

# **Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report**

July 16 to July 30, 2020

## **DIVERSITY DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **SCIENCE DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **HUNTER EDUCATION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **LANDS DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **GAME DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **REGION 1**

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

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

**Elk at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area:** Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer saw these two cow-calf elk pairs on a recent morning at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area (SCWLA). They were on the hillside above Bisbee Mountain Road, where it meets Highway 20. Elk are not commonly seen in that area but seem to be on the increase following forest thinning and prescribed burning projects.



Photo by Daro Palmer

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Hunting Access:** Natural Resource Technician Fish and Biologist Baarstad worked on Hunting access contracts in districts 1 and 2. Natural Resource Technician Fish spoke with landowners in District 1 about WDFW hunting access programs and worked on mapping recently enrolled hunting access properties in District 1.

**Region One South Access Areas:** Public use of our access sites and campgrounds has been extreme. Access Manager Greg Heimgartner is hauling truckloads of trash away from sites such as Heller Bar and the Wooten Campgrounds. Use by rafters and powerboat users at Heller Bar is completely filling the parking lot on weekends. Overflow traffic is parking along the County Road. Enforcement has been writing many tickets at the Wooten WLA for campfire use. Greg also discovered tree damage at a site in campground #8 at the Wooten WLA. Greg reported last week that every single restroom at the Wooten WLA with a urinal had human excrement in the urinals. Cleaning was extremely difficult.



*Trash left at Heller Bar*



*Tree Damage at Campground #8 at the Wooten WLA*



*Garbage left at the Wooten Wildlife Area*



*Rafters at Heller Bar*

**Wooten Wildlife Area Road Closure:** Wildlife area staff members worked with the United States Forest Service (USFS) personnel to move the main road closure to the washed-out bridge at the Little Tucannon. The public is now allowed to travel up the Patrick Grade to reach the Skyline Road and Maloney Mountain.



*Road Closure now located at the Little Tucannon bridge washout*

**Access Site Maintenance:** Litter has been a major issue this year, for access areas across the state. With many regular outdoor recreation options closed to the public, folks have taken to spending more time at the boat launches. More people mean more litter is left behind, regardless of the posted “pack it out” signs. Northeast Washington Access Manager Daniel Dziekan has been working to pick up after everyone and keep restrooms clean and sanitary. Many weeks those are the only two tasks that he has time to take care of. Daniel is coordinating with Enforcement and Public Affairs staff members to cut down on litter dumping, through emphasis patrols by officers, and by publicizing the problem using a variety of media.



*A monstrous pile of garbage left behind after a weekend at Newman Lake* - Photo by Daniel Dziekan

**Liberty Lake Eagle Scout Project:** Access Manager Dziekan has been working with a Boy Scout, Matthew Morse, for his Eagle Scout project. Matthew chose to build and install a life jacket loaner station and chose Liberty Lake as the location. Over the winter, he came up with donations of materials, signage, and life jackets, and built the station, all of which cost WDFW nothing. The virus put a halt to spring plans to install the station before the fishing season opened. Once WDFW started working with volunteers in the field again, Dziekan worked with Matthew to get a date set and install the station. Matthew, with the assistance of scouts in his troop, and his family, assembled and installed the loaner station with no issues, and many compliments and appreciation from the public, all while following social distancing and mask guidelines.



*The finishing touches: Matthew Morse (Left) and a fellow scout add the life jackets to a kiosk, which officially completes Matthew's Eagle Scout Project - Photo by Daniel Dziekan*

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

**Conflict Prevention:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill responded to the report of a black bear at the Curlew Job Corps that had repeatedly been getting into garbage and locked sheds. Samsill toured the campus and grounds with Job Corps staff members to determine the extent of damage and to come up with possible solutions. Based on the reports from Job Corps staff members, Samsill determined that the offending black bear had been habituated to coming into the staff member housing quarters and needed to be removed by a trap and transport operation. Samsill issued Job Corps staff members several cans of bear spray, non-lethal deterrents, and electric fencing materials to deter or haze the conflict black bear away. Samsill set a culvert trap within

the housing quarters to trap the black bear. Job Corps personnel checked the trap several times a day and reported the activity to Samsill. After running the trap for several days without any success, Samsill revisited the scene and closed the trap for the weekend. Samsill deployed a trail camera and moved the trap slightly with hopes of capturing the black bear in the coming week. The culvert trap will be pulled on July 28 and relocated to the USFS Republic Ranger District office for long-term storage.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill and Officer King responded to a depredation report in the Leadpoint pack territory. The producer found a mature bull that appeared to be injured in the hindquarters in a fashion consistent with wolf depredation. After conducting a thorough depredation investigation, WDFW personnel determined that the bull was injured from a non-depredation related cause. Samsill suspected that the bull was backed into a barbed wire fence and got the hind legs wrapped up.

**Elk Concentrations:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb spent numerous early mornings observing and selectively targeting hazing efforts towards large groups of over 200 elk in Walla Walla County. Due to the maturity of the cereal grain and legume crops, heavy-handed hazing efforts have the potential to cause more harm than good if large groups of elk are running through a field abreast.



*Large groups of elk in wheat fields responding to selective hazing efforts*

**Crop Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman spoke to a landowner who was having issues with elk getting into his lentil fields and wanted to borrow a propane cannon or two. Westerman had to pick up one of the propane cannons from a producer who had been using it. Westerman met with the lentil farmer and showed him how the cannons worked and how they should be deployed. Fire and safety issues were also discussed.

**Orchard Deer Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb responded to a peach and cherry producer in Walla Walla County who was concerned about deer damage in their orchard. Evidence of deer damage was most significant in those parts of the orchard which border riparian areas. Kolb recommended more robust tree shrub barriers on the saplings, as well as mowing the rows between trees to reduce cover and concealment for bedding areas. The producer has a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA).

**Peola Elk:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade spent one night checking an area in Peola where a small herd of elk has been seen multiple times in winter wheat and hay crops. Wade was unable to locate the elk that night. The following day Wade was contacted by a producer on the other side of Peola who reported that the same herd had shown up that morning. Wade and the producer determined that the elk did not need to be hazed out of the area, as they were predominantly feeding in a recently hayed Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) field.



*Wade observed lots deer taking advantage of the remaining green up from an above-average rainfall this spring while out late looking for elk in crops*





*A herd of elk that moved across the Peola area*

#### 4) Conserving Natural Areas

**Weatherly Forest Management Project:** Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice looked at the ongoing logging project at the Weatherly Unit of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. Two out of four of the units are just about complete. Slash piles left behind are very large and could be challenging to burn this fall/winter.



*Unit One logging at Weatherly before and after*

**Livestock Grazing on Blue Mountains Wildlife Areas:** Grazing at the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area has ended for the year. Producer 2 reported he has removed all of his cows except for three bulls that are still on the wildlife area. Producer 2 removed his cows by hauling them away. His partner moved his livestock to adjacent private property. Wildlife Area staff members made repairs to the boundary stock fence at Ables Ridge on the Wooten Wildlife Area last week. Trespass cows were found on the wildlife area prior to repairs being made. The producer was contacted, and the livestock was removed.



*Livestock at the 4-O West permit area*



*Natural Resource Worker Tom Jensen along with University of Idaho Interns Rylie Malm and Shandra Kelly making repairs to stock fence at Ables Ridge on the Wooten WLA on a very warm day*

**Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Habitat Conservation:** Natural Resource Technician Donovan Colvin relocated a gate to just east of the new Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWLA) office. This locked gate will halt unauthorized vehicle travel into the interior, to protect shrubsteppe habitat and prairie grouse. Natural Resource Technician Richard Fish, who works for Private Lands Biologist Todd Baarstad, helped Natural Resource Technician Colvin build a rock box to stabilize the gate.



Photo by Donovan Colvin

#### 5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

#### 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

**Cultural Resource Field Inspection:** Palmer and Jerry “Chris” Christensen hosted a site visit with WDFW Prescription Burn Team managers and a WDFW archaeologist. A recorded cultural resource site was located to determine what level of protection would be needed during planned prescribed burn treatments in the area this fall.



Photo by Juli Anderson

## 7) Other

**SLWA Facilities Maintenance:** Natural Resource Technician Colvin and Mike Finch moved the internet wiring for Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. It had been run to the old office, which is scheduled for removal. The wiring now runs to a powered weatherproof box, mounted to a tank house behind the old office. The tank house also holds the electrical wiring for the old office's well, which will continue to operate after the old office is gone, to water the lawn/planned picnic area.



Photo by Mike Finch

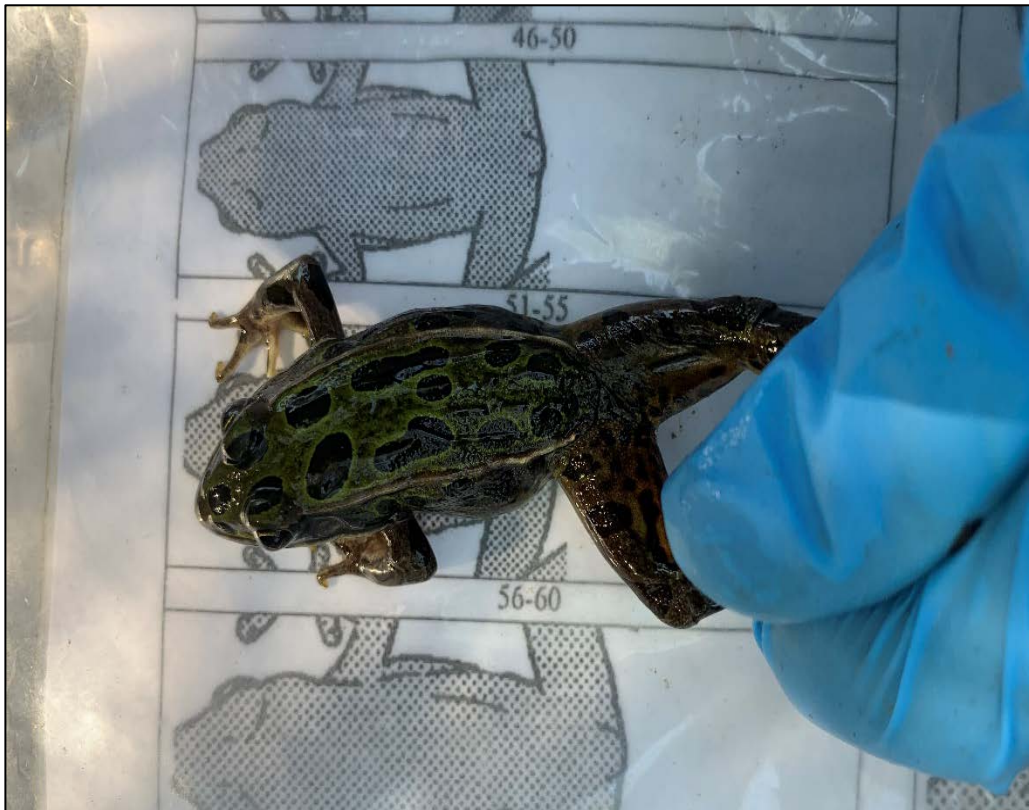
## **REGION 2**

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

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

**Northern Leopard Frogs (NLF):** Biologists Grabowsky and Rowan, along with USFWS Biologist Newsome and Washington State University (WSU) Veterinary Pathologist Pessier spent a long day removing bullfrog tadpoles and metamorphs from the Northern Leopard Frog translocation site. Doctor Pessier submitted a subset of the individuals collected for disease testing (specifically amphibian chytrid fungus and ranavirus). Testing results showed no presence of ranavirus and a low prevalence of chytrid fungus in the bullfrog population. Amphibian chytrid fungus is a widespread amphibian disease, so presence at this site was expected.

Biologist Grabowsky continued surveys for NLF metamorphs to advance understanding of distribution at Potholes Reservoir and track development during the summer. Because the reintroduction program did not go as planned this year, we've been busy documenting the phenology and development of NLF.



*Northern leopard frog being processed and measure for snout-vent-length (length from nose to end of body) - Photo by Biologist Grabowsky*

**Mountain Goat translocations:** Biologist Comstock spent two days assisting with the Olympic National Park mountain goat translocation. This is the third and final year of this monumental effort to remove mountain goats from Olympic National Park. Mountain goats are not native to the Olympic Peninsula and were originally introduced to the park in the 1920s. This year's removal effort was being coordinated by Biologist Will Moore, with assistance from a variety of WDFW, National Park Service, and USFS personnel. During the time Biologist, Comstock was present, three billy goats were removed from the park and translocated to Lime Ridge in Glacier Peak Wilderness. The logistics of driving the goats from Olympic National Park to their final release site to rendezvous with the helicopter were daunting and culminated in a 14-hour drive. Once the goats are loaded into a refrigerator truck, they are driven to their release landing zone where the support truck team stays overnight with them until they meet the release team in the morning. By the time these goats were released in Glacier Peak Wilderness, they had taken two helicopter rides, a ferry ride, and a long drive in a truck. Despite the long hours, and extra restrictions and safety precautions needed due to Covid-19, Biologist Comstock was privileged to be able to play even a small role in this major project.



*Two billy goats getting ready to fly* - Photo by Devon Comstock



*Away they go as the pilot takes off with two billy goats* – Photo by Devon Comstock

**Waterfowl:** Biologist Rowan continued with duck brood surveys along historic routes, which provides rough trend data on species presence and production. Numbers of broods were slightly up at a couple of sites and down at a couple of others, amounting to similar trends as last year. Brood ages were spread wide enough to indicate second broods were probably hatched. The impacts of Covid-19 and the human presence or lack of presence at sites may be confounding results, since birds may have moved to other areas or been more prevalent at historic sites as a result of human presence. Rowan also reviewed the new Game Bird and Small Game Pamphlet, which replaces the old “Waterfowl pamphlet”.





**A non-native and unwelcome black swan; some ducks can't be identified; scaup hen that looks like it was scalped...either a predation strike or aggressive mating damage per Waterfowl Specialist Wilson; Greater Yellowlegs - an infrequent visitor to Moses Lake.**

- Photos by Ella Rowan



## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Hunter Access Program:** Biologist Cook visited the site of reported Feel Free to Hunt signs being posted on property not enrolled in the Hunter Access Program. Cook discovered several signs posted incorrectly and removed them. Cook evaluated several properties nearby in the Hunter Access Program to understand sign reposting needs. Cook also began replacing hunter access signs, as needed, on properties in Adams County.

## 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Responding to Deer Damage:** Specialist Bridges has worked with a multitude of landowners in assisting with attempts to decrease damage for deer. DPCAs were pushed through, and permits were issued in a fashion that landowners were comfortable with regarding Covid-19 concerns.

**Coordinating Permit Hunts with Depredation:** Specialist Bridges continues to assist landowners with depredation hunt permits by directing special permit hunters to remove depredating deer on landowners' properties. As trust continues to build, so does the willingness of the landowners to work with hunters.

## 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

**Safe Harbor Agreement:** Biologist Hughes and Assistant Manager Bechtold conducted a safe harbor survey on 2,560 acres of new property being enrolled into the Safe Harbor Program within the Dormaier Recovery Area. No sign of pygmy rabbits was detected during the surveys. Hughes will complete the surveys within the next couple of weeks and provide an update to USFWS and the landowner of the results. Hughes completed a Safe Harbor plan and filled out the permit application for the new enrollee.



*New area being surveyed for pygmy rabbits* - Photo by Hughes

## 5) Providing Education and Outreach

**Trapped, Sick and Injured Wildlife:** Biologist Rowan responded to calls about bat exclusion from a home, and raptors on the ground. This is the time of year when mothers and pups are in maternity roosts in hot places like attics and barns. Excluding the mothers or sealing off entrances will entomb the pups to starve and decay in walls and other cavities of the home. Visit Bat Conservation International's website for information about appropriate timing and methods for bat exclusion. Sealing holes and gaps without proper exclusion is never an acceptable option since bats can be active in most of Washington year-round on days with temperatures above freezing.

## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

## 7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

## **REGION 3**

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

#### 1) Managing Wildlife Populations

**Mourning Dove Banding:** District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra started dove banding and had a surprisingly successful start with lots of juvenile birds captured indicating good productivity this spring despite the late storms. Over 100 doves were banded in the district in the first two weeks. The banding will continue throughout the month if capture success continues.



*Male mourning dove fitted with new leg band and ready for release*

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Berry observed two Western Gray Squirrels in the Reynolds Creek drainage last week, but they were too quick for a good photo. There were also many sightings of elk utilizing riparian zones in the Cowiche drainage.



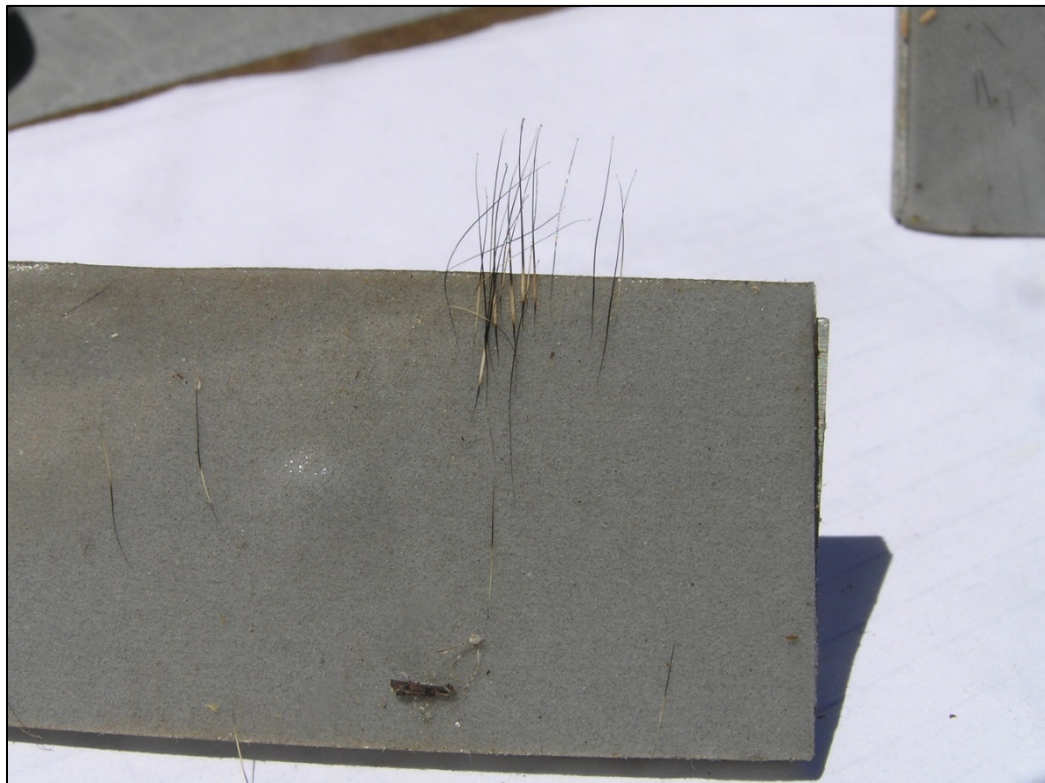
*Western gray squirrel in the Reynolds Creek drainage*



*Juvenile bull enjoying lush riparian foliage near the South Fork Cowiche*

Two radio-collared deer from the Muckleshoot Tribe Naches Mule deer study died in the last two weeks. The Muckleshoot biologists responded and found both were cougar kill. After a slow start to the spring, mortalities have been picking up in the Naches Study area.

District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz checked two Western Gray Squirrel (WGS) tube transects in Klickitat County. One had an obvious WGS hit. The second had no activity at the tubes, but two WGS were seen along the transect. It might just a bit longer for the squirrels to release walnuts are food. Minimal bear activity along the transects, probably due to the proximity to houses.



*WGS hair left (white banded), California Ground Squirrel right (yellowish)*

Bernatowicz ran a monarch survey along sites in the district where larvae were detected a few years ago. No monarch adults or larvae were detected. This year, milkweed density was low as grass had taken over the site. Annual variations (probably due to moisture and temperature) are always interesting.



*Ditch that had a high density of milkweed the last few years*

District 8 Biologists Bernatowicz, Oates, and Wilson set up waterfowl traps at two sites in preparation for summer banding. Daytime temperatures approached 100 degrees but standing in water helped make it bearable.

After withstanding valley heat all week, Bernatowicz was happy to conduct a high elevation Bumble Bee survey. The survey temperature ranged from 75-77 degrees. Abundant flowers and bumblebees (close to 100) were observed. Last year the surveyor found no bees. Timing is everything.



*Alpine Meadow Survey Location*



*Can You Find Bumble Bees in This Photo?*



*Three of the many bumblebees observed. A “bumble”, but not bumblebee, and yes, they do “bounce”.*

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Local Favorite Hunting Opportunity Locked in for Five Years:** Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett began the process of enrolling the Snake River Department of Natural Resources (DNR) farm into a five-year hunting access contract. Previously this property was on a year to year hunting contract however with their previous ag lease expiring DNR is wanting to put these agricultural fields into a longer contract. This contract will begin Nov 16, 2020, and will be open for Goose hunting only.

**New Hunting Opportunity this Fall:** Private Lands Biologist Hulett submitted one hunting access contract to contracting. This property will be 4000 acres of Hunt by Written Permission south of Kennewick. Currently, Region 3 Private Lands has three hunting access contracts waiting for signatures.

**Hunting Reservation of Open on Puget Sound Energy August 1st:** Private Lands Biologist Hulett updated the Puget Sound Energy (PSE) Hunt by Reservation site for the upcoming season. The property will be open for reservation beginning August 1 and will run until December 1. Modern Elk season will be capped at 50 hunters per day, but all other hunts will be unlimited.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Berry recently rearranged the existing barrier rock and installed seven tons of additional barrier rock on Cowiche Mill Road, following the June 21 fire caused by target shooting. This was done to minimize target shooting and off-road travel



during Emergency Restrictions in place to prevent fires due to drier fuels and weather conducive to rapid-fire growth. Berry and enforcement personnel have had many contacts with the public with questions and comments on the emergency closure. Education has been offered to help them understand the purpose of restrictions and most comments have been positive. With that said, the areas are still showing signs of misuse.

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik and Nass replaced emergency restriction signs, Discover signs, and WLA maps on kiosks. Many of the emergency restriction signs have been removed at popular camping spots along the Taneum. Officer Scherzinger reported a group target shooting at Green Gate and the sign missing.

Manager Babik met with an adjacent landowner in Cabin Creek. He complained about the increase in trespassing, unsafe shooting towards his home, fires, and trash on his property. Unmanaged recreation along the powerline corridor had been rampant and problematic for private landowners. Manager Babik hung some signs, provided contact information for law enforcement, and discussed ways he could protect his private property.



***Bonneville Power Administration powerline corridor with user-built trails, trash, fire pits, and bullet casings***

Natural Resource Technician Blore and Assistant Manager Winegeart set barrier rock at Cabin Creek where dumping and homeless encampments have become a regular issue.



*Barriers to prevent illegal dumping*

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Blore and Assistant Manager Winegeart picked up 560 pounds of garbage and an abandoned car used for target practice at Cabin Creek. Blore also cleaned up two other homeless encampments along Taneum Creek. WLA staff members are very appreciative of Officer Nasset's continued help evicting homeless encampments and trash from the wildlife area.





*Trash at Cabin Creek*



*The trash from two homeless encampments along Taneum Creek*

Nass posted “no motor vehicle” signs in three meadows at Gnat Flats in the L.T. Murray WLA after several tracks were created by recreational vehicles earlier this spring. Manager Babik is working with WDFW law enforcement and USFS to address some of the meadow damage that crosses land ownership.



*One of three motorcycle tracks created in meadows at Gnat Flats in the L.T. Murray WLA this spring*

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

**Elk:** Elk issues have increased in both Yakima and Kittitas counties with the onset of drier and hotter conditions. Some elk have begun to enter crop areas and have not been easily moved and continue to be very persistent. Elk have been hazed in the Tieton area of Yakima County and the Park Creek area of Kittitas County. Three propane cannons were deployed in Parke Creek to keep elk out of irrigated crops and pastures.

**Wolf Activities:** No conflicts between wolves and livestock were reported in the Naneum Pack territory this month. Based on collar data, wolves and livestock occupied the same areas but no negative interactions could be detected. An agency range rider is working in the territory. No conflicts between wolves and livestock were reported in the Teanaway Pack territory this month. Cattle were moved away from the probable den site vicinity and no wolf and livestock conflict was detected. Live wolf sightings and trail camera images were reported in several parts of the pack territory this month. An agency range rider is working in the territory. Pups were observed on cameras and by tracks.

**Rattlesnake Hills Elk Hazing:** District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to spend time hazing elk out of ripening winter wheat crops near the top of Rattlesnake Mountain including late evening/early morning patrols. Heavy damage permit hunting pressure and non-lethal hazing by landowners has aided in minimizing elk damage. Although wheat harvest is beginning, fields that will be ready to harvest first have shown only minimal damage.

**Ice Harbor Orchard Deer Damage:** District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with a landowner who operates a large wine grape and tree fruit operation along the north shore of the Snake River above Ice Harbor Dam. Several newly planted cherry trees have been damaged by a growing deer population in the vicinity. A DPCA and damage permits were developed and issued to identify both lethal and non-lethal actions that will be implemented to reduce the on-going damage.



*Young Cherry Tree browsed on by Deer*

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

Oak Creek Forester Hartmann and the South-Central Prescribed Fire Team collected pre-burn fire effects data on the Cougar Canyon underburn. Forester Hartmann also surveyed the Windy Point project for cultural resources with Archaeologist Major, Forester Pfiefl, and forestry interns.



***South-Central Prescribed Fire Team taking pre-burn photos, understory cover and fuel loading measurements across permanent plots established on Cougar Canyon underburn***

Oak Creek Manager Mackey collaborated with Yakama Indian Nation (YIN) Fisheries on planning further improvements to the Cowiche Creek floodplain. Bids were collected by YIN to further enhance floodplain restoration wood placement on a previously identified site. This work will aim to mitigate the effects of floodwaters on previously disturbed agricultural fields within the floodplain. Also, the original State Environmental Protections Act (SEPA) was amended to extend the timing of the proposed work and include additional mitigation measures.

Manager Mackey and Forester Hartmann also presented a proposed forestry project in the Sanford Pasture area of Cleman Mountain to the Region Management Team (RMT). It was well received by the RMT and will continue the restoration pathway with a field visit of regulatory internal and external stakeholders in the first week of August.

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart worked with eleven members of the Rough Grouse Society to remove old barbed wire from the south end of the L.T. Murray WLA. Approximately a half-mile of some of the oldest fence on the WLA was removed. Much of the

wire was broken and in small tangled piles which can go unnoticed by wildlife, livestock, pets, and/or people causing injuries.



*Ruffed Grouse Society barb wire removal efforts*



*Rough Grouse Society members practicing social distancing lunch*

## 5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing this installment.

## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik toured the Brain property preparing for the upcoming acquisition and discussed maintenance needs and the proposed property line adjustment with the current landowner. She documented several structures that will need decommissioning, slash piles that will need to be burned, and weeds that will be an issue. She also found a path around a decommissioned section of non-green dot road that connects the Brain property with Hutchins Road. This property will need a lot of restoration when added to the WLA.



*Structure to be decommissioned on the Brain Ranch*

## 7) Other

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik toured Trout Unlimited's Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) project, "Beaver Fever", as a grant requirement and offered some guidance on setting success measurables for beaver introduction. Babik submitted required ALEA reports for Trout Unlimited and Mountains to Sound Greenway projects.



## **REGION 4**

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

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

**Island Marble Butterfly:** Work continues in District 13 to conserve the Island Marble Butterfly. WDFW staff met with two landowners to discuss how they can best assist in butterfly conservation. Biologist Milner presented the sign that landowners who enrolled in the Island Marble Butterfly Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances prior to the species becoming listed as federally endangered.



*Presenting the island marble butterfly conservation sign to a participating enrollee*

**July Mountain Goat Releases:** This is the final year of translocating mountain goats from Olympic National Park to the North Cascades. As expected, with fewer goats located in more remote areas of the Park, fewer animals are being captured. We completed the first week of the operation with 35 goats released at three locations in the North Cascades. Capture operations will end on August 7.



*Crates holding mountain goats arrive by air to the alpine release site*



*And there they go!*



*Coming at you!*

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Region 4 Private Lands Access Program Waterfowl Access and Habitat:** Region 4 Private Lands Access Program staff members monitored plantings of waterfowl forage production. WDFW partners with private landowners to plant barley for migratory birds to feed on over the winter. Funding for these efforts comes from the Washington State Migratory Bird Stamp. Multiple contacts were made with other partner landowners regarding hunting plans for the upcoming season.



*Before and after pictures of a new waterfowl forage enhancement site that is usually farmed for production agriculture but is too wet this year. The blind location for hunting access is next to the telephone pole and the bushes.*

**Samish River Fishery:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard began outreach to the local community in preparation for the upcoming Samish River Chinook season. This is an extraordinarily popular opportunity for shore-bound anglers, and this popularity can cause issues with the community. Through engagement and discussion with the community and Skagit County partners, the fishery has improved over the last few years and we hope to continue that improvement into the future.

**418 Elk Hunt:** Private Lands staff members finalized the 418 elk hunt contract with the partner landowner. This partnership provides the unique opportunity to hunt behind locked gates with a vehicle after being selected for a Nooksack Quality Elk special permit.

**3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

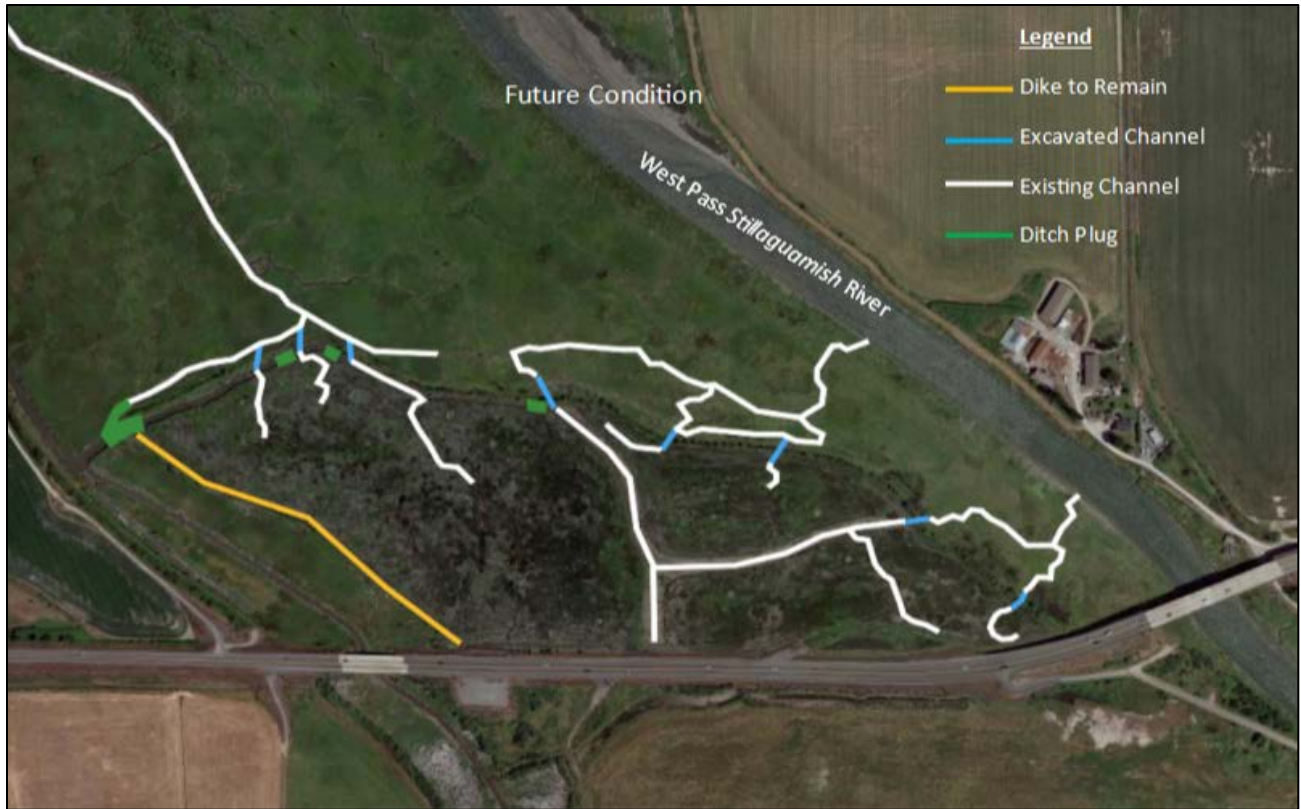
Nothing for this installment.

**4) Conserving Natural Landscapes**

**North Leque Island Grant:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw submitted a grant application to the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program requesting \$300,000 needed to advance the project to construction.



*There is currently a single opening in the dike at North Leque Island where a tide gate failed over 10 years ago*



*The North Leque Island project involves removing the majority of dike and reconnecting channels to improve tidal flow for fish and wildlife and reduce erosion on a neighbor's property.*

**Cherry Valley Drainage Improvement Project:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm reports the Cherry Valley Drainage Improvement Project is underway. This six-year cooperative effort between WDFW, Drainage District 7, Ducks Unlimited, and King County Agricultural Drainage Assistance Program is formally underway. Dewatering and de-fishing equipment and crews arrived this week to prepare the way for large equipment to begin cleaning out the drainage ditches. This project will improve drainage, agriculture, fish (salmonids) and wetland and waterfowl habitat as well as public recreational opportunities. The construction and re-vegetation will continue into September of this year.



*Construction equipment arrives at Cherry Valley Unit for the Drainage Improvement Project*

**Noxious Weed Control:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm coordinated with King County Noxious Weeds to treat purple loosestrife at the Cherry Valley and Stillwater Units.

**5) Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this installment.

**6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

**7) Other**

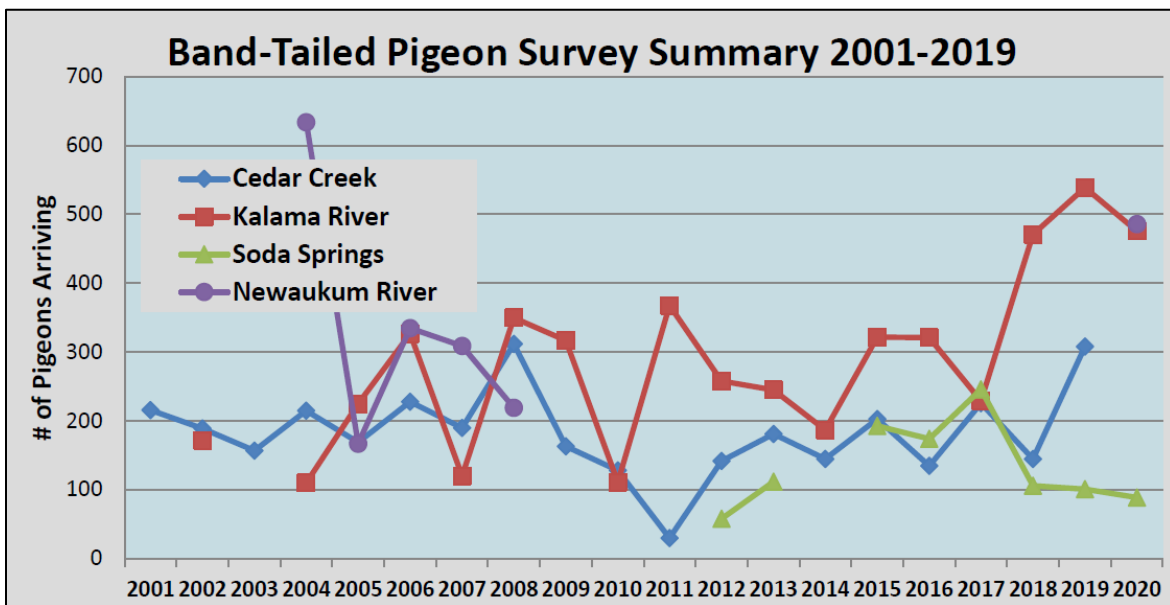
Nothing for this installment.

**REGION 5**

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

**1) Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Band-tailed Pigeon Surveys:** Biologists Stephens and Holman conducted Band-tailed Pigeon Surveys at three sites in District 10; Soda Springs, Pigeon Springs, and Newaukum River. These surveys are conducted annually and provide an index of the Pacific Coast band-tailed pigeons. As seen in the graph below, the numbers of birds counted at each of the three sites were like counts of the past few years.







*The pigeons are difficult to photograph at Pigeon Springs, but this American dipper was making itself very available for snapshots*

**Black Bear Population Estimation:** This week Biologists Holman and Stephens were joined by Carnivore Specialists Welfelt and Beausoleil to conclude this year's effort to generate a population estimate for black bears in GMUs 550 (Coweeman) and 556 (Toutle). Together the team made the final check of the 36 baited stations, collected hair from the sites that had been visited by bears, and removed all equipment from the sites.

Next, the hair samples will be consolidated and sent along to a lab in Canada for genetic analysis. Upon receiving these results, Welfelt and Beausoleil will calculate an estimate of bears per 100 square kilometers for the study area. This information will be used to inform management decisions. Thanks to all those who participated in the project.

**2021-2023 Three-Year Season Setting Cycle:** Regional Wildlife Biologists and Conflict Specialists along with Program Manager Jonker and Regional Enforcement Captain Wickersham joined Game Division staff members as well as counterparts in Regions 4 and 6 to discuss the three-year season setting effort. Many proposals were discussed and vetted during the many hour discussion. Regional proposals of note include game management units (GMU) boundary changes, modifications to some deer and elk seasons, efforts to recruit, retain, and revitalize hunters, and other items. Look for the proposals in their statewide entirety and provide input, early in August on the WDFW website.

**Klickitat County Monarch Surveys:** This week, Biologist Wickhem conducted five monarch butterfly surveys at known milkweed patches in Klickitat County. Monarchs populations across the western United States have dramatically decreased over the last few years, and WDFW biologists throughout Eastern Washington have been tasked with resurveying known monarch breeding locations to look for adult monarchs and new evidence of breeding (eggs, larvae, or pupae). Despite surveying thousands of milkweed plants, Wickhem was unable to find any monarchs. We are hoping for more success during the second round of surveys at the end of August.



*Showy Milkweed (Asclepias speciosa) in bloom*

**Western Pond Turtle Headstart Release:** Biologists Wickhem helped organize the annual release of Western pond turtle headstarts, which occurred this week. A total of 23 young headstarted turtles were released into two ponds on the Friends of the Columbia Gorge Turtle Haven property. This is the second time headstarted 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 on-site 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 headstarted 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. A limited number of staff members and volunteers (only ten) from WDFW, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, the Oregon Zoo, and

USFS attended the release, to comply with the Governor's recent restrictions on outdoor gatherings.



*Biologist Wickhem reads the PIT tag of a headstart Western pond turtle before release*



*A newly released headstart Western pond turtle*

**Balch Lake Field Trip:** Wildlife Biologist Wickhem, Habitat Biologist Johnson, Fish Biologist Gardner, and Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven met at Balch Lake at the Sondino Ponds Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area to strategize for an upcoming fish removal project. Balch Lake is home to the state-endangered Western Pond turtle, and healthy populations of non-native fish including largemouth bass, bluegill, pumpkinseed, and brown bullhead. The fish were introduced to the lake decades ago when the area was open to fishing. The lake has been closed to public access (and therefore fishing) for at least 20 years, and the fish have flourished without any fishing pressure.

Biologists very rarely catch hatchling pond turtles in the lake, and the hatchlings that have been released into the lake since 1997 have grown much slower compared to hatchlings released in nearby ponds that do not have fish. Biologists suspect the fish are out-competing the turtles for food and resources. The team is hoping to drain the lake this fall, which will put a large dent in the fish population. Western pond turtles can tolerate a temporarily drained habitat, and the draining should come at a time when the turtles are beginning to leave the water to hibernate for the winter. Each member of the team contributed valuable advice and was very motivated to make this project happen.



*Balch Lake Field Trip*

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Land Access Visits and Public Engagement:** Newly hired Private Lands Biologist Ferris toured eastern Region 5 to visit Private Lands Access (PLA) program properties, wildlife areas, and become familiar with the landscape in Klickitat County. Ferris was introduced to one of the participating landowners and initiated her presence as the new contact for the program.

**Hunting Prospects:** This week, regional wildlife biologists completed work on this year's hunting prospects. The documents are produced by district staff members throughout Washington and provide helpful information on hunting access, population trends, and prospects for the upcoming fall seasons. The documents will be posted on the hunting page of WDFW's website around Labor Day.

**Access Sites:** Access staff members Rhodes and McKinlay continue to see extensive use and vandalism of access sites, including excessive trash, graffiti, and destruction of property. Mount Saint Helens Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Wildermuth helped out with taking care of sites by lending a helping hand in mowing the grass area around Kress Lake.



*Trash and Graffiti at Barbers, Langsdorf, and Icehouse Access Sites*



*Mowing Kress Lake*

**Langsdorf Landing Access:** This week there was a small fire at the Langsdorf Landing access site. The Vancouver Fire Department responded and ensured it was all put out. There have been multiple fires in the same general area over the last few weeks.



*Langsdorf Landing fire*

### 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Injured Deer:** Regional Wildlife Program Manager Jonker contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen on her way into work regarding a female deer that she encountered that had been hit by another vehicle and left to suffer in the roadway. Having just passed that location a few minutes prior on his way into work as well, Jacobsen turned around and promptly responded to the scene. Several vehicles had stopped to look at the still-live deer and a traffic jam was forming. A Clark County Sheriff's Deputy arrived at the same time and provided traffic control while Jacobsen euthanized the deer.

**Bear In Bird Feeders:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen handled a report of a bear that had been frequenting a residence east of Goldendale. The bear had knocked down eight of the landowner's bird feeders. Jacobsen advised the landowner to remove all attractants, discussed living in bear country with the landowner, and asked the landowner to share Jacobsen's contact information with the neighboring landowners.

**Cougar Sightings:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen fielded a phone call from a landowner who had observed a cougar killing and feeding on a deer on his driveway in Skamania County. When the landowner returned, the cougar and deer were no longer visible. Jacobsen provided advice to the landowner and encouraged the landowner to avoid using the area of his property where the cougar and deer carcass were for the time being. Jacobsen advised that the cougar likely would move on within a couple of days given the high daytime temperatures. Jacobsen discussed the issues surrounding allowing tame deer to frequent gardens near houses and how they would likely attract cougars. The landowner agreed to call back if the cougar was observed again.

A landowner in Clark County contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen to report that a cougar had jumped into her yard and proceeded to chase a chicken around the yard. The chicken was not injured, and the cougar had left the scene. Advice was given to the landowner on securing her chickens, and educational information was provided on living in bear and cougar country. The landowner agreed to call back if the cougar was observed again.

Another landowner in Clark County contacted WDFW to report that a cougar was at his place the previous night at dusk. The landowner's turkey had gotten out of its pen earlier in the day and was still roaming around the property after dark when he heard a commotion involving the turkey. The landowner turned on the headlights of his vehicle and observed a cougar that had dropped the turkey and was now behind a tree. The reporting party (RP) had his shotgun to put the turkey down and took a shot at the cougar. The cougar proceeded to turn and walk away from the scene. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen advised on keeping his livestock secured and told the landowner to call back if the cougar was seen again.

**Elk With Swollen Hoof:** Jacobsen fielded a phone call from a concerned motorist who observed a bull elk that was limping and had a swollen hoof in Skamania County. Jacobsen entered the sighting on WDFW's Hoof Disease reporting tool and encouraged the reporting party to report additional sightings of limping elk on the reporting tool.

**Mistaken Identity Cases:** A concerned landowner in suburban Clark County contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen regarding a large black bear that had been sleeping in a tree in her yard daily. The landowner had observed scat near the base of the tree, and the neighboring landowners had also seen the bear and were concerned. Suspecting that the "bear" might be another critter with a striped tail, Jacobsen inquired about the size of the animal. The landowner estimated the bear to weigh well over 100 pounds. Jacobsen asked Officer Moats to check in with the landowner, as he was the nearest officer to the residence. Upon arrival, Officer Moats confirmed the "bear" to be a large raccoon, though the raccoon was not nearly 100 pounds.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen received two additional reports this week from concerned landowners who believed they observed bear scat in their yards. Both residents lived in suburban Clark County. After inspecting pictures of the reported bear scat, the scat in both instances was confirmed to be either raccoon or coyote. During the mid-summer when the fruit on fruit trees is readily available (especially cherries), raccoons, coyotes, and bears may all consume the same fruit types and their scat may appear very similar. However, based on the size of the scat piles, Jacobsen was able to determine that they did not belong to a black bear.

**Wolf Observation Report:** A concerned citizen contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen regarding an “extremely large” and “dangerous” wolf in a park in downtown Vancouver in Clark County. The tip of the wolf’s tail was reported to reach 6 inches off the ground, and the tail stood straight up in the air since it was an “alpha wolf”. The reporting party claimed that he had seen deer and an elk in the park as well, which he believed the wolf must be feeding on. The reporting party insisted on educating Jacobsen on the difference between malamutes, huskies, coyotes, and wolves. The reporting party warned several other park users of the animal. Jacobsen thanked the citizen for the report.

**Elk and Deer Damage and Reports:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen continues to work with a landowner in Klickitat County that has been experiencing elk damage to his hay crop and to his fences as well (allowing his cows to get out and roam about). When a group of over 100 head left the field one morning, the landowner even reported observing sparks arcing between the elk and the fence as they jumped over. It is unclear what caused the sparks – perhaps static electricity generated from the elk walking through the hay crop – but the sparks were concerning to the landowner given the extremely dry and hot weather recently. Jacobsen will continue working with the landowner on fencing options to reduce damage.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen worked with a landowner to review the terms of a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement to better help the farmer with preventing damage to his oat crop.

A concerned landowner contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen because he had experienced extensive damage to a plot of tree seedlings that he was using to reforest the area. The landowner reported that last year, he lost 1,800 cedar seedlings to deer damage. The landowner plans to use the trees as a timber crop in the distant future. The landowner was potentially interested in using public hunting during established hunting seasons as a means of preventing additional damage to his seedlings. Jacobsen provided information on hunting seasons and methods of hunting and provided suggestions for facilitating safe hunting on the property. The landowner will be in touch to discuss this further once his family approves of the plan.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen handled concerns from two different landowners complaining about deer damage to their gardens and hobby orchards. Advice was given on fencing and hazing measures. Public hunting options for the fall hunting season were also discussed. Unfortunately, one of the landowners resides in a “no shooting” zone within suburban Clark County, so public hunting to address the multiple bucks on his property will not be an



option. Jacobsen sent both landowners information on urban deer issues as well as on fencing and hazing techniques to deter deer.

A landowner contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen concerning an “aggressive deer” in Klickitat County. The landowner’s mother let their small dog out at night to relieve itself. The dog went on a neighboring piece of property, a vacant lot, where they believed that it was attacked by a deer. The circumstances of the attack were unknown, as no one saw the incident occur, and it could not be verified that a deer was responsible for the attack on the dog.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a report of an injured deer in north Clark County. Unfortunately, the deer was already deceased when Aubrey arrived. The carcass was removed from the area with the help of the landowner.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with an individual who has historically had issues with deer causing damage to grapevines and other fruits. The landowner had been issued hazing devices in the past and was wondering where to find new supplies as he was running low. Aubrey delivered some supplies to be used in the short term and gave the landowner information on where to purchase the supplies in the future.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey also spoke to and met with many landowners who usually experience elk damage during the fall. Aubrey is in the process of renewing Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements (DPCA) with landowners who have worked with WDFW in the past and will be meeting with several landowners soon to determine if enrolling in a DPCA is the best option for them.

**Cougar Issues and Sightings:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen fielded a report of a black cougar that was observed in Skamania County. Not only did the reporting party state that he observed a black cougar, but that the animal also had a pink tracking collar on it. The reporting party stated that the animal was at least 100 pounds, and he observed it scaling a near-vertical rock cliff. This was the second black cougar that the reporting party had seen in his lifetime. Jacobsen informed the reporting party that a melanistic (black) cougar has never actually been documented in existence anywhere, though a couple of other wild cat species from South America and Africa have been documented to have black fur. Jacobsen also noted that WDFW had not placed a pink collar, or any collar for that matter, on a black cougar. The reporting party most likely observed a domestic house cat, but the reporting party stated that he was going to put a trail camera up in the area to verify the sighting.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen followed up with a landowner after he shot a young cougar near his livestock. The cougar had been around his livestock the night before as well. Officer Van Vladriken conducted the initial investigation and response. Jacobsen provided advice and will meet with the landowner next week to discuss ways to protect his livestock in the future.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey followed up on a cougar issue initially handled by law enforcement. A cougar has been frequenting an area and may have been responsible for sheep depredations earlier in the year, however; WDFW was not notified of the livestock losses to investigate further. Advice was given to the landowners by both enforcement and Aubrey, and a

noise deterrent was left with the landowner to attempt to scare the cougar when entering the property.

**Injured Owl:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a call for an injured great horned owl near La Center. Aubrey was able to catch the owl and transported it the following morning to a wildlife rehabilitator.

#### 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

**Mount Saint Helens Wildlife Area Merrill Lake Unit Monitoring:** Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Hunter Education Coordinator Elliott went to the Merrill Lake Unit, as Elliott is going to help with monitoring the area weekly. While at the unit they reposted signs, picked up trash, and took down several teepee-like structures at illegal campsites. It appeared that the area has received very high use over the last month. A couple of the campsites had large amounts of trash left behind, and human waste on the ground. Wildlife area staff members have reached out to the Enforcement Program to see if additional patrols can be conducted in the area.



*An illegal camp that was dismantled along the Kalama River in the Merrill Lake Unit*

**Cowlitz Wildlife Area Spears Unit Vegetation Management:** The old mill pond site on the Spears Unit, due largely to its wide seasonal variability in water depths and its history of impacts from the historic Mount Saint Helens Plywood mill, tends to have a large amount of vegetation issues. The heavily impacted area tends to be weedy. The WLA controls unwanted vegetation using integrated vegetation management techniques such as applying chemical treatments, hand pulling plants, as well as mowing plants or cutting blooms to prevent invasive plants from producing seed. Other activities include planting or encouraging desirable vegetation to create competition. Cowlitz Wildlife Area staff members hand-pulled tansy ragwort, mowed the road and banks around the pond, and mowed the vegetation around the rest of the historic mill site.



*Photos of Spears Unit pond and mill site showing results of vegetation management activities*

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

**Mount Saint Helens Mountain Goat Ground Count Training:** Biologist Wickhem, along with staff from the Mount Saint Helens Institute and Cowlitz Indian Tribe, presented a virtual training to volunteers participating in the annual Mount Saint Helens Mountain Goat Ground Count. This weekend, ten teams of volunteers will hike assigned routes around Mt Saint Helens and in the Mount Margaret Backcountry and glass the slopes at designated survey points in search of goats. All observed goats will be counted, aged, and sexed (if possible), and their locations recorded on a detailed topo map. This survey has been a good indicator of general mountain goat population trends in the area and has shown the population to be steadily growing over the past several years. Biologist Wickhem is volunteering for a route along with Volunteer Downing, and they are looking forward to a beautiful hike and plenty of goats!

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

Nothing for this installment.

## 7) Other

**New Region 5 Private Lands Biologist:** Private Lands Biologist Monique Ferris started with WDFW on July 16th. Based out of the Ridgefield office, Monique will be leading the private lands work throughout Region 5. Monique arrived from Michigan with an extensive background in private lands access and habitat work, as well as in Farm Bill and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) collaboration. Monique graduated with a Bachelor's in Biology and Earth Science from Central Michigan University and received her Master's in Biology: Ecology and Organismal Biology at Eastern Michigan University where she gained experience surveying endangered bats. Her favorite experience was her opportunity to study abroad in the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador.

Monique managed the Michigan DNR Hunting Access Program throughout the state and completed two United States Department of Agriculture Voluntary Public Access grants and was awarded funding for a third grant during her four years there. She also served as a DNR private lands biologist for southeast Michigan restoring habitat on private lands. In addition, Monique worked as a farm bill biologist for the Conservation Districts representing the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative and providing technical assistance to landowners on Farm Bill conservation programs. She wrote and managed four DNR Wildlife Habitat grants on state land in three counties and assisted numerous habitat projects on private land while partnering with US Fish and Wildlife, Michigan Department of Agriculture, U.S. Farm Service Agency, and numerous conservation groups. Working closely with the Michigan DNR since 2004, Monique surveyed six state game areas as an ecologist with the Michigan Natural Features Inventory. She also interned with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and with the National Wildlife Federation.

## **REGION 6**

Nothing for this installment.