

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

July 1 to 15, 2021

DIVERSITY DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

Nothing for this installment.

LANDS DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nothing for this installment.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Discover Pass: WDFW Representatives Sisolak and Vernie, the Department of Natural Resources, Parks, and the USDA Forest Service met on July 2 to discuss ways to improve customer service, reduce public confusion between the Northwest Forest Pass and Discover Pass, and co-market the two fee mechanisms.

Coordination with Tribes: WDFW recently hosted a meeting in June about outdoor recreation and impacts, where Tulalip Tribes representatives presented a literature review titled “[The ‘Recreation Boom’ on Public Lands in Western Washington: Impacts to Wildlife and Implications for Treaty Tribes](#) (2021).” On July 14, Section Manager Sisolak and Tribal Liaison Woods had a follow up meeting with Libby Nelson from Tulalip Tribes to discuss approaches to managing recreation impacts being considered for the WDFW Statewide Recreation Strategy and next steps.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Conflict Management Process: A subcommittee of the Recreation Strategy Advisory Committee is developing a process for managing local recreation-related conflicts arising on WDFW-managed lands. The goal is to manage conflicts locally where possible.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this installment.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

WDFW Outreach and Engagement Committee: Section Manager Sisolak serves on the interagency committee tasked with assessing and improving agency outreach and engagement. WDFW has contracted a team from Maul Foster Alongi and Triangle Associates to facilitate the effort. A kickoff with the consulting team was held on July 6.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

SCIENCE DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Western Grebe Surveys: Wildlife Biologists Atamian and Lowe and Enforcement intern Maletzke conducted the biennial survey of western grebes on Long Lake in Spokane County. Approximately 20 river miles and six locations of emergent vegetation were surveyed between the Nine Mile Dam and the Long Lake Dam. A total of 134 adult grebes were counted. The vast majority (118) were observed at the Nine Mile Recreation Area, 15 were observed in the Sportsman Paradise area, and one was seen near the McLellan Conservation Area. All observed nesting was limited to the Nine Mile Recreation Area. Fifty-seven active nests were counted, which was three more than last year.



Three adult western grebes foraging at Long Lake in Spokane County



Ten western grebes with seven sitting on nests at Long Lake in Spokane County



Pied-billed grebe (left) and western grebe (right) on nest at Long Lake in Spokane County

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Fishing Access: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley contacted two property owners along two separate water ways in Walla Walla County to enroll them into WDFW's Feel Free to Fish access program. Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley entered them into the contracting system, NOVATUS.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Bear Concern: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb and Officer Horn visited with a concerned homeowner and his family about a bear sighting near their property in Walla Walla County. The homeowner reported that the bear(s) come down the drainage and get into the garbage cans at the end of the driveway. Advice was provided, contact information for how to obtain additional bear proofing material from Basin Disposal was exchanged, and electric fencing schematics and examples were passed along as well to limit access to garbage areas.

Pasture Check and Non-Lethal Deterrent Adjustments: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb assisted producers who were impacted by fires in the Blue Mountain Area by checking on livestock. Some livestock producers run multi-county operations and were unable to complete range riding on all their stock due to fire threats in other areas. Kolb checked livestock and documented their behavior, observed and documented wolf activity, and moved fox lights around the pasture areas.



Wolf tracks observed in a private pasture in Columbia County. The location of activity was relayed to the producer

Depredation Report and Investigation: On Saturday, Conflict Section staff members received a report of a possible depredation of a calf being found on private pasture northwest of Anatone. Conflict staff members coordinated with the producer and WDFW Enforcement staff members to conduct a full investigation and necropsy the following morning. The producer secured the area and covered the carcass that night to preserve evidence. Conflict and Enforcement staff members found injuries and hemorrhaging consistent with a cougar depredation and confirmed the depredation as confirmed cougar in the field.

Injured Hawk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade responded to a report of an injured hawk in a Pomeroy resident's yard. Wade evaluated the hawk and determined that it had an injury to its wing. After capturing the hawk, Wade coordinated with Washington State University Veterinary School and transported it to Pullman for evaluation and rehabilitation.



Injured hawk

Elk Hazing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb continued to assist producers in hazing elk off wheat, pea, corn, and garbanzo bean crops in Walla Walla County.



A Zon gun deployed in a severely damaged corn field in Walla Walla County. The deterrent measure has kept the elk from causing additional damage for the time being

Lingering Mountain Lion: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb continues to assist a producer who runs more than 700 goats in Columbia County. The goats are used to graze pasture areas down for weed and fire control. Although the goats are penned at night in a tight group, mountain lion sightings remain a nightly occurrence. Fladry, fox lights, electric fencing, livestock guardian dogs, and a 24/7 shepherd are currently being utilized by the producer and seem to be effective at keeping predators out of the tribe of goats for the time being.

Grouse Flats Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade met with a producer in the Grouse Flats area to look at a grain hay field that has been heavily damaged by a herd of elk. Daily hazing has been ongoing in the area, but due to current drought conditions the elk have been very unresponsive to hazing efforts. After evaluating the damage, Wade discussed the damage claim process with the producer, who then submitted a notice of intent to Olympia Conflict staff members.



Herd of elk that have been damaging hay fields in the Grouse Flats area

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Lick Creek Fire: On the morning of July 7, lightning ignited fires in Dry Gulch near the Weatherly unit of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area and in Lick Creek on USFS lands. The fires eventually merged and became the Lick Creek Fire. The fire has burned nearly all of the main unit of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. At this time, the fire is still burning on USFS lands to the South and is over 77,000 acres in size. Two unused WDFW barns were destroyed by the fire along with many miles of boundary stock fence and 3.3 miles of elk fence.

Key storage buildings and a house at Smoothing Iron were saved by fire fighters on the night of July 8. Several guzzlers and a big game guzzler installed by Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation volunteers were damaged. Wildlife Area staff members are still assessing and adding up damages which will take some time. Numerous trees and woody riparian vegetation have been burned along miles of riparian zones in Charley Creek, Lick Creek, North Fork of Asotin Creek, and South Fork of Asotin Creek.



The birth of the Lick Creek Fire on the morning of July 7. Shortly after lightning strikes ignited fires in Dry Gulch on the left and Lick Creek on the right



The Lick Creek fire from the Weatherly Unit looking South towards across the blackened landscape of the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area. The fire is raging on USFS lands many miles to the south in this picture



Fire crews ignite backburns to save WDFW buildings at Smoothing Iron Ridge in the early morning hours of July 9



Fire burning across upper Smoothing Iron on the evening of July 8



Fire pushing up out of the North Fork of Asotin Creek towards the ridge top at Smoothing Iron on the afternoon of July 8



Structures burning on private property at the mouth of Charley Creek next to WDFW land on the evening of July 7

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Hunting Prospects: Wildlife Biologists Atamian and Lowe worked on updating the District 2 Hunting Prospects for 2021.

Girl Scout STEM Program: Biologist Lowe gave a lesson on local wildlife to several groups of Girl Scouts as part of their “STEM in the field” day in the Dishman Hills.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Mourning Dove Management: Biologists Rowan and Dougherty worked with fellow staff members to train two new technicians how to trap and band mourning doves. Rowan also scouted for new sites, spent nearly every day trapping and banding, and captured over 100 mourning doves. Unfortunately, we have a very intelligent red-tailed hawk who has learned how to release doves from traps and has been a source of mortality. Rowan made adjustments to trapping in effort to evade the hawk, which has helped to some extent. WDFW bands mourning doves every year as a way to gain an understanding of harvest, distribution, age and sex composition, and to some extent, population abundance locally.



Newly banded dove – Photo by Sean Dougherty



Mourning dove pair – Photo by Sean Dougherty



Hungry doves waiting for someone to put out more bait – Photo by Sean Dougherty

Waterfowl Management: Biologist Rowan began baiting duck ponds in order to band them later this summer. WDFW also bands mallards every year as a way to monitor harvest, sex, and age composition of the local population, distribution and to a lesser extent population abundance locally. Rowan also worked with the USFWS Columbia Basin Wildlife Refuge manager to gain a permit to trap and band birds on their property.

Burrowing Owls: Biologist Dougherty assisted WDFW's Habitat Program with assessing burrowing owls at a fiber installation site. After some initial concern, there were three confirmed occupied burrows that appear to have had no impacts as a result of the construction activities.



Burrowing owl perched on a sign post – Photo by Sean Dougherty

Aerial Goat Surveys: Along with the help of District 6 Wildlife Biologist Scott Fitkin and Ungulate Specialist Will Moore, Biologists Comstock and Jeffreys attempted an aerial survey of the North Shore and South Shore Lake Chelan mountain goat herds. Vast areas of potential summer range were flown via helicopter on both sides of the lake, from Harbor Creek to McAlester Mountain on the North Shore and from Nobby Creek to Castle Creek on the South Shore. However, in three days of surveys, exceedingly few goats were observed, prompting biologists to call off the effort early. While summer aerial surveys are a tried-and-true method of estimating mountain goat populations, it is possible that the dramatic temperature increase in the final two weeks of June pushed goats to seek shade in areas of heavy timber where they were hidden from aerial view. The few goats that were observed were all at elevations of between 6,500 and 7,500 feet.

Neither of these goat herds can be effectively surveyed on foot due to the extremely steep topography of their ranges, so biologists will likely pursue fall and winter aerial surveys when temperatures are lower, and goats may concentrate in a smaller area as higher altitudes become too snowy. Additionally, Chelan Public Utility District (PUD) will perform their annual winter surveys of each herd via boat.



Larch Lakes (left) and Domke Lake (right), as seen during aerial surveys of potential summer range for the South Shore Lake Chelan mountain goat herd – Photos by Emily Jeffreys

Bumblebee Surveys: Scientific Technician Amy Pavelchek completed the second and final bumble bee survey at Strahl Canyon in northeastern Douglas County, capturing 11 bumble bees. Technician Pavelchek has since begun the intensive process of entering the large amount of data associated with each completed bumble bee survey into the Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas’s Bumble Bee Watch data entry portal. More data will need to be entered following the completion of remaining bumble bee survey grids in District 7, at Shady Pass and Black Canyon in Chelan County and the Palisades in Douglas County.



A Hunt’s bumblebee (Bombus huntii) on a lupine – Photo by Amy Pavelchek

District 7 - Bumblebee Surveys:



A yellow-faced bumblebee (Bombus vosnesenskii) – Photo by Devon Comstock

Common Loon Surveys: Biologists Comstock and Jeffreys performed a second survey for common loons on Twin Lakes in Chelan County. Once again, although Big Twin Lake appears conducive to supporting nesting loons, no loons were detected despite a thorough survey via boat. Biologists will hike into survey Little Twin in late July when streams will likely be low enough to cross safely.



Biologist Comstock performing the second common loon occupancy survey on Twin Lakes –
Photo by Emily Jeffreys

Biologist Jeffreys and Technician Pavelchek performed a second survey for common loons at the mouth of the Stehekin River. No common loons were observed, which was largely unsurprising due to the dramatic fluctuations in water level that Lake Chelan experiences throughout the year. Common loons can only nest on bodies of water that maintain stable water levels, as their nests are typically located on the water in floating rafts of vegetation or on small islands to keep the eggs and nestlings safe from terrestrial predators. Jeffreys and Pavelchek also hiked into Howard Lake, just several miles from Stehekin at the edge of North Cascades National Park. This lake looked promising for nesting loons, as it is not prone to fluctuations in water level and has plenty of vegetation and even a couple islands on which loons might nest. However, common loons are diving birds known to descend to depths as far as 200 feet or more in search of prey, and Howard Lake is quite shallow. No loons were detected during the survey.



Howard Lake in North Cascades National Park near Stehekin, Washington – Photo by Emily Jeffreys

North American Bat Monitoring: Biologists Jeffreys and Comstock deployed four SM4 acoustic detectors at Burch Mountain and Swakane as part of a joint effort between WDFW, Northwestern Bat Hub at Oregon State University, and other regional partners. SM4 acoustic detectors record the high frequency vocalizations of bats, allowing for call analysis and species identification. These data will be incorporated into the North American Bat Monitoring Program, which seeks to monitor local and regional bat populations across the continent and inform effective bat conservation.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Hunter Access Program: Private Lands Biologist Braaten continues reposting Hunter Access private properties within the Pearl Hill wildfire boundary. Hundreds of signs need to be replaced. Work is ongoing.



New Hunter Access signs replaced after being destroyed by wildfire – Photo by Eric Braaten

Water Access Sites: Water Access Manager Harmon and Assistant Manager Steele put out bear hide strips hanging from wire suspended between T-posts to stop our friend “beaver” from damming up a water passage and potentially washing out the road in the Quincy Lakes. Harmon and Steele also prepped a boat for use on a Recreation Conservation Office project at Burke Lake. Assistant Manager Steele continues to make herbicide applications on breakthrough weeds as weather permits. Steele was contacted by an Electric City resident wanting to volunteer their efforts to help keep clean some of the access sites near Grand Coulee. He then completed his end of the volunteer project setup for the North and South Million-dollar mile access sites. Manager Harmon and Assistant Manager Steele were contacted by a Foster Creek Conservation District (FCCD) employee in regard to invasive Phragmites along the shoreline of Jameson Lake. Steele and Harmon spoke with Assistant Manager Cole to coordinate a joint effort with the FCCD to make herbicide treatments in late summer. Natural Resource worker Bilodeau continues to do a great job servicing access sites, providing a quality experience and stay on our lands.



Assistant Manager Steele hanging bear hide at Burke Lake – Photo by Harmon

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Raptor Rescue: Biologists Jeffreys and Comstock responded to a call from a Malaga resident who found five raptor nestlings stranded on the ground in a patch of Douglas firs on his property. These Cooper’s hawk chicks were primarily covered in down and were a long way from having their flight feathers and full plumage grown in, so they were neither capable of flight nor thermoregulation. Sadly, the extreme heatwave much of the Pacific Northwest is currently experiencing is causing many nestlings to prematurely leave the nest or be ejected from the nest by heat-stressed parents, so biologists speculated this may have been what happened to these Cooper’s hawk chicks.



Biologists placed the downy nestlings in a well-ventilated cardboard box and moved them into air conditioning, as the temperature was already above 100 degrees that morning – Photo by

Emily Jeffreys

After carefully picking up the chicks, placing them in a well-ventilated box with a towel on the bottom, and getting them to a quiet, air-conditioned place indoors, biologists set about trying to find the nest and to determine whether the nestlings' parents were still in the vicinity. Biologists did locate the nest and observed an adult Cooper's hawk on a branch immediately adjacent to it, but the nest was a good 40 or more feet above the ground and well out of reach. This meant biologists would be unable to return the nestlings to their nest and had to do the next best thing: create a replacement nest to get the chicks safely off the ground.

Biologists lined a laundry basket with cardboard and placed a coconut fiber mat of the type used in hanging planters on top of the cardboard layer. After finishing off the makeshift nest with a layer of small pine branches, Biologist Comstock wove a ratchet strap through some of the holes in the laundry basket, climbed a ladder, and fastened the nest basket to the tree about 10 feet off the ground using the ratchet strap and a bungee cord. Once the nest was secured, biologists retrieved the box of nestlings and gently placed each baby bird in the nest basket. Biologists then left the area with the plan to check in with the property owners the following day to see if the adults had been observed returning to the chicks. It turned out to be successful and Mom and Dad came back and continued to feed.



Biologist Jeffreys placing the five chicks in their new nest – Photos by Devon Comstock (left) and Emily Jeffreys (right)



Two of the Cooper's hawk chicks peer over the edge of their new "nest" – Photo by Devon Comstock

Unfortunately, WDFW staff members lack the capacity to respond to most calls regarding fallen nestlings or injured wildlife, and WDFW personnel are not licensed wildlife rehabilitators. Currently, there is no licensed wildlife rehabber in northcentral Washington, and reaching the nearest wildlife rehabilitation facility requires a two-and-a-half to four-hour drive one way, depending on starting location and which facility will accept the animal.

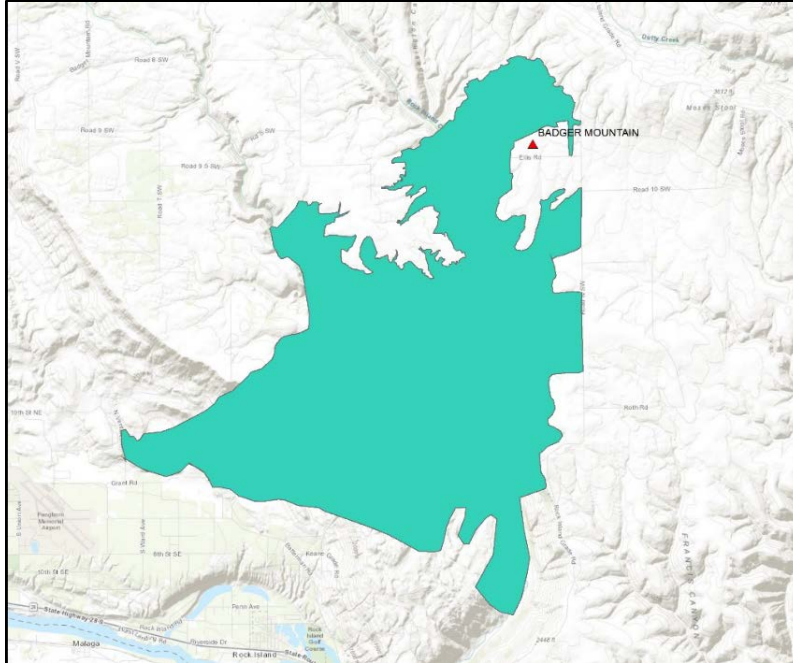
With that in mind, here is what to do if you find a baby bird (or five!) on the ground: First, determine whether the bird is a nestling or a fledgling. If it is fully feathered and hopping around, it is a fledgling and should be left alone. It can take a day or two for fledglings to develop the musculature required for flight after leaving the nest, so this period of awkwardly hopping around on the ground is a perfectly natural part of a bird's lifecycle. Meanwhile, they will continue to be fed by their parents. If the baby bird is primarily covered with down and unable to hop, it is a nestling and needs help. Always try to locate the nest and put the baby bird back inside it, gently covering the nestling with a towel to transport it. Birds will not reject their young because a human has touched them. However, the nest may be too high to reach, or may have fallen and broken apart. In these cases, you can create a makeshift nest for the chicks and secure it to the nest tree as high off the ground as you can safely reach.

For more information regarding what to do if you find a baby bird, how to differentiate a nestling from a fledgling, and building makeshift nests for displaced nestlings, please see the links below: Raptors: <https://tetonraptorcenter.org/our-work/young-raptors>
Passerines (Songbirds): <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/injured-wildlife/baby-birds>
<https://www.greenwoodwildlife.org/building-temporary-nests-for-misplaced-baby-birds/>

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

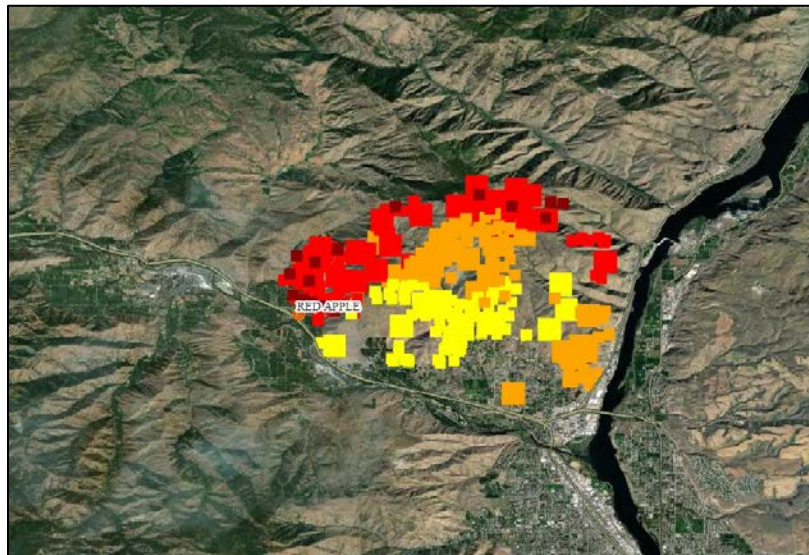
District 7 – Heatwave and Wildfire: An unprecedented heatwave hit the Pacific Northwest the week of June 28, with temperatures getting as high as 113 degrees in the Wenatchee Valley on June 29. These record-breaking high temperatures coupled with the drought conditions that already existed caused significant stress to both plants and wildlife. Rehab facilities were inundated with calls of nestling birds abandoning their nests and biologist responded to multiple calls of grounded nestlings and fledglings. Trees and shrubs are showing signs of sun scorch, and just like agricultural crops, native berry crops are suffering as fruit has been sunburnt. The cumulative stress of drought, heatwave and wildfire is creating a triple whammy for native wildlife this summer.

On July 4 the Batterman Road fire initiated in East Wenatchee, spreading north and east towards Rock Island and up the Rock Island Grade Road. This fire consumed shrubsteppe habitat surrounding the Badger Mountain sage-grouse lek. The fire was contained on July 10 and was estimated at 14,000 acres. Mop-up operations are still ongoing.



Boundary of the Batterman Road fire in relation to the Badger Mountain lek. Data from Northwest Interagency Coordination Center (NWCC)

On July 13 the Red Apple fire initiated on Red Apple Road just west of Wenatchee. This fire quickly spread to the north and east, leading to the evacuation of over 1,000 residences, as well as evacuation of the Wenatchee District Office on July 14. The fire consumed grassland and shrubsteppe habitat on Burch Mountain, before climbing uphill and burning ponderosa pine stands. As of July 15, the fire has moved back west towards Warner Canyon and upper Nahahum Canyon, leading to further evacuations. This fire is impacting core bighorn sheep habitat and mule deer winter range.



Remote sensing detections of wildfire from [NASA Fire Information for Resource Management System \(FIRMS\)](#) on July 15



Red Apple Road fire as it moves east towards Highway 97A, prompting closure of the highway on July 14 – Photo by Devon Comstock

2021 SAFE CRP – Douglas County: Private Lands Biologist Braaten was informed last week that 10 new State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts were signed up so far and more are in the process. Private Lands Biologist Braaten has been working on several site visits to determine how CRP plans will be written. Private Lands Biologist is also working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to determine form information. Some forms sent out were wrong and have been corrected after it was brought to their attention.



Douglas County Private Lands Biologist Braaten completes a field survey and compositions assessment on field to be enrolled in the SAFE CRP program for NRCS – Photo by Eric Braaten

REGION 3

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 4

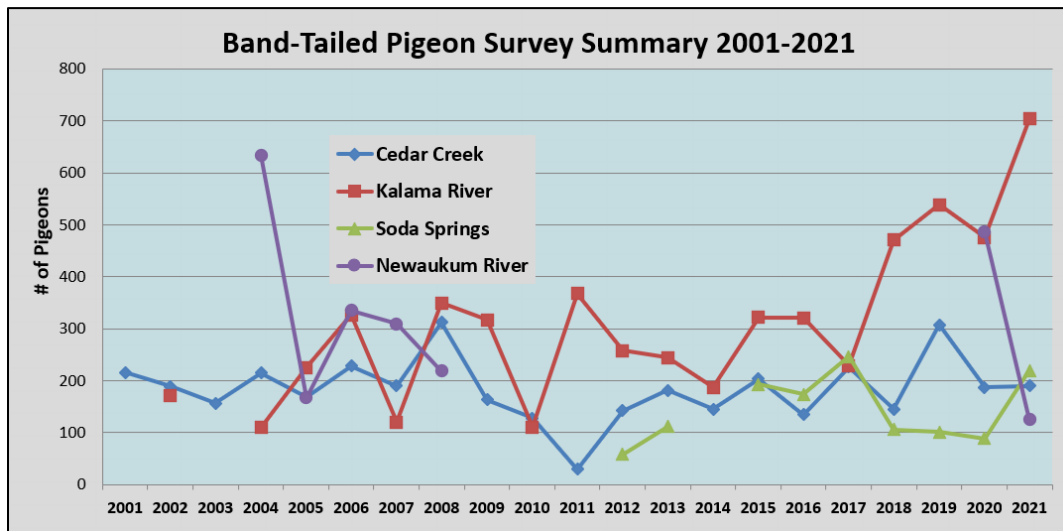
Nothing for this installment.

REGION 5

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Band-tailed Pigeon Surveys: Biologist Holman completed the annual band-tailed pigeon mineral site surveys at the Kalama River and Newaukum River sites. Biologist Holman and Conflict Specialist Aubrey teamed up to complete the heavily forested Soda Springs site as well. Biologist Wickhem conducted the survey at the Cedar Creek Wildlife Area. Mineral sites throughout the range of the Pacific Coast population of band-tailed pigeons in western Washington, Oregon, California, and British Columbia are surveyed this time of year to index abundance and allow wildlife managers to monitor the population trends of this game species. Survey results were strong for the local sites again this year, highlighted by a record count of 704 at the Kalama River site. Other wildlife observed while on the surveys included a bear, deer, mourning doves, turkey vultures, dippers, kingfishers, garter snakes, juncos, bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, Steller's jays, robins, cedar waxwings, song sparrows, hooded and common mergansers, a barred owl (audio only), and lots of mosquitoes.



21-year graphic illustrating the number of band-tailed pigeons visiting mineral sites in WDFW Region 5



Several band-tailed pigeons perched in a cedar tree above their mineral site



A yearling buck and doe assisting Biologist Wickhem on her band-tailed pigeon survey

Monitoring the Success of WDFW’s Fisher Reintroduction Efforts: Biologists Holman and Wickhem joined Species Lead Lewis, Diversity Survey Section Lead Cotton, Biologists Tirhi and Butler from Region 6, as well as Science Division Data Managers Blatz and Simpler for a day of training and initial station set up for fisher monitoring. Staff members from the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and Conservation Northwest completed the group. Introductions, protocol review, site selection, equipment, and data management were all covered during the morning session of the gathering. In the afternoon, the team traveled to the USFS lands and set up an initial survey station.

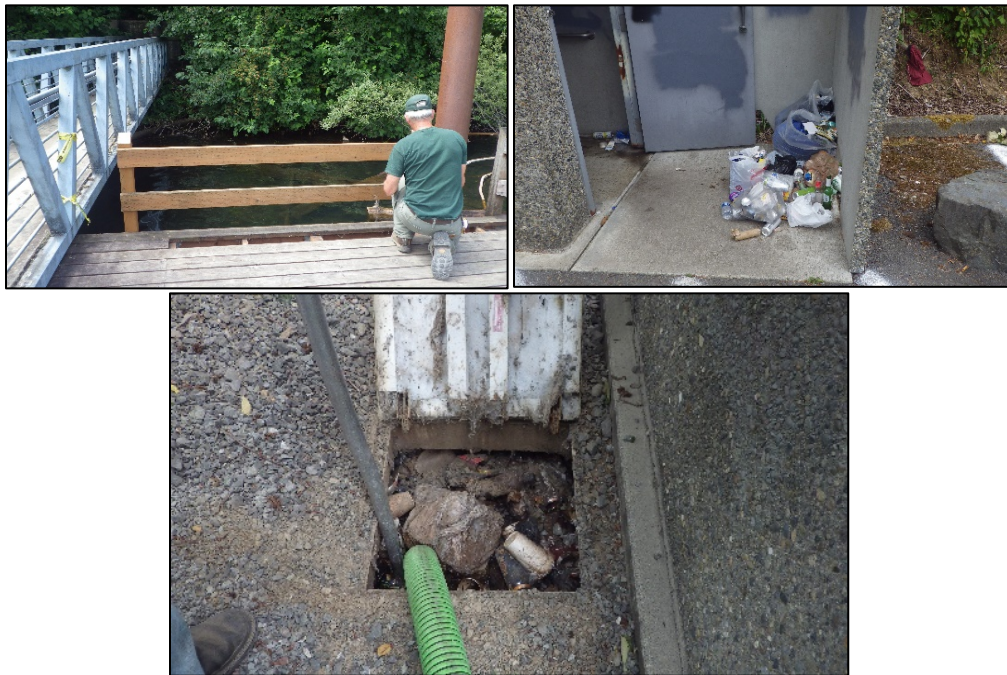
The training day marks the start of what will be a two-to-three-year effort designed to determine if re-introduced fishers are successfully colonizing the forests of southern Washington. For more information on efforts to re-establish fishers in their native habitats in Washington, see the WDFW website [here](#).



Conservation Northwest Biologist Long and WDFW Species Lead Lewis setting up a fisher monitoring station on USFS lands in Southwest Washington

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Mineral Lake and Fisherman's Loop East Access Sites: Access staff members had to replace more lumber this week at Mineral Lake Access. Lumber is being either stolen or thrown in the lake more frequently, now causing unsafe conditions for users of this site. This is not the only vandalism that occurred at Mineral. Someone filled one of the restroom vaults with trash resulting in unsanitary conditions and requiring another trip to pump out the vault. Trash was left both inside and outside the restrooms at the Mineral Lake Access and thrown throughout the parking lot. A large dump site was also found at Fisherman's Loop East this week. The Department of Ecology crew assisted with the cleanup and separated the bottles and cans for recycling. During the cleanup an envelope with names and addresses was found in one of the bags and this information was sent to enforcement.



Mineral Lake lumber replacement, trash, and trash found in vault toilet



Department of Ecology crew assisting with the cleanup at Fisherman's Loop East

Access Sites: The good news this week for access sites is the return of the Department of Corrections (DOC) crew to help with maintenance of several access sites in the Region. DOC work was suspended in March of 2020 due to Covid. Access and DOC staff members were able to mow multiple access sites including Vancouver Lake Access. In addition, over 200 pounds of Tansy Ragwort had to be pulled and bagged before mowing to stop the spread of seeds. DOC will be helping twice a week at Clark and Cowlitz County access sites.



DOC mowing at Vancouver Lake Access



Bagged Tansy Ragwort

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Injured Eagles: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a report of an injured juvenile bald eagle that had been on the ground in the same location for multiple days. One of the reporting parties was able to take Aubrey to the area the eagle was located. The eagle was captured and observed to have a severely broken wing. After consultation with a veterinarian and wildlife rehabber, the decision was made to euthanize the eagle.

Aubrey also responded to a call for an injured bald eagle in a chicken coop. The eagle had killed a chicken the previous day and had been on the ground in the area for almost two days. The eagle had attempted to fly but was unable to get in the air. Aubrey was able to capture the eagle and transport it to a wildlife rehabber. Further evaluation showed the eagle was potentially having vision problems. The rehabber and a veterinarian were going to evaluate and assess further options.

Nuisance Cougar: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey spoke with an individual whose dog had scared a cougar into a tree the night prior. Advice was given for living in cougar country and keeping livestock secure at night to prevent conflict.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Cowlitz Wildlife Area Habitat Management: Cowlitz Wildlife Area staff members have relocated two gates on the Peterman Ridge Unit of the wildlife area to meet the Management Plan's road density requirements of 1.5 mile of road per square mile of ground. The objective of the project is to reduce fragmentation caused by active roads and increase the usable habitat available to wildlife. Studies have shown that animals will avoid habitat adjacent to active roads within 600 feet (two football fields) and limit their use up to a half a mile away. The relocated gates will be open from September 1 to December 31 in any given year to provide access during hunting seasons.



Relocated gate on the 1700 road



Relocated gate on the 2000 road

Cowlitz Wildlife Area: Manager Vanderlip, Assistant Manager Steveson, Natural Resource Technician Wallace, and Tacoma Power Natural Resource Coordinator Russell teamed up with Officer Sympson to do a boat patrol on Riffe Lake to control scotch broom. The group began the day on the south shore at Fishhook across from Dogpatch as there were several locations where scotch broom was known to be present. Using battery-powered chain saws the broom was cut down to the stump where it was then stump treated with a Garlon diesel mix per the label using a daubing wand. The wand allows precision treatment of just the stump. The group was able to canvas the south shore treating all broom from Fishhook to Landers Creek (~3.5 miles). The group is planning on doing additional patrols soon.

Cowlitz Wildlife Area Grazing Lease Forage Sampling: Cowlitz Wildlife Area staff members conducted forage sampling on the Spears Unit fields. These fields are under a grazing lease and the sampling was done to determine how many AUs (animal units) the fields can support during the grazing period. Staff members clipped all the vegetation from a randomly selected square meter of field. Once dried the vegetation will be weighed to determine biomass of the fields which is directly proportional to the number of AUs the field can support. Studies have shown that one AU requires three percent of its body weight in air dried forage daily or 30 pounds for a 1000-pound cow. Once the clipped vegetation is dried, staff members will provide the weights to the WDFW Range Ecologist to determine the total number of animals the lessee can graze on the fields and maintain objectives to provide benefits to wildlife and protect ecological integrity.



Assistant Manager Steveson collecting a sample

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Completion of Property Line Fence on Soda Springs Unit:

Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven, despite being short-staffed, mounted the last three wires on posts at the west end of the fence line and finished up other details of this big job. Van Leuven hauled most of the remaining unused materials back to the Klickitat Wildlife Area Headquarters and hauled all of the old fence wire and posts to the transfer station.

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Western Pond Turtles: Biologist Murphie visited the Mason County pond turtle site and counted 36 turtles basking; four of these were small enough to be from the last release of 10 juvenile turtles at this site in 2018. An adult male turtle was caught by hand and released on site after a fishing hook was removed. An opportunistic search for nests did not turn up any nests.

Bat Counts: Biologist Murphie assisted USFS biologists and staff members with a second count at the Hamma Hamma cabin. He reports a total of 394 bats at this count.

Band-tailed Pigeon Mineral Site Counts: Biologist Murphie conducted band-tailed pigeon counts at two mineral sites in District 15. These counts record the number of birds arriving and departing over a six-and-a-half-hour period. One mineral site is located near Potlatch and the other is near Lilliwaup on Hood Canal.

Mountain Goats: Biologist Murphie did some work in preparation for the upcoming mountain goat removal effort being conducted by Olympic National Park.

Band-tailed Pigeon Project: Biologist's McMillan and Ament were able to assist with the Band-Tailed Pigeon Project on June 7, 2021. Biologist Novak is the lead and secured migratory bird stamp funding for this project designed to capture, mark, and track movements of band-tailed pigeons in areas where mineral sites are unknown. These mineral sites are surveyed in July as part of the statewide monitoring of band-tailed pigeons. Two traps were set up in two locations in Clallam Bay where band-tailed pigeons were being fed by landowners. A total of eight pigeons were captured and banded. Satellite transmitters were deployed on two pigeons by Waterfowl Specialist Spragens. Unfortunately, the transmitters have been unable to successfully connect with satellites to download locations. Biologist Novak has contacted the company for advice.



Band-tailed pigeons concentrate near trap prior to capture



Kyle secures the transmitter in place



Anita observes as Shelly releases a pigeon

Snowy Plover Surveys: Biologist Ament was able to travel to Pacific County to assist with snowy plover surveys on June 16 and 17. The project lead, Biologist Sundstrom, graciously took the time the first day to help train Ament to determine suitable habitat, search for nests, identify plover behavior, and properly read bands. The second day Ament participated as a survey team member. Two different routes were covered by the survey teams, that consisted of Tribal, USFW and WDFW biologists. A high number of snowy plovers were observed, and Biologist Ament was able to improve her skills at reading bands. Highlights included observing a scrape site and a nest with two young chicks plus an unhatched egg! The snowy plover population is starting to expand north, and Biologist Sundstrom has recommended search efforts be conducted in District 16. Biologist Ament is now much more knowledgeable about this rare species and is more qualified to conduct future surveys. It was also quite special to spend a few days working with other regional biologists.



Training case with plover bands and eggs



Survey team prepares to start survey



Signage posted along the survey beach

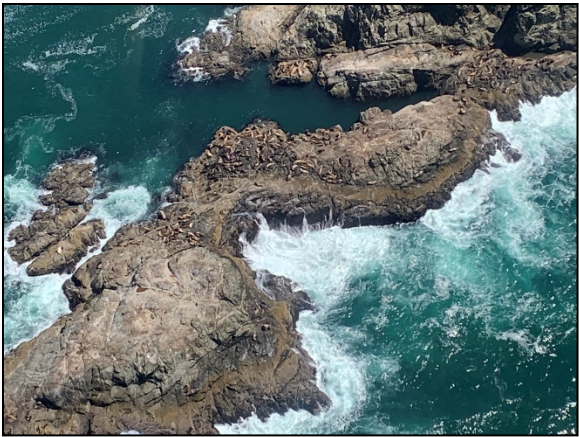


Snowy plover scrape site



Snowy plover nest site with two “day old” (per Cyndie) chicks and egg

Sea Otter Surveys: Biologist Ament participated in the annual sea otter count along the Washington coast June 21 – June 25, 2021. The survey was not completed last year due to Covid-19 restrictions. The plan was to conduct a full survey each day of the week and use the best count to help determine a population estimate. Unfortunately, the USFWS was unable to organize biologists from the USFWS/WDFW, staff members from the Seattle Aquarium and Point Defiance Zoo, and other volunteers to assist with conducting ground counts this season. Biologist Ament joined the new Marine Mammal Specialist Clark and retired Marine Mammal Specialist Jeffries in the plane for the aerial survey flights. The WDFW Partenavia plane and agency pilot Kimbrel were used for conducting the surveys. A pre-survey flight was planned for June 21, 2021 to determine the main locations of the otters and help train Clark and Ament for conducting future surveys. Jeffries was positioned in the front seat with Biologists Ament and Clark as observers in the back. Biologist Ament recorded all observations and Jeffries took photos of all larger groups of otters. The survey covered nearshore waters, reefs, and kelp beds from Point Grenville north to Cape Flattery then east along the Strait of Juan de Fuca to Freshwater Bay. Due to foggy conditions the remainder of the week, this initial first survey was the only full survey conducted for sea otters for the entire week. Another survey attempt was made on June 25, but low fog conditions were encountered along the coast. The counts and photos obtained from the June 21 survey will be used for producing the estimate of the sea otter population along the Washington coast. It is certainly possible that some groups of sea otters were not observed during this “training” survey effort. The photos will be reviewed to determine the number of sea otters in all large groups. The count will likely be over 2,000 but may not be as high as the 2019 population estimate of 2,785. As observed in previous surveys, some large groups of otters were observed far offshore in the vicinity of Kalaloch. Humpback whales, gray whales, sea lions, harbor seals and harbor porpoises were other marine mammals that were observed during aerial survey flights. Sea lion counts were conducted during the June 25 survey. An extra bonus that day for the survey crew was to fly directly over the top of Mount Olympus on the return flight to the airport.



Common Loon Breeding Surveys: District 16 Biologists McMillan and Ament, other regional biologists, WDFW Loon Lead Biologist Steve Desimone, and a few volunteers have continued their survey efforts to try and document breeding common loon activity in the district:

Lake Ozette: A previous survey was conducted at this lake this season on May 14. This lake is located within the northern boundary of Olympic National Park and is the largest unaltered natural lake in Washington at 2,954 hectares. It is eight miles long and three miles wide. Adult loons have been observed and heard vocalizing on the lake in past years. Retired DNR Biologist Horton reported that he observed “two good-sized fledglings” on the lake in late July of 2015. Loon pairs and lone loons have been observed during past WDFW survey efforts at this lake.

June 14, 2021 – A motorboat captained by Biologist Michaelis was used to conduct the survey of the entire lake. Biologist Desimone served as an observer on the boat. They reported observing one pair of loons and at least two lone loons. One lone loon observed at Boot Bay showed some defensive behavior, so Steve requested to focus some effort on this location next survey.

June 29, 2021 – Region 6 Biologists Michaelis, McMillan, Ament, along with District 11 Biologist Tirhi and volunteer Val, teamed up on June 29, 2021 to conduct a loon survey at Lake Ozette. Biologist Michaelis served as captain/observer. Biologist McMillan and volunteer Langley served as observers on the boat. They slowly surveyed the entire lake. Biologist’s Tirhi and Ament, along with volunteer Val, used kayaks to focus their effort on the Boot Bay area of the lake. They observed no loon activity. As requested by Desimone, Tirhi played wail calls using a megaphone from her kayak. No loons responded. The boat survey team once again reported seeing several pairs of loons and some lone loons. No nests or loon chicks observed. The survey teams had suitable weather (actually, cloudy most of the day), but the winds did pick up in the afternoon.



Preparing to launch at Swan Bay



Tirhi plays loon calls from her kayak



Lily pad flower-brightened the cloudy day

Winds make water rough for kayaking

A final two-day loon survey effort was conducted at Lake Ozette on June 28 and 29. Two motorboats were deployed on June 28. Biologist Murphie bought up his boat, Biologist McMillan and volunteer Langley joining him as observers. Biologist Michaelis also brought his boat (borrowed) up for the survey and he was joined by Biologist Ament. Weather conditions were excellent for the survey. A little more sunshine would have been nice but there was minimal wind so viewing from a boat was exceptional. Each team did a complete survey of the entire lake. At least three loon pairs and several lone loons were documented during the survey. Final loon survey of the season at Lake Ozette was conducted on June 29. Biologist Michaelis served as captain/observer on his boat with Biologist McMillan and volunteer Langley on board as observers. They surveyed nearly the entire lake, except for the Boot and Swan Bay areas. They documented an interesting observation of 14 loons feeding together at the south end of the lake. Biologist Ament launched her kayak from Swan Bay and focused her survey efforts on Boot Bay, where an adult lone loon was observed during a previous survey. She observed no loons in the vicinity of Boot Bay but did observe two separate lone adult loons at Swan Bay as she returned to the boat launch. She did make a great connection with a man who owns a remote cabin near Boot Bay. He and his family will be assisting with loon monitoring at the lake.

Another friendly gentleman she met at the lake during the June 29 survey also seemed very interested in helping with the quest to confirm loon nesting at the lake. He has already provided some e-mails with loon photos and records of his observations. Another highlight of this last survey was meeting the park maintenance man who shared some interesting information. He conveyed to Biologist Ament that he has observed lone eggs with no real nest on grassy/vegetated logs protruding into the water along the northwest lake shore. He observed this on at least three occasions while he was canoeing at the lake but never saw any loons nearby. There are many bald eagles, river otters, and other predators that might cause abandonment of a nest. At least this report helps to convey some evidence that loons may be trying to breed/nest at the lake.



Adult common loon pair near Baby Island *Warren and boat were essential for surveys –*
Photo by JP O'Donnell

Lake Crescent Loon Survey Efforts: Biologist Murphie provided a motorized boat and Biologist McMillan was able to join him for a full survey of Lake Crescent for loons on June 21, 2021. No common loons were observed during the survey. An adult loon pair was observed at the lake by Biologist Murphie earlier in the season and other loon observations have been reported at the lake in the past. There is certainly some suitable habitat at the lake, but the site does receive a fairly high volume of recreational use during the spring and summer.

Aerial Survey Loon Efforts: As part of the 2021 season common loon survey effort, several remote lakes in District 16 were identified as potential loon breeding sites. Unfortunately, private timberlands have restricted access for these lakes. Biologist Ament was able to search a few of these lakes from the air during the planned sea otter surveys from June 21 to June 25. There were foggy conditions along the coast and the survey team was flying over these lakes in their travels to the coast. A quick aerial survey of the following lakes was conducted: Dickey Lake, Wentworth Lake, Big Joes Lake, and Seafield Lake. No common loons were observed but it should be noted that loons could have been diving or concealed in vegetation when the plane passed over. A big thanks to Biologist Clark and pilot Kimbrel for allowing this this great opportunity!



Dickey Lake



Big Joes Lake

Bat Recon: Biologist Ament has initiated efforts to conduct some bat recon work during the past month. She has always wondered if there may be some bat use at structures located on a parcel within the Bell Creek Wildlife Unit. She was in the vicinity on June 14, 2021 and investigated the main old structure. She did not locate any bats but did find a small area of bat guano on the main floor. She has advised Wildlife Area Manager Lowery that there may be some seasonal roosting of individual bats at this agency building.



Old barn structure at the Bell Creek Wildlife Unit



Attic space in the structure



Guano found on main floor

Bat Emergent Counts: Biologist Ament and dedicated volunteers have been working to complete bat emergence counts at known colonies in the district. Another count will be completed next week at a known Townsend's big-eared bat colony located near Salt Creek County Park. A summary of all exit counts and recon site visits will be provided in the next Highlights Report.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Injured/Sick Wildlife Response: Biologist Ament responded to the following sick/injured wildlife reports this past month or so.



June 7 – Electrocuted young eagle near Sekiu

June 8 – Aggressive deer east of Port Angeles.

June 16 – Doe with plant wire cage around chest at Sunland in Sequim.

June 23 – Electrocuted turkey vulture near Sequim.

July 1 – Doe with dead fawn (partially birthed, legs/hooves hanging out back end). Vet Mansfield was consulted and was shocked to know the doe is still so mobile. Biologist Ament has recently seen the doe jump a four-foot fence. Biologist Murphie and the Center Valley Animal Rescue team have assisted with response. Still an on-going issue and more information will be provided in the next Highlights Report. See photos below taken by a landowner.



July 12 – Sick deer at Sunland in Sequim.

July 13 – Buck with large lump on neck in Port Angeles.

July 15 – Deer struggling with broken leg in Port Angeles.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Elk Forage Management: With all their positions once again filled, the Olympic-Willapa Hills Wildlife Area staff members (Assistant Manager Gallegos, Technicians Vanblaricom and Walker) have been hard at work on several of their properties managed for providing elk forage. Nearly all spring and summer tasks at the Wynoochee Mitigation Sites have now been completed, including the mowing of about 250 acres, disking and spreading agricultural lime on another 50 in preparation of seeding. Roughly another 120 acres were also mowed at the Wishkah River sites of the Olympic Wildlife Area. The seasonal mowing of these fields helps ensure that there is an abundance of lush, herbaceous plant material for Roosevelt elk every year in these critical areas.



Northwest Lime working the Wynoochee Mitigation Sites – Photo by D. Walker



Technician Walker mowing the Lynn parcel – Photo by N. Bechtold

5) Providing Education and Outreach

General: Biologist Murphie responded to inquiries received by phone or email related to:

- Sick deer x 1
- Olympic goat hunt x 2
- Great blue heron x 1
- Deer hunting x 1
- Elk hunting x 1

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.