed.

Staff members treated weeds at other sites across the complex as well, including: Tunk Valley for hoary alyssum, St. John's wort, and Dalmatian toadflax. The Scotch Creek Unit for St. John's wort and scotch thistle. The Chopaka Unit for leafy spurge and Dalmatian toadflax and the Pogue Unit for hoary alyssum.

**Artesian and Black Lake:** Lands Operations Manager Finger participated in discussions about managing the water available from the conserved water bucket to continue feasibility work on this project. Currently about 1500 of 4500 available acre-feet have been released in hopes that the water will find its way to the shallow aquifer that supports this wetland system. Unfortunately, test wells have shown no noticeable change from baseline conditions. Discussions have centered around the potential to shift water release into next year and make modifications to assist the water in getting closer to the project area.

**Sinlahekin Noxious Weed Treatments:** Manager Wehmeyer was able to treat some of the Native restoration sites in the Sinlahekin. He was treating a variety of the broadleaf weeds that are trying to encroach on the sites. Maintenance Mechanic Boulger worked diligently at the Chiliwist Unit treating scotch thistle. He also was able to treat some patches that a local volunteer identified.



*Native restoration site on Sinlahekin Wildlife Area* – Photos by Wehmeyer

**Bio Control Releases:** The Scotch Creek Wildlife Area project received two releases of a diffuse knapweed bio-control agent from Jennifer Andreas, WSU Extension, Integrated Weed Control Project in Puyallup. Manager Olson released 300 insects (*Bangasternus fausti*) with one release on the Similkameen-Chopaka unit, and the other in the Honey Lake area of the Scotch Creek Unit. Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Manager Wehmeyer received six releases of *B. fausti*, which is a biological control for diffuse knapweed. He was able to put the release out at a variety



of areas on the Sinlahekin and Chiliwist units. When he was putting the releases out on the Sinlahekin, he noticed a heavy population of *Chrysolina quadrigemina*, a biological for St. John's wort, was active on many of the patches of St. John's wort in the valley. The *C. quadrigemina* has wintered well and is showing good population growth. There has not been a release in a few years.



*Chrysolina quadrigemina* on *St. John's wort* - Photos by Wehmeyer

**North Potholes Wood Duck Boxes:** Specialist McPherson and Manager Eidson went to investigate production in two wood duck boxes in the North Potholes Reserve. These wood duck boxes were successful last year, so Specialist Mcpherson set trail cameras on them to capture activity. Unfortunately, the due to the vegetation blowing in the wind SD cards were full in a matter of days. On a positive note, though both boxes were successful, one box had seven hatched eggs and the other two ducklings and un-hatched eggs.



*Hatched wood duck eggs* - Photo by C. McPherson

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this reporting period.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

**NRCS Cultural Resource Training:** Private Lands Biologists Braaten and Hughes, and Supervisor Rickel attended cultural resources training sponsored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with Washington Conservation District, NRCS, etc. This training is another requirement as part of the Conservation Planner certification process. Great training with lead archeologists in the state. Very good info presented in North Central Washington.





*State and Tribal Historical Preservation Office archeologists training field staff on cultural resource issues* - Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

**Senior Staff Meeting:** Lands Operations Manager Finger participated and helped host senior staff during a field trip of Columbia Basin Wildlife Area.



*Lunchtime with a view; senior staff meeting at Quincy Lakes Unit* - Photo by R. Finger

## 7) Other

**Raptors:** Biologist Comstock responded to two calls of apparently injured or orphaned raptors. One of which was an adult osprey found in an orchard near Wells Dam. After inspection, Biologist Comstock could not find anything apparently wrong with the bird and after obtaining some trout fingerlings from Chelan Hatchery she released the bird at Beebe Springs.



A hatch-year red-tail hawk was brought into the Wenatchee district office when an orchard worker picked it up. A surprise visit from Regional Director Brown and Director Susewind gave them an opportunity to see the hawk before it was returned to its nest and witness the struggle of the public perception of injured and orphaned wildlife and WDFW's role. After multiple phone calls back and forth it was determined that this bird was simply a fledgling that was branching. Biologist Comstock and Customer Service Specialist Collier returned the bird to its nest area, where the two adults and its siblings were waiting.



*Two birds not really in need of being rescued. Adult osprey (left) - Photo by Devon Comstock  
Juvenile red-tail hawk (Right) - Photo courtesy of the Wenatchee World*

### **REGION 3**

#### ***HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:***

##### **1) Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Hazardous Canals:** District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra researched and prepared for an interview with local news on wildlife trapped in canals. Canals are a hazard to wildlife across the Columbia Basin. Water saving improvements such as lining with concrete or synthetic plastic-type materials has created deathtraps for many species unable to climb out the steep, slippery surfaces. Fidorra set up a meeting with a local irrigation district who manage a canal where three deer were recently rescued. The irrigation district was willing to discuss ideas for better designing canal improvements, and are already switching to a textured canal liner for unrelated reasons, which might not be as bad as concrete or slick plastic liners.



*A previously earthen canal now lined with a textured plastic*

**Volunteers Trap and Band Geese for Research in Tri-Cities:** District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra and Waterfowl Specialist Wilson coordinated Canada goose trapping events on two dates this month near Tri-Cities. Several volunteers came to assist with corralling the geese using fence panels and kayaks, and then learned to age and sex the geese before they were marked with leg bands and released. Over 200 geese were captured which will contribute to nation-wide research on movement, harvest, and survival of the species.





*Natural Resource Technician Rodgers and volunteers eager to learn how to wrestle and sex geese in Columbia Park, Kennewick*



*WDFW staff members and Richland Rod and Gun Club volunteers processing geese in the pen*

**Sage Grouse Planning Meeting Dates Set:** District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra worked with staff members and partners to select dates for the annual Washington Sage Grouse Working Group which will take place in Wenatchee this year on November 13 and the sage grouse technical team meeting in July.

**Burrowing Owl Season Nesting Season Wrapping Up:** District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra continued to monitor artificial burrows for nesting burrowing owls and band young and adults. Only a few nests and a handful of male owls remain to be banded. The project is part of a long-term population study partnered with Global Owl Project and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Several volunteers and Regional Program Manager McCorquodale assisted with the project over the month.





*Region 3 Program Manager McCorquodale with an adult male burrowing owl that was recaptured with an existing leg band. This owl is apparently at least six years old.*

**Partnership Provides Public a Glimpse into the Underground World of the Burrowing Owl:** District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra with equipment and technical assistance from the Richland Rod and Gun Club, and utilities from a public landowner installed a live feed camera on a burrowing owl nest. The stream was live on YouTube for some time but dropped over the weekend. Once repaired, the feed will provide public wildlife viewing opportunities and be recorded for researchers including the Global Owl Project additional information on ecology of this species.

**Roadkill Pronghorn Antelope:** District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand responded to a dead pronghorn antelope in the Horse Heaven Hills initially reported as possibly poached. After investigating the area, it was clear the pronghorn had been hit and killed by a vehicle. The carcass was removed from the roadway and relocated to a remote area. No collar or ear tag were observed on the animal.



*Roadkill pronghorn in Benton County*

**Managing Wildlife Populations:** District 8 Biologist Bernatowicz, Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson, Technician Wascisin and Game Division Manager Aoude surveyed for bumblebees on two areas on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area.



*Two species of bumblebees found on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area*

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik and District 8 Wildlife Biologist Moore performed a follow-up bumblebee survey on the Columbia River Wildlife Area. The two biologists found more flowering plants but only observed one bumblebee.





*Bumblebee found on the Columbia River Wildlife Area*

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this installment.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

**Landowner Hunting Permit (LHP) Meeting:** District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand, District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra, and Olympia and regional staff members attended a landowner/public meeting in Yakima to discuss the current LHP program and take input on possible revisions. Several landowners showed up who all stated that despite ongoing crop damage, they were happy with the current program, which took many years to develop. All agreed they would like to keep the program as is without change. No landowners were dissatisfied with the current program, and only two additional public participants arrived who were just looking for information about the program.

**Summer Bull Damage Permits:** District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand coordinated with several landowners and damage permit holders on conducting hunting operations along Hanford's southern border. Nineteen bull elk were harvested since the mid-May opener and many elk redirected back to the Hanford Monument. This damage permit season ended on June 30.



*Youth damage permit hunter with her first elk*

**Kittitas County:** District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzels worked on contracts, materials, and coordination with three large orchard and truck farm operators to install cost share fencing. Projects are ongoing and a new fourth and very large project has been requested by a third large orchard owner.





*Posts ready to deliver to one of four cost-share fencing projects in Kittitas County*

Several hay growers called to request elk damage permits for elk in hay. The landowners were advised that permits would not be issued until August. They were advised to conduct non-lethal hazing and other methods to keep elk out of hay fields.

The elk fencing that crosses Taneum Creek was augmented with electric paneling to prevent movement of elk and deer downstream. No elk have been in the area but as forage conditions change elk may move into the area. The USFWS/Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) fence did catch a small turkey that was freed from the wire and released.



*New electrified mesh on the Taneum fence*





*Wild turkey chick freed from wire and released*

District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted several times about a cougar that was seen in the lower Manastash. No conflicts have been documented between this cougar or cougars to date with humans but a cattle owner removed some cattle from the area due to instances where cattle broke through fences, allegedly from a cougar interaction.

#### **4) Conserving Natural Landscapes**

**Planning underway on a wildlife habitat project:** Private Lands Biologist Hulett and Soil Conservation Specialist Tachella with Natural Resources Conservation Science (NRCS) met with a landowner to discuss their *Inadequate Wildlife Habitat* Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) project. The property contains a few acres of wetland and riparian habitat, along with a large upland habitat that has been grazed heavily for the last decade. The discussion ended with everyone agreeing on starting with a smaller project. The plan is to establish more tree and shrubs along the riparian area, build a fence that will keep the cattle off most of the property and adding nesting structures throughout the property.

**Fuel Break Green Strip Pilot Project Moving Forward:** Private Lands Biologist Hulett and District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra attended the Blackrock working group meeting in Yakima with Habitat Program staff members and Regional Director Livingston. The group is currently

focused on testing vegetated firebreaks, or green strips, to slow and control fire that frequently occurs due to continuous cheat-grass and invasive fuel cover. An Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant proposal was not funded, so the group will utilize mitigation money with matching partner funds to get a project on the ground this fall.

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart met with Kittitas County Weed Board staff to assess *Ventenata dubia* plots that were sprayed in the fall of 2018. The Rimsulfuron (Laramie 25DF) plot had good *Ventenata dubia* control without damage to native grasses or forbs.



*Laramie 25DF plot*

On the afternoon of Friday, June 7, District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Don Hand was in the Rattlesnake Mountain area, when he observed a thunderstorm pass through the area. He then noticed smoke coming from the direction of the Thornton Unit of the Sunnyside Wildlife Area. He arrived quickly to find a fire that was caused by a recent lightning strike. Don called 911 and fire crews responded very quickly to the area of the fire. It was contained with only about an acre burned. This part of Rattlesnake Mountain is very remote, and if Don had not been in the area and reported the fire as he did, this fire could have damaged many square miles of shrub steppe habitat and possibly threatened the town of Benton City. Thank you Don for your quick response!





*Fire at the Thorton Unit of the Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area*



*Fire after containment*

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this installment.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

## 7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

### **REGION 4**

#### *HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:*

##### 1) Managing Wildlife Populations

**Barn Owl Fledglings:** District Wildlife Biologist Waddell accompanied Statewide Waterfowl Specialist Wilson to band two barn owl fledglings that were in the barn of a Skagit County resident. Banding of fledgling owls helps biologists better understand a variety of things about these birds, including home range and migratory patterns.



*Waterfowl Specialist Wilson (right) bands a fledgling barn owl with help from a local resident*  
- Photo by R. Waddell





*A fledgling barn owl with some remaining downy feathers* - Photo by R. Waddell

**Bat Maternity Colony Surveys:** District Biologists Milner, Hamer, Moore, and Waddell and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, along with several volunteers, conducted bat maternity colony surveys at three sites. Surveys are performed yearly in June and July with several observers per site counting the number of bats emerging from each colony. WDFW uses this information to understand the roosting ecology and distribution of bat species potentially vulnerable to white-nose syndrome (WNS). In addition, these colonies, and others surveyed elsewhere, will be considered in future management activities identified in WDFW's WNS Strategy Plan, such as colony emergence counts, which allow population trends to be assessed, and WNS surveillance, which allow colony health and geographic distribution of WNS to be monitored.



*A building in Skagit County that houses a bat maternity colony and a site where yearly surveys are conducted*

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Special Hunt Communication:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman has fielded numerous phone calls from hunters selected for special permit hunts throughout Region 4. The hunters appear excited about their upcoming hunting opportunity and have been advised there is a tentative date of August 17 set to meet with all hunters. Information about access to the hunting units will be provided at that time.

## 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Fence Installation:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and Natural Resource Technician Cogdal installed wood posts for a blueberry producer in Skagit County. The fence will protect approximately 18 acres of a high value blueberry crop.





*Wood posts being installed for exclusionary elk fence in Skagit County*

**Gate Installation:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and Natural Resource Technician Cogdal completed some final installation of gates on a newly constructed elk fence in Whatcom County. When arriving at the property, the elk obviously found access through the gate openings the previous evening. The elk were herded out and gates were installed.



*Elk group being herded out of a newly fenced hay field in Whatcom County*

#### **4) Conserving Natural Landscapes**

**Leque Island Pre-Construction Meeting:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, Planner Baker, CAMP personnel, and Ducks Unlimited met with the team of the construction contractor for Leque Island project and discussed schedule, contract language, and other items. The contractor expects to begin on July 15.

## 5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this reporting period.

## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this reporting period.

## 7) Other

Nothing for this reporting period.

## **REGION 5**

### 1) Managing Wildlife Populations

**Western Gray Squirrel Statewide Survey:** Over the past two weeks, Wildlife Biologists Wickhem and Bergh and Habitat Biologist Johnson have worked on deploying western gray squirrel transects throughout Klickitat County as part of the statewide survey. Each transect consists of 12 PVC tubes with a walnut glued into each tube, and plates with double-sided tape at each tube entrance. When a squirrel enters the tube to investigate the walnut, it leaves hair behind on the double-sided tape. The hair is used to identify the species of squirrel. Once the transects are deployed, they will be checked for activity three times over the course of two months. The team has 60 transects to complete in Klickitat County by the end of next summer. The results of this study will advise the periodic status review of this state threatened species. For more information about western gray squirrels, please visit: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/sciurus-griseus>.



*Baited transect tubes – ready for a squirrel!*

**Monitoring Washington's Bats:** Biologist Holman joined Biologists Tobin and Salzer to conduct exit counts at a private residence in Lewis County. The two-replicate survey was completed and the team counted over 450 bats on the better survey evening. In addition, Regional Wildlife Program Manager Jonker joined Biologist Holman to conduct the exit counts at the same private residence in Lewis County. The survey was completed according to protocol and around 335 bats were counted by the duo. The overall effort is being conducted to gain a better understanding of Washington's bats in light of the presence of white-nose syndrome.

**Black Bear Population Monitoring in Willapa Hills:** Biologist Holman joined Region 6 Biologists Novack, Tirhi, and Blankenship for the second check of the hair snares associated with black bear population monitoring in GMU 672 (Fall River). The monitoring effort involves constructing 36 barbed wire enclosures each set into a one square kilometer area. The stations are baited with blood and fish oil. When accessing the attractant, the bears leave hair on the wire barbs. Each location will be checked four times during the spring/summer survey period. Bear hair is collected from the barbs and DNA analysis is used to determine the number of individual bears in the area as well as generate a mark re-sight estimate of bear density.



*Biologist Tirhi collecting bear hair snare data in GMU 672*

**Black-tailed Deer Buck Captures:** Biologist Holman continued attempts to capture black-tailed bucks for the Buck Mortality Research Project. Attempts were made in GMUs 672 (Fall River) while concurrently working on the Black Bear Population Monitoring Project and 568 (Washougal). Many bucks have been located and over the past two weeks he has made two captures in GMU 568 (Washougal).





*Blacktail bucks captured and collared in GMU 568 (Washougal)*

**Western Pond Turtle Monitoring:** Female western pond turtles are being monitored during the nesting season in order to locate and protect their nests. This helps to maximize the number of pond turtle hatchlings entering the population, making the population more secure. Assistant Manager Steveson tracked the movements of adult female western pond turtles for a day this week. He and a volunteer from Oregon State University checked one turtle nest, finding six eggs in the nest. They carefully reburied the eggs to incubate in the ground for the remainder of the summer. A heavy-duty metal screen was put over the nest to prevent predators from digging it up.

**Klickitat Wildlife Area Nest Box Survey:** A survey of wooden nest boxes on the Soda Springs Unit showed a high level of use by western bluebirds. Of the 25 usable nest boxes, 16 of them were occupied by bluebirds.

One box was occupied by tree swallows, and another box was occupied by either tree swallows or violet-green swallows. One nest box was being used by chickadees (most likely mountain chickadees). One box contained a nest of tiny oak twigs, probably built by a house wren. Another box contained a grass nest that held many small tan eggs, which turned out to be acorns. Only four of the available boxes were unoccupied.

## **2) Providing Recreation Opportunities**

**Klickitat Wildlife Area Summer Wildflowers:** The wildflower viewing season is not over with the passing of spring. Flowers that are in their prime during the last weeks of June are: Richardson's penstemon, northern bedstraw, hyacinth cluster lilies, rayless goldenweed, phantom orchid, a particularly attractive form of strict buckwheat, green-banded star tulips (just starting to bloom at lower elevations), large-flowered collomia and long-bearded sego lilies (reaching the end of their bloom period), meadow larkspur, hyacinth cluster lilies, and narrowleaf milkweed.





*Green-banded star tulip in Old Headquarters area.*

*Large-flowered collomia*

*Richardson's penstamon*

*Strict buckwheat*

*Long-bearded sego lily*

*Meadow larkspur and hyacinth cluster lilies*

***Klickitat Wildlife Area summer wildflowers***

**Kress Lake:** Access Manager Rhodes coordinated with the Department of Corrections work crew to pick up trash and start clearing the trail around Kress Lake involving brush and brier cutting.



***Department of Corrections Work crew helping with clearing the trail around Kress Lake***



### 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Possible Cougar Sightings:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen fielded multiple reports of potential cougar sightings in Clark County. All of the reports matched descriptions of other animals such as deer or coyotes. Advice on living with wildlife was given to the reporting parties.

**Goat Depredation:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Officer Chamberlain, accompanied by Customer Service Specialist Koppi, investigated a goat depredation in Clark County. The landowner suspected that the goat was killed by a cougar. However, inspection of the carcass revealed that the goat had actually been killed and consumed by coyotes sometime during the night. Advice was given to the landowner on night penning of his remaining goat.



*Carcass of goat that was killed by coyotes*

**Chicken Depredation:** Officer Myers fielded a phone call regarding a cougar depredation on a chicken that had happened during the previous afternoon. The landowner had observed the cougar in the partially fenced coop with her chickens and threw her shoe at the cougar to get it to leave. The cougar bounded away into the brush with the chicken. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to the residence. The residence and chicken coop were surrounded by heavy timber and brush, which makes for ideal cougar habitat. Jacobsen discussed livestock husbandry and fencing options with the landowner to help minimize the potential for future conflicts with wildlife and her two remaining chickens. While pulling up to the residence, Jacobsen observed 30 elk, including young calves, in an adjacent field.





*Chicken coop with low fence where chicken was taken by a cougar. The feathers in the bottom left corner of the photo indicate where the chicken was killed.*



*Thirty elk in a field across the street from where a cougar depredated on a chicken the day before*

**Depredation on Calf:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Officer Nelson investigated a 2.5-month-old calf that was attacked by a black bear on open rangeland in Klickitat County. The calf was alive at the time of the investigation but succumbed to its wounds later that night.



*Injuries to the top of the back and side of the calf, inflicted by a black bear*

**Depredation on Goat:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Officer Van Vladricken investigated a depredation on a domestic goat in Clark County. The goat had escaped from its pen during the night and was wandering around in the yard when it was attacked. The landowner interrupted the depredation in the middle of the night and returned the goat to the pen, unaware of the injuries sustained to the goat. The goat succumbed to its injuries later in the night. It was determined that either a coyote or domestic dog was responsible for the attack.



*Dead domestic goat killed by a canine. Injuries to the goat's side were visible after shaving the hide.*

**Cougar Sighting:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to several cougar and bear sighting complaints. On one occasion, Jacobsen and Officer Nelson searched a section of woods in a residential area for a cougar with the use of a houndsman. No cougar was located.

**Elk Complaint:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with a landowner complaining about elk in his alfalfa and elk on his airplane runway. The landowner declined to implement a remote elk-hazing device, but opted to try using buckshot to haze elk away from his property.



#### 4) Conserving Natural Areas

**Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area - Merrill Lake Unit Celebration:** WDFW personnel coordinated with members of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) to host a two-day event celebrating the acquisition and protection of the Merrill Lake Unit. The RMEF was instrumental in coordinating with the previous land owner to secure this 1,453 acre parcel for WDFW management. The property was purchased by WDFW in three phases with funds from the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). During the last phase, several RMEF members generously donated 32.5 acres. While the property has been open to public access and under WDFW management for several years, this event was a great opportunity to celebrate the protection of the unit for wildlife habitat and public recreation. Attendees included WDFW personnel (from the southwest and headquarters offices), RMEF members from local chapters and national delegates, RCO staff members, Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program members, Cowlitz County commissioner, reporters, volunteers, and members of public.



*Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald leading tours*

**Klickitat Wildlife Area Control of Rush Skeletonweed:** Rush skeletonweed is a highly invasive nonnative plant that has been detected on the Soda Springs Unit, as well as other units of the Klickitat Wildlife Area. Extra effort is being focused on controlling this species in an effort to preserve native plant communities. This week Assistant Manager Steveson made spot applications of herbicide to rush skeletonweed plants using a backpack sprayer to treat scattered plants. This is a time-consuming way to apply herbicide, however the plants are often distributed sparsely in the early stages of colonization of a site and it is best to stop the infestation before it becomes well established. The plants have not sent up flower stalks yet and we hope to prevent seed production this year.

**Klickitat Wildlife Area Soda Springs Fuel Break Maintenance:** A new contractor has been selected to perform slash disposal for the fuel break maintenance project that was initiated last winter. The original contractor, who operated a skid-steer mulching machine, became unavailable and Assistant Manager Steveson has been working diligently with the WDFW contracting office to set up a new contract. The new contractor has a different type of machine that has a masticating head mounted on an articulated boom. This will allow him to reach into more confined areas to process the slash while the engine and cab sit close to the road. This

equipment is likely to produce better results than the skid-steer machine and the wildlife area staff members were eager to observe the quality of the work. Once all was in place, the disposal of shrubs and pruned limbs within a fuel break corridor on the Soda Springs Unit commenced. This material is left from work that was done by ground crew people during winter and spring. Assistant Manager Steveson met with the operator of the machine to go over the parameters of the project and checked on progress periodically. Assistant Manager Steveson also worked in the fuel break corridor to treat sprouting shrubs with herbicide. By controlling shrub growth, the frequency and cost of maintenance can be reduced and the fuel breaks will be more effective if they are needed. The maintenance work is in the final stages of completion now and Assistant Manager Steveson has been monitoring this activity and is pleased with the quality of the results achieved by a careful operator using a machine well suited to the job. Limbs pruned from the trees within the fuel break area are being mulched along with unwanted shrubs, with minimal ground disturbance or injury to nearby trees.



*Masticating machine being used to chip limbs and brush along Old Headquarters Road*



*Ground along Old Headquarters Road cleared of limbs and brush to help with fire control*



*Shaded fuel break along Old Headquarters Road after tree pruning and brush and slash removal. A small tracked machine with masticating head mounted on an articulated boom performed very well in mulching shrubs and pruning debris, with minimal ground disturbance.*



**Klickitat Wildlife Area Weed Control:** Assistant Manager Steveson focused his efforts on stopping the spread of rush skeletonweed in an area that is lightly infested by searching for plants in known trouble spots and applying herbicide. The timing of the application is intended to prevent weed seed production. Manager Van Leuven encountered weeds in the course of other duties, and given that only a few plants were found, she pulled them and put them in a plastic bag for disposal. A small-scale effort is known to be effective in heading off a much larger problem later if the work is done in a timely fashion.

**Fire Activity Near the Klickitat Wildlife Area:** A wildfire was ignited near the Soda Springs Unit on Sunday or Monday, possibly by lightning. In a call to the dispatch center in Wenatchee, it turned out that the fire was a couple of miles away from the north end of the wildlife area. Due to steep terrain and difficulty of access, two DNR Helitac crews fought the fire while ground crews were enroute to the site. As it turned out, a rainsquall doused the fire at about the same time a 20-person crew passed the Klickitat Wildlife Area office on their way to the fire. The ground crew probably ended up doing mop-up instead of suppression of an active blaze. At a temporary helipad set up on the Soda Springs Unit, Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven visited with the fuel truck driver and the two pilots. They were interested to meet a Helitac alumnus in the field (Van Leuven began her state service on a DNR Helitac crew in 1978) and a few stories were traded.



*Two Department of Natural Resources helicopters on a temporary helipad along the Grayback Road*

## **5) Providing Education and Outreach**

**Hunter Education Class:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist/Private Lands Biologist Jacobsen presented to a hunter education course in Klickitat County this week. The presentation focused on WDFW's Private Lands Access Program, how to find places to hunt around the state, and how to be respectful of private landowners and property boundaries. The course was well attended and the students had several excellent questions about hunting on public and private lands.



## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

**Bear Management Meeting:** Biologists Bergh and Holman attended a statewide meeting regarding bear management. The purpose of the group is to evaluate the current management structure and objectives from the current Game Management Plan, discuss the implementation of the new monitoring protocol and how that data will be applied to harvest management, look for strategies to improve compliance of mandatory reporting and tooth submission, look for strategies to improve outreach and education to prevent human-bear conflicts and inform the public of our work, and propose rule changes as necessary. The group came away from the meeting with lots of tasks to follow-up on for the next meeting later this fall. For information on the annual bear harvest reports, annual status and trend report for bears, and the current Game Management Plan see our website here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/management/plans>.

## 7) Other

**Lost Dogs:** Klickitat Wildlife Area staff members received reports of a confused and apparently lost German shepherd at the Leidl Park campground. The dog was located on the second attempt to find it; however, the dog avoided being caught. Fortunately the Klickitat County Sheriff's Office also heard of the situation and they responded by bringing animal control personnel to the campground. The German shepherd was soon caught in a large live trap and transported to the animal shelter. The following day, another deputy captured a loose beagle near the same campground. So far, there is no word on where the dogs came from. There were no campers missing any dogs at the campground.

**Dumped Calf Carcass:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen discovered a freshly dumped dairy calf carcass on the side of a major highway. Jacobsen turned over the information to County Range Deputy Cole to investigate and determine who the owner of the calf was.

## **REGION 6**

### *HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:*

#### 1) Managing Wildlife Populations

**Western Pond Turtle:** Biologists Butler, Tirhi, and Michaelis, as well as many volunteers, continue nest monitoring at the Pierce County recovery site. This year 25 adult female western pond turtles received transmitters and their locations have been monitored every day since mid-May. After the recent warm weather and surge in nesting activity, things have now begun to slow with only one new nest found in the recent week. Twenty two nests have been found with six of those nests delivered to the Woodland Park Zoo to support head-starting efforts. The remaining 16 nests have been left to incubate naturally as part of a project assessing the effect of shell disease on reproduction. Nest monitoring will continue into July as we hope to find nests for the last few females.



*Western pond turtle eggs within nest*



*Female Western pond turtle found looking for holes in the fence line*



*A streaked horned lark observed during survey*

**Streaked Horned Lark:** Biologist Butler and Tirhi conducted the third and final streaked horned lark survey at the Olympia airport this year. The streaked horned lark is listed as threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act and as endangered by the state of Washington. In order to assess streaked horned lark populations throughout Washington, WDFW coordinates site occupancy surveys at all known sites every three years and 2018 was a survey year. Due to a lower than expected count at the Olympia airport, it is being surveyed again this year. During this survey, 37 larks were observed and one nest was found.

**Black-tailed Deer Study:** While checking for bear hair at the corrals in GMU 672, Biologists Novack and Michaelis successfully captured and collared a two-point buck. WDFW is studying black-tailed buck mortality in conjunction with a larger effort to develop a population model.





## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Forest Cleanup:** Olympic Public Access Coalition and Eyes in the Woods teamed up to clean up a gravel pit and a campsite on USFS managed lands. Biologist Harris assisted by providing a dump trailer to haul the garbage off. While cleaning the pit, two locals assisted in the cleanup. They realized that keeping the pit clean is key to keeping it open. It is a popular target practice location with a safe backstop.



*Volunteers busy picking up target trash*

*(Note this is just a small portion of the pit)*

*Results of volunteer efforts*





*Cleaning up remote campsite*



*Volunteers with the trailer loaded*

### **3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

**Bear – McCleary:** Natural Resource Technician Tupen responded to a report of a bear digging up a septic system and breaking pipes. The Reporting Party (RP) stated there was bear scat all over his yard. During the site visit, Tupen noted that there were no holes and the broken risers on the septic system appear to have been hit by a lawn mower. He also was unable to locate any scat. Tupen reports that the RP wanted to know if he could shoot it. The RP stated that in the past he was told he could by WDFW. Tupen made it very clear he could not shoot a bear just because it is on his property.



*Broken Septic riser. Not bear damage*



*Picture provided by RP of bear scat....NOT!*



**Baby Raccoons:** Biologist Harris spent part of a weekend babysitting a couple of baby raccoons. They were dropped off at the Grayland Beach State Park visitor center. Due to time constraints and the logistics, he was not able to arrange transportation to a rehabber until the following Monday. It was unknown how long they had been without food and water. He was able to get them to eat a little. Unfortunately, they appeared to be deteriorating. As of the writing of report, the outcome is not known.

**Satsop/Brady Flats Elk:** Natural Resource Technician Tupen discovered that a bachelor group of elk was in a cornfield in the Satsop area. He hazed the elk up river. Local producers were notified. Biologist Harris was notified a few days later of elk tracks from three elk that were found going south to Brady Flats. One elk was reportedly hit while crossing the freeway. This will mark the fourth year in a row that we have had to deal with a bachelor group in this area. With roughly 600 acres of corn planted, there is a potential for a lot of damage.

**Beaver Struggles:** Natural Resource Technician Tupen checked locations where bear hide is being used to deter beavers from building dams. No beaver activity was reported. Biologist Harris checked an area where a forester will be reopening a road to access both managed forestlands and state lands. Interestingly, this is not good beaver habitat so activity is minimal. However, beavers being beavers they have to build dams and then leave the area. Over time, they have diverted a stream to run down the center of the road. He is looking for ways to try to control the beaver activity without removing the beavers.

**Bear and Beehives:** Biologist Harris responded to a report of two bears destroying beehives. The hives were kept alongside a county road in timber. Surprisingly they have been in the same spot for several years and this is the first time the bears have found them. Unfortunately, all hives were destroyed. When Biologist Harris approached the hives, both he and a bear had a close encounter. After voicing its frustration over having its meal interrupted, the bear quickly left the area. Advice was given to place future hives in a better location and to protect them with an electric fence. With the exception of the hive location, this property was very bear friendly. No other food sources were observed. This surprised Biologist Harris, as normally the first thing he sees when making a site visit are attractants.



*Hives kept in tree*



*Bears really like honey!*

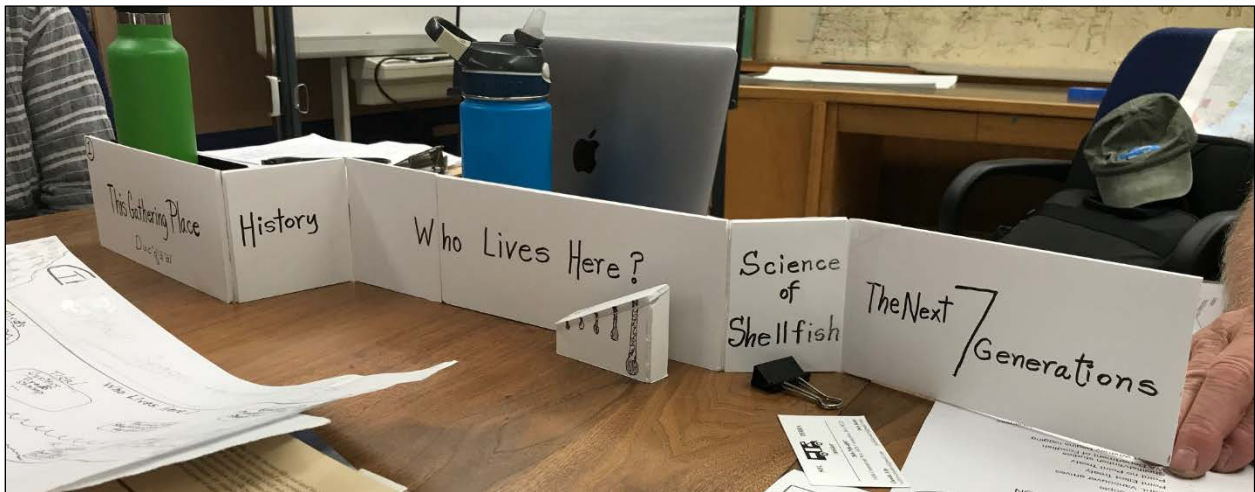


#### 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

#### 5) Providing Education and Outreach

**Potential Interpretive Display—Point Whitney:** Program Manager Calkins, Water Access Manager Mitchell, representatives from CAMP and the shellfish team met with Dick Kent and Glenda Alm who have taken an interest in WDFW's Point Whitney site. The couple visited the site recently and recognized the potential for improving the interpretive materials provided which show their age. Alm is retired from the Mount Hood National Forest where she was the lead interpreter for the forest. The two had developed a well thought out plan which was presented to the group that covered pre-settlement history through to the future. All of the WDFW staff members present felt that their idea is worthy of pursuing, given funding can be allocated through either the ongoing site redevelopment project or another source.



*Mockup of potential layout of interpretive panels presented by Kent and Alm*

#### 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

#### 7) Other

Nothing for this installment.