

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

Sept. 1 to Sept. 15, 2019

DIVERSITY DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

SGCN Species - White-tailed

Ptarmigan: Biologist Stinson and Research Scientist Schroeder attended a white-tailed ptarmigan workshop at Mount Rainier with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Park Service (NPS). In response to a petition to list the population in Washington under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), USFWS is conducting a status assessment. Potential cooperative research and surveys were discussed. No ptarmigan were seen at Mount Rainier National Park, but we did find some ptarmigan feathers, and saw a brood of sooty grouse.



Female sooty grouse at Mount Rainier, Sept. 11 - Photo by Mike Schroeder

Stinson and Schroeder also had a short article about white-tailed ptarmigan accepted for publication in *The Mountaineers* magazine that will appear in the winter issue.

Candidate Assessments: Biologists Stinson and Potter completed a draft candidate conservation assessment and sent it out for internal review.

Periodic Status Reviews: Biologist Stinson completed most of a first draft of a status review for the Larch Mountain salamander.

Red Knot Science: Natural Resource Scientist Buchanan and 12 co-authors published a short paper in *Wader Study* (126[2]:151-154; 2019) on the potential effects of transmitter attachment on resighting rates of red knots (Does radio transmitter attachment influence resighting rates of Red Knots in the Pacific Flyway, USA?). The analysis was based on knots trapped and marked at Grays Harbor in 2014 and 2014 and then subsequently resighted between three and 34 months later, primarily in Mexico and Washington.

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.

GAME DIVISION

No report this period.

HUNTER EDUCATION

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nothing for this reporting period.

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

Region 1 Coordinator Whorton held two pre-service training (PST) sessions for applicant hunter education instructors. One was in Stevens County that currently has very few active hunter education instructors, so we are hopeful to get a few more viable instructors certified. The other PST was held in Spokane with seven participants. During this reporting period, Region 1 Coordinator Whorton has submitted five packages to headquarters for instructor certification.

Region 5 Coordinator Elliott held a recertification training for two instructors who were previously certified but had let their credentials lapse for a couple years. Both are in areas that can use additional instructors and classes so will be good to have them active.

Regional Coordinator Elliott attended a traditional class and did a team evaluation in Cathlamet. She also ran an online field skills evaluation in Trout Lake when the chief instructor and one other instructor were not able to attend at the last minute due to medical issues.

Coordinator Elliott followed up with all instructor applicants who have completed their PSTs but have yet to assist a teaching team to complete their certification requirements. All have been invited to an upcoming online field skills evaluation in early October. Instructors who have not taught in 2019 will also be invited to participate.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia met with Private Lands Biologist Brian Gaston to plan an upland hunting clinic and mentored hunt in the St. John area. The clinic and hunt are posted to the clinic website.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia worked at the Naches Sportsmen Days booth on Sept. 6.

Regional Coordinators Garcia, Elliott, and Montgomery worked at the Wenatchee Sportsman Association National Hunting and Fishing Day event on Sept 14.

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey visited teams at four different venues. Dazey also conducted two PSTs one at the Boy Scout Camp Pigott and one on Lopez Island. Both PST sessions went well and new instructor applicants were certified as instructors at both sessions. While visiting a class in Whatcom County Dazey also was able to deliver a repaired orange gun to another team that teaches in Lynden.

Coordinator Dazey started to gauge interest among instructors in taking a Range Safety Officer (RSO) training. This training will provide to the instructors the tools to better conduct safe live fire at their hunter education classes. Over 100 instructors around the state have expressed interest and Dazey is now working on securing venues and dates to conduct the classes. RSO trainings are being scheduled in the first part of 2020 so as not to conflict with hunting seasons.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Region 5 Coordinator Elliott participated in a First Aid and CPR certification class.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this reporting period.

LANDS DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nothing for this reporting period.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this reporting period.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this reporting period.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

2019 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Section 6 Acquisition Update: The USFWS contacted WDFW with follow-up questions on the Central Ferry Canyon application. During application review, any inquiries from Washington, D.C. are a favorable sign that the project will be funded. WDFW headquarters and regional staff updated the application with budget information and pygmy rabbit recovery information. The agency also submitted one additional acquisition application for Violet Prairie. There has been no official word on the status of the two acquisitions.

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.

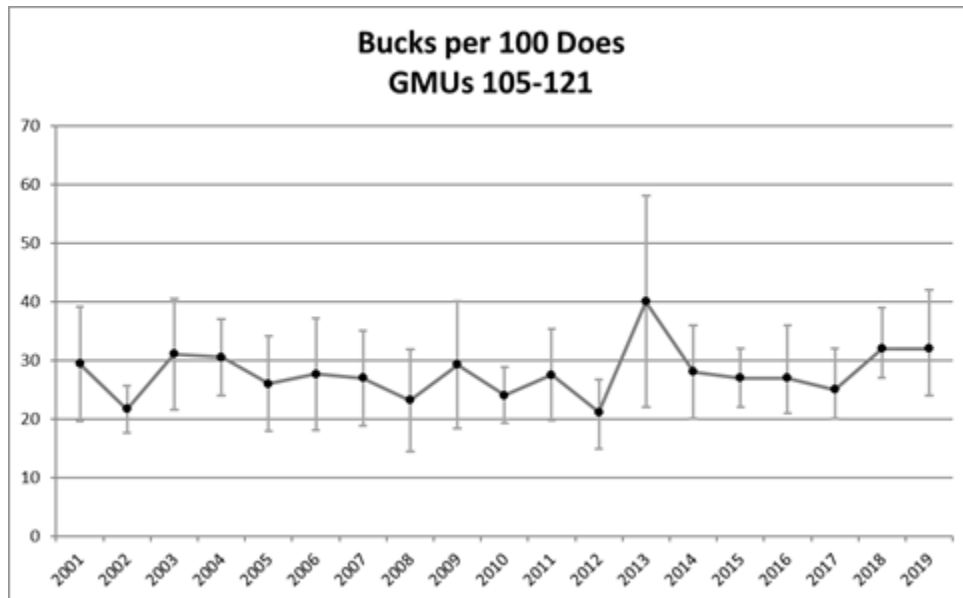
SCIENCE DIVISION

No report this period.

REGION 1

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Pre-season Deer Surveys: Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock, with the assistance of other District 1 staff members and volunteers, completed the annual pre-season buck to doe deer surveys. These surveys are conducted along roads within District 1 where we expect to see higher numbers of deer and the deer are easily viewed. During this year's effort, we classified over 1,200 deer and that yielded a buck to doe ratio of 32, which is consistent with past year's efforts.



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 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Northern Leopard Frogs: Biologist Grabowsky continued northern leopard frog metamorph surveys. Visual encounter surveys at Potholes Reservoir are almost completed and data analysis will begin in the next few weeks. In addition, weekly visual encounter surveys are being conducted at Columbia National Wildlife Refuge with the help of USFWS biologist to evaluate persistence of captive-reared frogs at the reintroduction site. Although it is too soon to determine whether or not the reintroductions have been successful, several northern leopard frog metamorphs have been observed at the release site. All frogs observed appear to be very alert and have good body condition, indicating that these frogs are adjusting to their new environment well.



Captive reared northern leopard frog released at CNWR at the end of July. Note good body condition that indicates feeding since release - Photo by Emily Grabowsky

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Private Lands Hunter Access Program: Private Lands Biologist Braaten continues to repost signs and meet with cooperating landowners before upcoming hunting seasons. Private Lands Biologist Braaten also assisted PLB Baarstad with Timber Access contracts in Stevens County making sure signs were posted properly and gates secure prior to upcoming hunting seasons.



WDFW timber hunting access signage - Stevens County - Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Dead Cow Investigation: Specialist Heilhecker along with WDFW officers investigated a dead cow found in a private pasture. This was the only cow in the pasture. The cow fall calves; her calf had been turned out on a public grazing allotment along with the producer's other cows. The cow was 16 years old with a lame leg and therefore kept on private property. The producer estimated the cow had likely been dead for three to four days. It was an unconfirmed, unknown cause of death. No one observed wolves attacking or feeding on the cow. There was no evidence remaining to indicate predators killed the cow. It is equally possible the cow died from a condition related to old age.

Deer Damage: Specialist Heilhecker met with a landowner experiencing deer damage to a cabbage field. The field is fenced; however, deer occasionally compromise the fence. The landowner signed a damage prevention cooperative agreement. Specialist Heilhecker issued a landowner kill permit until the start of the antlerless deer hunting season.

Wolf Education: Specialist Heilhecker spoke to a landowner interested in learning more about wolves and preventing livestock depredation. They discussed wolf behavior, in particular, how wolves give warning signals when pups are near, non-lethal deterrence measures and damage prevention cooperative agreements.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Columbia Basin Circle Corner Habitat Project: Biologist Walker conducted a brief baseline survey of a circle corner habitat restoration project in central Grant County. The property will not be enrolled in any WDFW hunter access programs, but is located adjacent to WDFW-managed lands and will provide additional nesting and chick foraging area for pheasants and other upland birds once complete. Circle corner restoration efforts are typically funded by either federal farm bill programs (e.x. EQUIP) or by habitat-focused non-governmental organizations NGOs (e.x. Pheasants Forever). The circle corner restoration area is 4.5 acres and will is currently dominated by alfalfa, crested wheat grass, and a diverse suite of noxious weeds. The site will be fallowed next spring and summer and planted to native bunchgrasses and forbs next fall.

This may seem like a small piece of habitat and may lead one to wonder “what’s the point of such small-scale restoration efforts?” While a single circle corner is a relatively small piece of habitat (the average corner is only 7 acres), it should be noted that there are somewhere between 150,000 to 200,000 acres of circle corners in the Columbia Basin Project alone. Assuming that only 1/3 of those corners were restored with upland bird habitat (i.e. native bunchgrasses, forbs, and shrubs), that would produce 50,000 – 66,000 acres of habitat where there was once nothing but weeds, haystacks, bare ground, or pieces of parked farm equipment. A recent study from North Dakota found that one of the three most important habitat type for wild pheasants was restored bunchgrass habitat with adjacent coniferous cover – especially in winter (Stackhouse, 2013). The Region 2 Private Lands Team often installs a shrub belt (including coniferous cover) when restoring habitat corners when irrigation is available. While circle corners are typically low acreage, several studies indicate that pheasants, unlike some species of upland birds, are not affected by habitat patch size (Warner and Joselyn, 1986; Warner et al., 1987; Walk and Warne,

1999; Best, 2000). In other words, it is likely that circle corner and other small-scale habitat plot restoration efforts do, in fact, benefit pheasant populations by providing pockets of breeding and rearing habitat as well as escape cover and loafing habitat. Further, former WDFW Game Section manager, Angelique Curtis, noted in a 2017 press release that pheasant populations and harvest have increased in correlation with Farm Bill programs like CRP (Cropland Reserve Program) and circle corner restoration programs (e.x. EQUIP; Carpenter, 2017) indicating that even small acreages of habitat restoration (i.e. small patches) are beneficial to pheasants in eastern Washington.

One way to enhance the effectiveness of what is often sporadic and spatially dispersed circle corner restoration projects may be to build a coalition among WDFW, Federal Agencies, habitat-focused NGOs, and private landowners that can create circle corner restoration focus areas. These focus areas would allow for more a more targeted approach to circle corner restoration efforts by strongly promoting circle corner habitat restoration in designated areas over a period of time. The ideal result of this coalition and its focus areas would be to restore several circle corners within a focus area whereby creating habitat connectivity (between existing pieces of upland bird habitat) and additional breeding, foraging, escape, and loafing habitat for upland birds. While many programs that offer funding to private landowners for circle corner restoration currently exist, no such coalition focusing these dollars and their efforts does. Biologist Walker firmly believes that building such a coalition would be an excellent first step toward enhancing pheasant and other upland bird populations across the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project area. However, as with many great endeavors, this first step may be the biggest and the most difficult to complete.

References:

- Best, L.B. 2000. Continuous enrollment Conservation Reserve Program: The value of buffer habitats for birds in agricultural landscapes. Pp 75-94 in W.L. Hohman and D.J. Halloum, editors. 2000. A comprehensive review of Farm Bill contributions to wildlife conservations, 1985-2000. U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS, Wildlife Habitat Management Institute. Technical Report.
- Carpenter, Tom. 2017. Summer Pheasant Report. Pheasants Forever. Retrieved from: <https://www.pheasantsforever.org/getdoc/af71bbdf-e621-46b8-b11e-5ef912391e3c/Summer-Pheasant-Report.aspx>.
- Stackhouse, J. W. 2013. Ring-necked pheasant: Evaluation of winter survival, habitat use, and current research methods of nest searching. M.Sc. Thesis. North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND. 110 pp
- Walk, J. W., and R. E. Warne. 1999. Effects of habitat area on the occurrence of grassland birds in Illinois. *American Midland Naturalist* 141:339-344.
- Warner, R. E., and G. B. Joselyn. 1986. Responses of Illinois ring-necked pheasant populations to block roadside management. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 50:525-532.
- Warner, R. E., G. B. Joselyn, and S. L. Etter. 1987. Factors affecting roadside nesting by pheasants in Illinois. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 15:221-228.

Shrubsteppe SAFE: Biologist Hughes worked with a Grant County landowner on a contract that she was recently became the technical service contact. Hughes had developed a relationship with this landowner through Safe Harbor and Hunter Access, which made taking over the Safe contract an easy process. Biologist Hughes discussed previous work done with the landowner and updated notes for his contract. Hughes conducted a site visit on the field and made notes of grass establishment since last autumn's planting. Hughes and the landowner discussed the possibility of mowing due to a thick mustard canopy throughout the field.

Fall Aerial Herbicide Application: Wildlife area personnel conducted fall aerial to help open up wetland areas and control listed noxious weeds (Phragmites and Russian olives) to better wildlife habitat and enhance recreational opportunities.



Ferrying over Potholes Reservoir to the next location - Photo by C. McPherson

Frenchman Regulated Access Area Biomass: Specialist McPherson collected biomass samples in wetland basins through the project. Twenty-eight random samples were collected in basins ranging from naturally established, volunteer crop, harrowed/drill seeded, and harrowed/broadcast seeded. Specialist McPherson noticed that samples taken this year had much more desirable vegetation showing that consecutive years of moist soil management are significantly benefiting wetland basins.



Food plot located in Cell 7 of Frenchman Regulated Access Area - Photo by C. McPherson

Frenchman Regulated Access Area Mowing: Specialist McPherson strategically mowed wetland basins to create areas that are attractive and benefit waterfowl that use the project. Mowing certain habitat features will also make these areas favorable for waterfowl hunters and bird watchers.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Beaver Relocation Facility: Biologist Comstock met with Trout Unlimited (TU) Project Manager Cody Gillin at the Leavenworth Fish Hatchery for an interim review of how the beaver holding facility was working and the beaver relocation progress for this season. 2019 is the pilot year for WDFW's new Beaver Relocator Permittee Program. So far this season TU has trapped and relocated ten beavers. During this visit, TU had two female beavers in the holding facility which they were attempting to acclimate to one another before releasing to a new location.

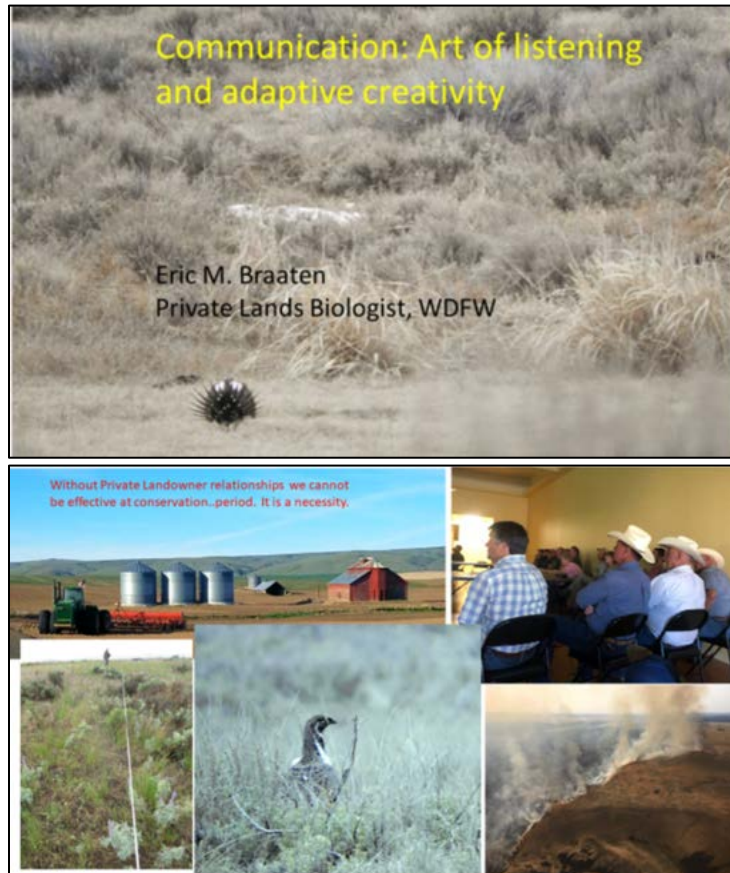


Female beaver “Bartlett” in her raceway at the Leavenworth Fish Hatchery



Shaded beaver lodge being reconstructed by TU's Cody Gillin

Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI) Conservation Planner Training Presentation: Private Lands Biologist Braaten provided a presentation to Sage Grouse Initiative staff members as part of their annual conservation planner training in Ephrata. Pulling from over 20 years of experience, Braaten discussed the importance of communicating effectively with private landowners and discussed ways alternatives can be successful when planning conservation projects with landowners.



Slides from presentation provided by Eric Braaten, WDFW

Hawkfest 2019: Biologist Comstock assisted with the 2019 Hawkfest by providing additional trapping and banding support at the Chelan Ridge Hawkwatch. This included educating visitors on trapping methods and giving visitors an opportunity to see banded birds before they were released. The consistent below average temperatures and above average precipitation for September has had things off to a slow start at the site, both in terms on the numbers of birds seen migrating and the number of birds encountered at the trapping stations.



Hatch-year male peregrine falcon - Photos by Lara Elmquist, Hawkwatch International

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

DNR Land Transfer to State Parks: Lands Operations Manager Finger, Wildlife Area Manager Eidson, and Water Access Manager Harmon met with Randy Kline from State Parks to discuss future developments and recreational shifts associated with the change from DNR's Milwaukee Road Corridor to the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail, which runs through the Lower Crab Creek Unit. State Parks is currently working to re-establish the pedestrian crossing of the Columbia River across the railroad bridge at Beverly. The bridge has been closed since the 2018 Boylston Fire. The group discussed the importance of future collaboration for all developments to ensure we are planning for the future and leveraging funding to get the best possible outcomes.

BOR Emergency Action Plan Functional Exercise: Lands Operations Manager Finger participated in a multi-agency emergency exercise with Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), County Sheriff's offices, and Irrigation Districts, to test emergency preparedness. The exercise involved a scenario where Dry Falls Dam, which holds back Banks Lake Reservoir, fails under a combination of unusually wet conditions followed by a large scale earthquake. An emergency response manual provided critical information which Finger was able to use to determine how staff could best assist while staying well outside the danger zone. For example, it was known from modeling exercises that it would take approximately 21 hours for waters to fill and pass over Soap Lake and it would take approximately 36 hours before Potholes Reservoir was filled and overtopped. Therefore, field staff could safely work from north to south to spread the word about the coming floodwaters. The exercise was informative and well received and some valuable recommendations were shared. BOR will summarize the exercise in a final report and will update their emergency documentation as needed.

Washington Conservation Corps (WCC): Lands Operations Manager Finger and Wildlife Area Manager Eidson met with Roland McGill with Ecology to start discussions about trying to establish a WCC crew in Moses Lake. With the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area and the

abundance of State Parks needs in the area, it seems logical to establish a local crew. The relatively low cost of \$188k per year for a six-person crew and supervisor is very appealing for an area with such a large backlog in operations and maintenance needs. Finger and Eidson are working with the BOR to try to figure out how we can support a crew by seeking increases in soil and moisture conservation funding, Additional capability funding requests, and/or Title 28 funds. McGill will reach out to State Parks to try to determine the potential for a partnership.

BOR Funding Meeting: Lands Operations Manager Finger and Wildlife Area Manager Eidson started meeting with Bureau of Reclamation staff annually to check in on S&MC and Block 26 budgets, assess future O&M needs, and discuss priorities. Shortly after the meeting, we were contacted by BOR with news that they were increasing our S&MC fund by \$50k, which was a very welcome surprise.

Corfu Site Visit: Lands Operations Manager Finger and Wildlife Area Manager Eidson visited the Corfu site, which is BOR land that the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area manages. This parcel has been a political lightning rod for decades due to local interests in grazing and challenging weed issues. Unfortunately, the upland habitat, though very weedy, provides good habitat for wildlife. The most problematic weeds are Canada thistle, whitetop, and phragmites. Canada thistle grows patchily around wetland edges and may be treated aerially in future applications along with phragmites if patch size are large enough. Whitetop is widespread and dispersed, making chemical control very challenging except in the rare dense patches where it makes sense.

Whipsnakes and Bureau of Reclamation Lands: Lands Operations Manager Finger, Wildlife Area Manager Eidson, District Wildlife Biologist Dougherty, and Natural Resource Specialists Dodds and Orling with Bureau of Reclamation, met up with Landscape Conservation Section Manager Gorrell, Land Stewardship and Operations Section Manager, Herpetologist Hallock, and Environmental Planner Teske to discuss how to conserve a sandy desert landscape for the benefit of multiple species such as the striped whipsnake. Gorrell did a great job of leading the discussion in a way that brought out all the pertinent information, focused on positive outcomes and problem solving, and gave everyone a voice in the process. Though the region feels that managing the lands is not the right approach at this time, the discussion has brought about conversations about a bigger picture of how to conserve the landscape on which the species depends.

Peshastin Mill Site Parking: Lands Operations Manager Finger met with Davidson and Mehall from SCJ Alliance to discuss the Peshastin Mill site and development occurring by the adjacent landowner. The landowner intends to pave the road into his development, which he controls. A condition of his permitting is that he also install a paved walking path. Additionally, the Close the Loop Coalition, has agreed to purchase a small portion of Hi-Up property to establish a public parking area to donate to WDFW. The parking area and ADA compliant path (partially across WDFW owned land) would be provided at no cost to WDFW but we would be responsible for the environmental and cultural compliance. Finger is seeking more detail from SCJ Alliance and will begin engaging appropriate staff members once more information is at hand.

Swakane Canyon: Lands Operations Manager Finger began drafting a Firearms and Archery Range Recreation (FARR) Grant proposal with National Rifle Association (NRA). The proposal is very straightforward thus far and is not due until November 19. Finger will work with Lands Planning, Recreation and Outreach Section Manager Sisolak to hopefully secure this \$25k opportunity and necessary match.

Hopkins Ferry Boat Launch: Lands Operations Manager Finger scheduled a Skype meeting to discuss the results of the cultural resources survey which determined an adverse effect, larger archaeological areas, and recommended the site be assessed as a traditional cultural property. Finger is hoping that a meeting involving Archaeologist Kelly will allow staff members to ask questions and determine whether this is a roadblock or a hurdle. An additional consideration, pointed out by Wildlife Area Manager Peterson, regarding obligations related to the DJ funding which purchased the site are being investigated.

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Wascisin and Natural Resource Technician Rodgers disked and planted the buffer edges of the 100-acre pivot field near the Sunnyside Headquarters Unit office and planted with black oil sunflower and Japanese millet as food plot/cover crops in August 2019. The sunflower and millet are reaching maturity and appear to be producing a large seed yield that will benefit quail, doves, and other game species throughout the fall and winter.



Sunflowers near Headquarters Unit office

Oak Creek Assistant Manager Berry, Manager Mackey along with Kyle Garrison worked with Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) volunteers in the hot August sun to remove old barbed wired fencing in the Cowiche unit. Crews rolled up approximately three to four miles of fence along Cowiche Mill Road. These volunteers are always eager to get things done and we look forward to their trip to Oak Creek each year.



One of two loads of wire collected during RMEF volunteer outing

Oak Creek Assistant Manager Berry worked in Cowiche Creek bottom, removing the root wad which allowed outlaw elk to get to east side of elk fence and into agriculture lands. They also removed cotter pins from re-entry gate hinge pins and lifted gate off hinges. Berry rectified the missing pin issue and has had no sign of elk activity east of fence.



Re-entry gate disassembled by some smarter elk



Before and after root wad removal

Biologists Bernatowicz ran waterfowl traps as part of the annual effort to band at least 750 mallards statewide. Trapping success was very low the last few weeks and trapping discontinued. For the season, a total of 305 mallards and 15 pintail were banded. Most years, at least 500 mallards are banded in District 8. One primary site was unavailable due to lack of water most of the year. When water was added, few birds arrived at the site. If trapping is an indication of duck numbers, it appears to be a down year.



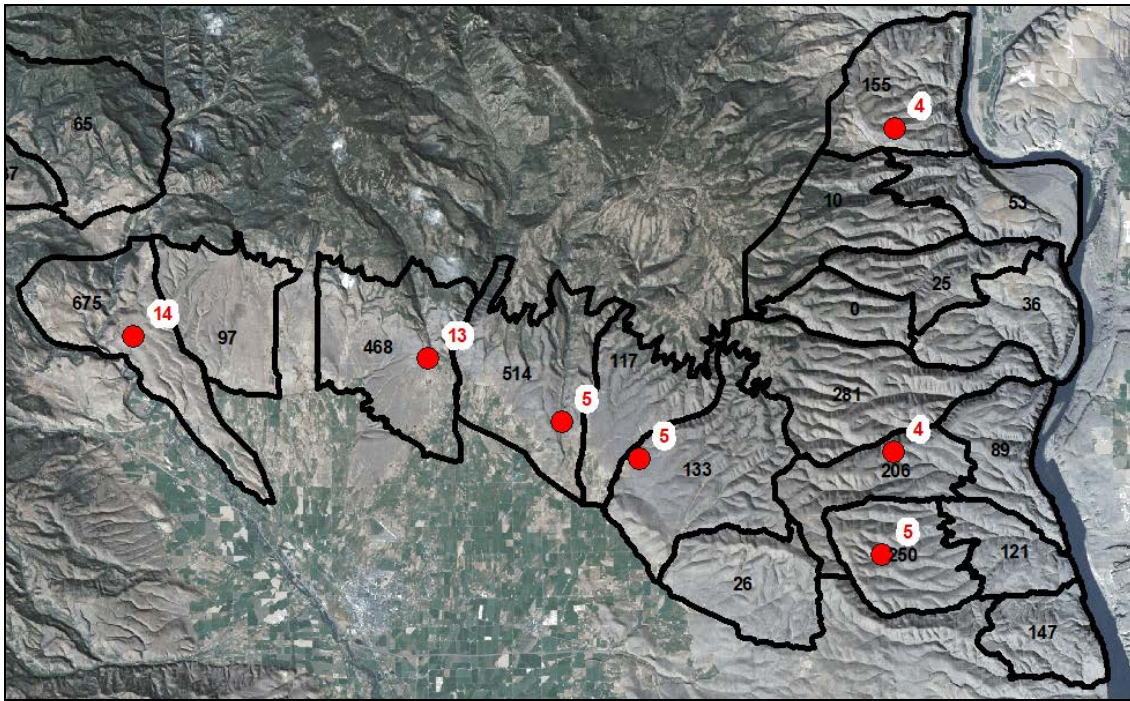
A live confidence decoy in the waterfowl trap

Biologist Moore inventoried the Oak Creek Wildlife Area for milkweed. Areas with relatively easy access near moisture and below 2800 feet were prioritized. Just over 200 plants were found, with the largest patch being approximately 100 plants.



District 8 staff members collected wings from four barrels in the district. In total, 39 wings have been collected over the first 10 days of the season. This is about average, but the distribution is heavily weighted toward Yakima County (33 of 39 wings).

Biologist Moore and Bernatowicz continued planning for a deer capture in the northern portion of District 8 this winter. The objective is to identify important winter range and migration corridors for mule deer, especially in areas where energy development might be an issue.



Proposed distribution of deer radio collars in District 8

Providing Recreation Opportunities: Biologist Bernatowicz spent a fair amount of time providing information to special sheep permit holders and arranging for sample collection in the Yakima River Canyon. This year, 25 permit holders are part of an experiment to see if Yakima River Canyon sheep can be cleared from the bacteria *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (MOVI). MOVI has caused very low lamb recruitment for the last five years and the population is declining. Experiments in small and captive herds has found that the few MOVI carriers can be identified and removed, but it requires handling most sheep. The canyon herd is still a little too large to capture most sheep. Based on lamb recruitment, it is also possible some sub-herds do not contain a MOVI carrier. The hunting opportunity will reduce the herd to a manageable number and provide samples that should detect if a sub-group is MOVI-free.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area personnel begin removing trash for the 2019 hunting season.



Trash removed from the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Oak Creek Forester Hartmann met with contractors conducting forest stand exams on Oak Creek, Wenas, L.T. Murray and Colockum wildlife areas. The stand exams will help with prescription development on the next several years of restoration projects across those wildlife areas. Forester Hartmann also conducted his own stand exams for an upcoming pre-commercial thin project along Oak Creek and South Fork Oak Creek roads.



See the plot pole? Pre-thin stand condition photo from sample plot in South Fork Oak Creek drainage. Current stocking of this plot is 2,600 stems-per-acre, many of which are shade-tolerant/fire and drought intolerant species. The thinning will help focus the growing potential of the site into fewer trees as they ascend to the overstory.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin have been monitoring water levels of the Brady wetland and Giffin Lake in preparation for the installation of a new water control structure at the Giffin Lake outlet. Ferguson removed most of the old, non-functioning water control structure and created an outflow channel into the Brady wetland to lower the Giffin Lake water level. On September 16, contractors arrived on site and began installation of the new structure.

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik participated in a review of large woody debris placement in the North Fork Teanaway River. Project sponsors requested ideas on ways to address old railroad levees in the middle reach of the project.



Large woody debris structure in the North Fork Teanaway River

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart performed “landscape appearance” utilization monitoring on the Martinez sheep permit area. Winegeart observed very little utilization.



Domestic sheep at Gnat Flat on the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 4

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Bat Outreach with Conservation Partners: District 12 and Bats Northwest partnered in outreach at the annual Shadow Lake Nature Preserve “Frog Frolic.” We had many visitors to our station as they filtered through the festival visiting other government and non-profit natural resource related booths.



Bats Northwest member and WDFW volunteer on local WDFW bat surveys and monitoring efforts goes through bats of the Pacific Northwest with a multi-generation party. WDFW and Bats Northwest provided flyers and “bat bling” from both entities as well as outreach on WDFW efforts in bat management, where to report bats, etc.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this reporting period.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Mountain Goat Conflict: District 12 biologists worked with enforcement to provide for an area young male goat that was dispersing across the foothill areas of North Bend. Biologists hazed the animal away from a house in one event with the animal moving in the right direction – towards mountains. However, the young guy decided that turning around and finding a cliff on a resident’s front deck would be a good idea. Due to the comfort this goat exhibited around residential areas and affinity to stay put in those areas it was decided to capture the animal and then release him elsewhere in the Cascades with the translocated Olympic goats. This guy was native to the greater North Bend population but will share a bit of those genes, hopefully, in our greater Region 4 goats now; less hanging on someone’s deck.



Sub adult male goat peeking out from his nook on his lush “cliff”. He was relatively tame but very confused. Thanks to Detachment 11 for collaborating in this cross-program effort! Good team work!

Shell Puget Sound Refinery Consultation: District Wildlife Biologist C. Moore, Oil Spill Planning and Response Specialist Macdonald and Oil Spill Team Manager Carlson met with staff members from Shell’s Puget Sound Refinery to discuss strategies to strengthen their current wildlife incident prevention program. Specialists from Washington Department of Ecology and Focus Wildlife were also on hand to provide expertise.



WDFW employees meeting with Shell Puget Sound Refinery personnel discussing wildlife incident prevention strategies

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Leque Island Estuary Restoration Project: Construction is well underway and WDFW Wildlife Program and CAMP staff members are working with Strider Construction and Ducks Unlimited to manage the project. Heavier rainfall than is typical for early September is causing the construction team to adapt to softer ground conditions for moving equipment around the site.



Habitat Nearshore staff members Jane Atha and Hannah Faulkner flew the WDFW drone over the Leque project to capture photos and gather topography data



The WDFW drone captured some good photos of the Leque site, including this one looking North over the restoration area. After the dikes are removed in October, the channels will be connected to the surrounding river and marsh.



This photo shows the construction equipment parked for the night on top of the new wave protection berm, which will have a 0.7-mile long trail on top of it

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Skagit River Salmon Festival: Habitat Biologists Desmul, Syms, Baker, and District Wildlife Biologists C. Moore greeted festival attendees all day at the Skagit River Salmon Festival. The crew handed out WDFW swag, hunting and fishing regulations, and wildlife information pamphlets. They answered many questions and showed off the new interactive stream table, which was a great hit with many of the younger attendees!



District Wildlife Biologist C. Moore, and Habitat Biologists Desmul, and Syms staffing the WDFW booth with the new interactive stream table

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this reporting period.

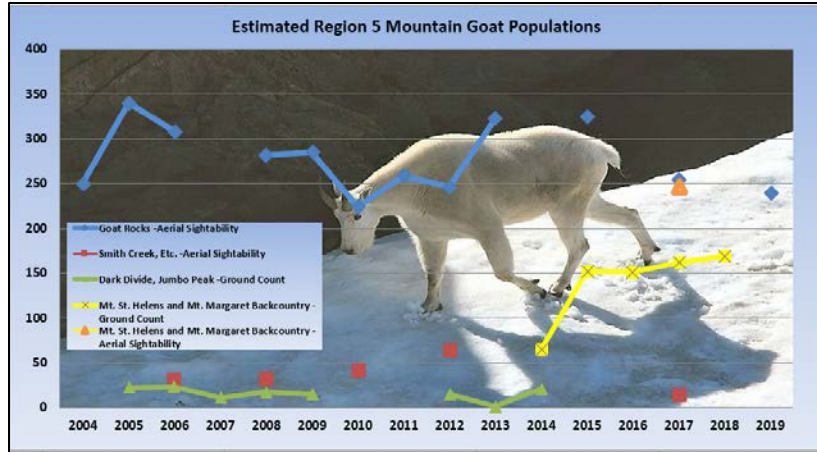
7) Other

Nothing for this reporting period.

REGION 5

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Goat Rocks Goat Population Estimate: Biologist Stephens entered data from an aerial survey of goats in the Goat Rocks Wilderness into a sightability model in order to estimate the population of goats in this area. This resulted in an estimate of 239 goats in all of the survey blocks. This is a slight decrease from the last time this population was surveyed in 2017. Below is a graph, updated with this new estimate that shows the survey results of Region 5 goat populations from 2004 through 2019.



Estimated mountain goat populations in WDFW Region 5 2004-2019

Annual Game Status and Trend Reports: Regional wildlife biologists began work on the annual status and trend reports for elk, deer, and mountain goats in the various herds and population that comprise Region 5. The reports summarize management activities, population surveys and estimates, hunter harvest, etc. For a look at the 2018 reports, visit the WDFW website at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/02058>. Readers will find detailed information on all of the hunted species in Washington.

Grouse Wing Collection Barrels: Biologist Stephens and Holman reconstructed and then put out one additional barrel for hunters to deposit wings and tails of grouse they have harvested. The wings and tails will allow managers to understand the age, sex, and species composition of the harvest. The grouse barrel locations in Region 5 are on Peterman Hill Road on the Cowlitz Wildlife Area in Lewis County, at the junction of the 1900/1901 road in the Winston GMU, and at the junction of the 4100/4200 roads near the town of Toutle.



Grouse wing collection station at the junction of the 4100 and 4200 roads

Grouse Wing Collection Barrels Continued: Biologists Bergh constructed and put out three grouse wing barrels to collect hunter-harvested forest grouse (spruce, ruffed, dusky and sooty species) wings and tails during hunting season from September through December. This will help to evaluate changes in species composition, sex, and age of harvested grouse over time. Grouse hunters are encouraged to help by depositing one wing and the tail of each grouse harvested into wing collection barrels placed around the [state](#). In Klickitat and Skamania counties the barrels are located at: **Trout Lake:** USFS Mount Adams Ranger Station; **White Salmon/Husum:** Nestor Peak Road at the intersection with Big Buck Cr Road; **Carson:** Wind River Market Texaco Station on the Wind River Highway.



Grouse wing barrel ready for hunter harvested grouse wings

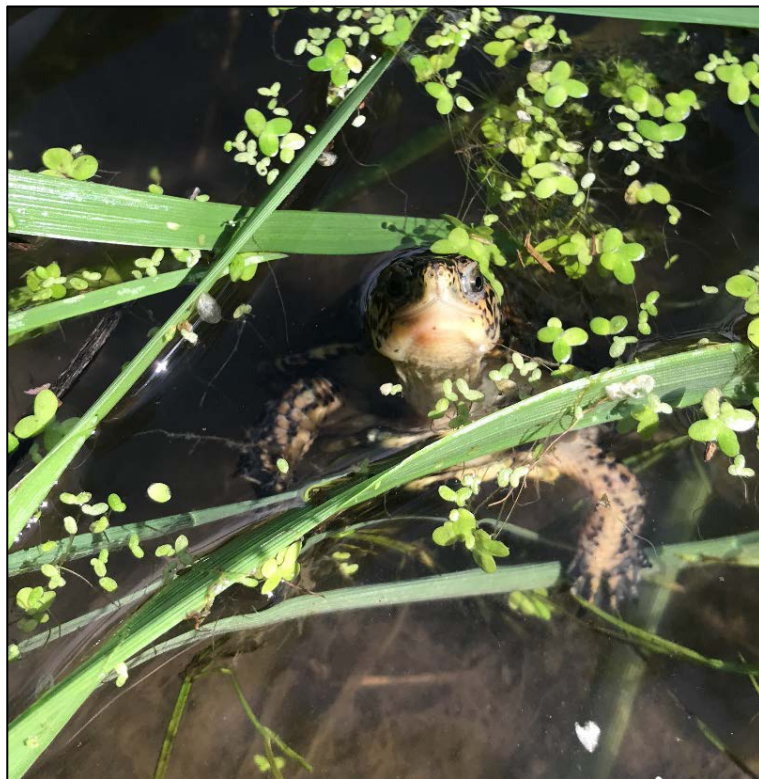
Western Gray Squirrel Population Distribution Study: Hair snag traps on a transect on the Mineral Springs Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area were picked up this week since results from the last check showed presence of western gray squirrels there. Several of the hair snag tubes had been chewed on, with some of the damage being half way along the length of the traps where the bait was glued inside. It appears that the squirrel thought it would be easier to just chew through the side of the trap to get the walnut instead of crawling in through the open end of the trap.

Western Pond Turtle Release: Biologists Bergh and Wickhem helped organize the annual release of western pond turtle head starts. Sixteen young head started turtles were released on the Friends of the Columbia Gorge Turtle Haven property. This is the first time that head started turtles have been released in these two ponds, although other releases have occurred on the USFS land adjacent to Turtle Haven. The property was previously owned by a family who lived onsite and was purchased by Friends of the Columbia Gorge in December 2015. The group has been slowly working to restore the property for the benefit of turtles and recently received a USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife grant that will provide additional funding for the restoration work. The head started turtles were very small newly hatched turtles when they were collected from nests last fall as part of a research project investigating the impact of shell disease on reproduction. Those hatchlings were transferred to the Oregon Zoo where they were fed and cared for over the winter, growing large enough to escape predation, mainly by invasive bullfrogs. Staff members and volunteers from WDFW, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, the

Oregon Zoo, USFS, and USFWS attended the release along with members of the media from KOIN6, The Oregonian, and TVW.



Attendees of the western pond turtle release listen to Biologist Bergh and colleagues talk about the turtles and the day's events



Newly released western pond turtle - Photo by Jason Wettstein, WDFW

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Shillapoo Wildlife Area Corn Harvesting: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald spent considerable time this week monitoring the agricultural lessee's corn harvest. Hauswald along with Assistant Manager Hawk marked rows of corn for the lessee not to harvest in each field so that it can be utilized by wildlife this fall and winter. Under the agricultural lease, a minimum of five percent of corn needs to be left unharvested in each field, as partial payment for farming on Shillapoo. All of the cornfields in the South Unit will be harvested for the start of the September goose season and most of the North Unit fields will be harvested as well by the end of the first full weekend in September. The corn crop this year appears to be about average, and grew significantly better than the two previous year's. All of the corn grown on Shillapoo is for silage and is used to feed dairy cows.



Harvesting of corn in the North Unit



Columbian white-tailed deer searching for spilled corn after the harvest

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this reporting period.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Weed Control on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Wildermuth spent two days treating invasive weeds on the Cedar Creek and Mudflow units of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. At the Cedar Creek Unit, knapweed, scotch broom, and a recently discovered patch of toadflax were sprayed. On the Mudflow Unit, work continues to remove patches of scotch broom that are encroaching on elk wintering grounds.

Cattle Trespass Resolved on the Klickitat Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Steveson checked the old headquarters area and found no cattle there. Animals that were discovered last week were rounded up over the Labor Day weekend, according to a message from a neighbor of the wildlife area, and it appears that all of them were gathered up and moved.

Property Boundary Fence Maintenance on the Klickitat Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Steveson repaired approximately a quarter mile of boundary fence near the south end of the Soda Springs Unit and 0.1 mile was repaired where a fence on the east edge of the Soda Springs Unit crosses a small seasonal stream.



Boundary fence on Soda Springs Unit repaired with addition of five braces

Grazing Monitoring on the Klickitat Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Steveson visited a grazing permit area on the Fisher Hill Unit, finding that cattle have been moved off the property in compliance with the terms of the permit. He also noted that the fence had been recently repaired, in accordance with the permit agreement.

Klickitat Wildlife Area Simcoe Unit Fencing Project: Wildlife Area Manager Van L'Euven toured the project area with CAMP Project Coordinator Mosberger to restart the planning process. Mosberger noted the type of terrain, soil, access routes, forest cover, and other conditions on the property that will influence the work on the ground. Gate and cattle guard locations were visited, fence design was discussed, and prioritization of segments of the project were agreed upon. The issue of prevailing wage for fence construction, access agreements across private lands, review of the results of the cultural resources consultation, and final design work are on the list of tasks to check off to get the project moving.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Hunter Inquiries in Advance of Hunting Seasons: Regional wildlife biologists fielded many calls and e-mails from prospective hunters in advance of the upcoming seasons. The most common questions relate to trying to find areas with good concentrations of elk but with few hunters and how to access areas for which special hunting permits have been drawn. Hunters are reminded that the hunting prospects located on the WDFW website at: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/locations/prospects> are an excellent reference on how to get started.

Sediment movement in the North Fork Toutle River on the Mudflow Unit: Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Wildermuth joined a group of professors and students from the University of Nottingham in England on their field trip to study sediment movement in the North Fork Toutle River on the Mudflow Unit. The group had many questions about wildlife and habitat management and how social and political pressures affect them. Assistant Manager Wildermuth also had the chance to discuss the success of the wooden erosion control structures with one of the professors who was impressed with the reforestation and stabilization of the bank.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this reporting period.

7) Other

Fawn Stuck in Fencing Material: A fawn with plastic construction fencing stuck around its neck has been reported for the past month in Washougal. Conflict Specialist Jacobsen attempted to locate it but it did not show up the evening that he searched the area. Biologist Bergh tried again to locate it and this time it showed up at the residence where it was first reported. The deer was immobilized and the fencing material was easily removed. Like in many other similar cases, this deer was being given supplemental feed and was not very wary of people. In addition to getting into things they shouldn't, deer have a difficult time digesting non-native foods, and concentrating deer can help spread disease. Instead of providing [supplemental feed](#), it is recommended that deer enthusiasts plant [native food sources](#) on their property.



Deer fawn now free of the fencing material that was stuck around its neck

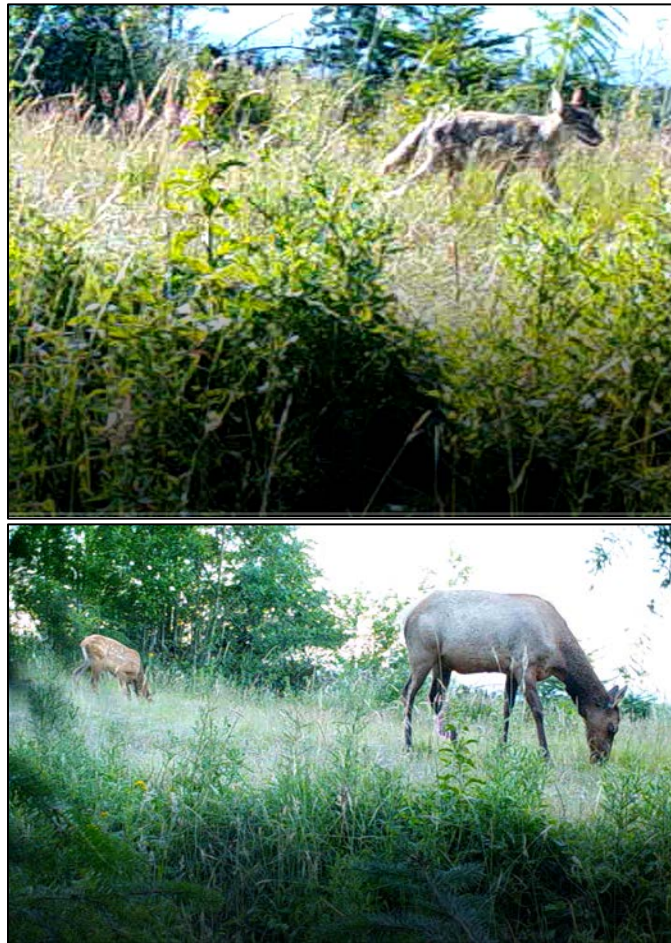
REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Elk Survey: Biologists Tirhi and Butler assisted the TransAlta Corporation with the annual elk survey of the Centralia Mine, located in Thurston/Lewis counties. The survey began at 7:15 a.m. but was grounded half way thru due to heavy, low fog impeding visibility (and safety). Eventually the fog lifted to enable the survey to resume and conclude. One hundred ninety nine elk were counted during the 3.15 minute survey (includes grounding time) as follows: 128 cows, 34 calves, 15 spike bull, five rag horn bull, 17 branched bull. Bull:cow ratio=29 and calf:cow ratio=27...both of which suggest a healthy and growing subherd. WDFW and TransAlta cooperate to annually provide a senior and a disabled permit hunt opportunity on the Centralia Mine which is closed to the general public due to federal mine reclamation requirements. These are highly successful and desirable hunts to those members of our hunting community. If you qualify, permit application to either can be found in our WDFW hunting pamphlet (search Centralia Mine).

Wolf Monitoring: Biologist Tirhi, volunteer Terry and high school job shadow student Emily re-deployed four trail cameras in the Carbon River area for wolf monitoring. District 11 is monitoring wolves in this area and the White River in response to limited sporadic reports from the public. Thanks to volunteer Terry who sifted thru over six hours of 10-second video clips from the first deployment of cameras on which deer, elk, and several coyotes were detected. District 11 staff members will continue to move cameras around these drainages every 1.5 months throughout the year.



Coyotes and elk captured by District 11 on wolf monitoring cameras in the Carbon River drainage

Taylor’s Checkerspot Distance Sampling Surveys: Biologist Randolph completed quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) on the 2019 distance sampling database comprised of almost 23,000 records. This process entails re-listening to voice tapes to search for and correct errors, sorting and filtering database records, and developing pivot tables to insure all data are present and that it accurately reflects field observations. The database was closely examined to determine which, if any, surveys were performed in non-protocol conditions, because these datasets may need to be culled from the distance sampling analysis to be performed later in winter. Summaries on nectar observations, numbers of checkerspots observed per survey, and mardon skipper observations were generated for inclusion in year-end reports.

Rapid Habitat Assessment Data Transfer to Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM): Biologist Randolph completed QA/QC procedures on the Rapid Habitat Assessment (RHA) data collected in early summer from three prairies on JBLM: Johnson Prairie, TA15, and Marion Prairie in TA18, amounting to 91 acres of habitat surveyed. RHA data are composed of spatially explicit biotic and abiotic checkerspot habitat variables to inform land managers of existing conditions and to reveal areas in need of restoration treatments. Once complete, the data were appended to a Master RHA Geodatabase housing all RHA data, and were sent to JBLM land managers for restoration planning purposes. Checkerspots have a relationship to all sites. A rare sighting occurred on Johnson prairie earlier this spring, a naturally founding population was recently discovered on Marion prairie and they were recently reintroduced to TA15.

Western Pond Turtle: Biologists Butler and two dedicated volunteers trapped western pond turtles early this month looking for candidates for shell disease treatment. The goal was to trap 12 candidates to send to the PAWS Wildlife Center for shell disease treatment. In total, 21 turtles were transported to the Veterinary Specialty Clinic of Seattle for CT scans. Of those, only 11 turtles were selected as possible treatment candidates and transported to PAWS. Shell disease treatment is still experimental as the etiology of the disease is still being studied. However, treating a variety of USD cases and following their recovery in the coming years will help inform veterinarians as to the effectiveness of the treatments.



Western pond turtle ready to be CT scanned



Turtles getting CT scanned

Western Gray Squirrel: Biologist Butler conducted the third and final check of the three western gray squirrel transects. The transects are comprised of two points with four hair tubes deployed at each point. After being deployed for eight weeks, 16 tubes were checked and removed with 12 of those found with hair. While each sample's identity still needs to be confirmed, an examination of the hairs in the field suggest western gray squirrel hair was found within at least four tubes. The others had Douglas squirrel hair or hair that needs further examination. Unfortunately, access was restricted to the third transect and it will be checked at the end of the month. The western gray squirrel is listed as threatened in the state of Washington and this work is part of a statewide study assessing its current range in Washington.



Western gray squirrel hair sample within tube



Western gray squirrel hair sample

Oregon Spotted Frog Habitat Management: Biologist Butler met with the regional project coordinator for the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) at an Oregon spotted frog site to discuss reed canary grass mowing strategies. In previous years, reed canary grass was cut from designated experimental plots at this site.



Testing the limits of the equipment

However, due in part to inconsistent water depths between years, there has been no advantage found between the various plot designs. This year WDFW will work with a WCC crew to cut large strips along both sides of the creek. A self-propelled brush cutter was tested at the site in hopes to provide another tool to use besides hand held brush cutters, but the terrain and grass height quickly proved too much for the larger mower. The WCC crew is scheduled to assist with mowing for two days using hand held brush cutters.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Grouse Wing Barrels: Biologist Butler placed three grouse wing barrels within District 11 this month. One barrel is located at the northern recreational access point to the Vail Tree Farm off Sorenson Road SE and a second barrel is located at the western recreational access point to the Vail Tree Farm off Big Hanaford Road. The third barrel is located in the parking lot of the Skookumchuck Wildlife Area. The goal of this collection effort is to build estimated population trend datasets for each species to evaluate harvest changes. These barrels will be in place from September 1 until the middle of December. More about this effort can be found here:



<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds/grouse-wing-tail-collection> .

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this reporting period.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Restoration at the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area South Unit Using Prescribed Fire: Biologists Cook and Tveten, and South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Manager Lowery participated in the execution of a successful prescribed fire at the South unit of the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area on September 12. Sites were prepared by mowing the perimeter of each burn unit to prevent spread of unwanted flames. They teamed up with partners from the Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) to coordinate into burn teams for igniting and holding the fire within well-defined polygons. Of the 28 acres identified and prepared for burns, about 13 acres of prairie habitat actually received this critical restoration treatment (units B1, B2, C3, D1, and D2), which will help maintain overall grassland structure as well as critical habitat for many at-peril species. Biologist Randolph stationed herself at the North Unit of Scatter Creek Wildlife Area to monitor smoke impacts and inform burn teams of downwind effects. This is the first prescribed fire to occur on site since the catastrophic 2017 wildfire.



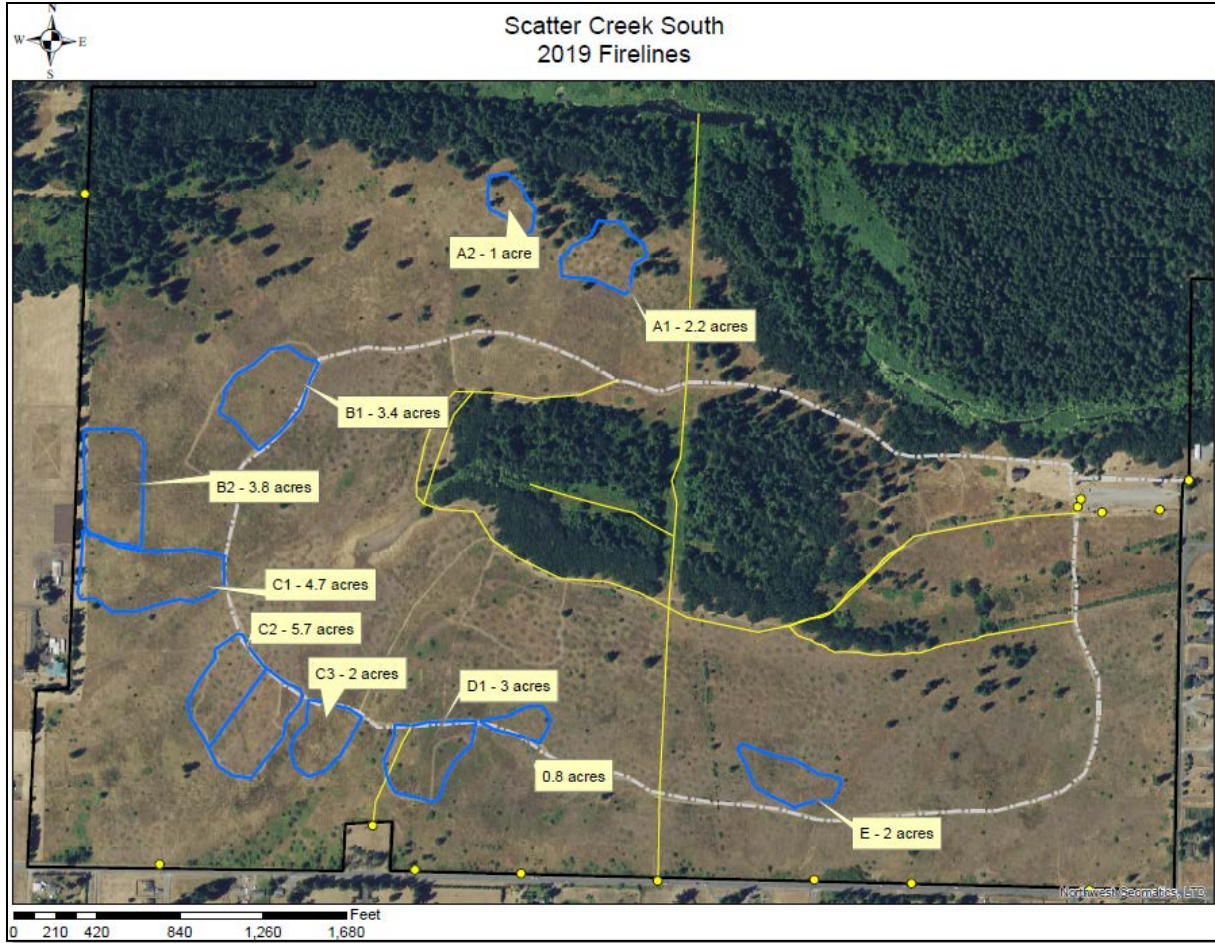
Prescribed fire team members gather supplies and coordinate into burn teams



After prescribed fire was performed



Biologist Lowery and Cook survey the after-effects of fire



Mazama Pocket Gopher Recovery and Working Farms: Biologist Tirhi completed the final draft of the South Puget Sound Prairie and Prairie Species Conservation Grant Conservation Easement (Wheeler Property) Management Plan and submitted to USFWS (funds grantor) for review. The management plan dictates all site management per the conservation easement between WDFW and the landowner including all agricultural activities, forest management, infrastructure, monitoring and more.

**Management Plan for the
South Puget Sound Prairie and Prairie Species
Conservation Grant Conservation Easement
(Wheeler Property)**

September 2019



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife



WDFW Wildlife Area Management Planning—Scatter Creek Complex: Biologists Tirhi and Novak completed various wildlife sections of the draft Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Management Plan including deer, elk and waterfowl. To learn more about this wildlife area and get involved go to <https://wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/wildlife-areas/scatter-creek-wildlife-area>.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Hunting Seasons for the Non-hunter Talk: Biologist Murphie gave a talk to members of the local hiking community in Clallam County, recently. The emphasis of the talk was the basics of hunting seasons and regulations in Washington with a focus on how to determine the type of hunting occurring when and where. The talk, attended by 21 members of local hiking clubs, was well received.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this reporting period.

7) Other

Nothing for this reporting period.