

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

October 16 to 31, 2022

LANDS DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Chester Butte Funding: The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) recently announced Section 6 funding to purchase the Chester Butte acquisition, the additional 650 acres will become part of the Wells Sagebrush Flatt Wildlife Area (WLA) Complex in Region 2. The main objective of the acquisition is to conserve and protect the federally endangered Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit, and other shrubsteppe obligate species by building on an existing base of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) conservation lands. This purchase supports conservation of Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit, greater sage-grouse, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, and Washington ground squirrel and occurs within an identified recovery emphasis area for Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit where recovery actions have been ongoing and include reintroduction and habitat rehabilitation. This acquisition proposal focuses on this increasingly rare habitat type in a strategic location in Washington.

Cowlitz Wildlife Area Pre-planning: Lands Division Planners Holly English and Joel Sisolak visited the Cowlitz WLA to begin scoping for a wildlife area planning process to begin in early 2023. The planners met with WLA Manager Richard Vanderlip, Assistant WLA Manager Nicholas Steveson, and Tacoma Power Representative Eric Russell for a preplanning meeting and tour of the wildlife area.

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Chronic Wasting Disease Check Station: Wildlife Biologist Prince along with two Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) technicians and three Washington State University (WSU) volunteers, operated the Colville check station. Over opening weekend, the crew collected three samples from one salvaged elk and two white-tailed deer. Two other deer checked were not sampled, due to the hunter wanting a cape mount. Overall, the weekend was very slow.



Hunter posing with his first deer

Chronic Wasting Disease: Natural Resources Technician Nizer checked hunter camps throughout the week and tested for CWD. In addition, Nizer conducted a check station at Washtucna, Washington with the help of volunteers and Private Lands Biologist Gaston. In total, 11 mule deer were tested, and 16 hunters were interviewed.



WDFW Volunteers Helping with Sampling Deer for CWD

Natural Resources Technician Nizer operated a CWD check station in Washtucna on Oct. 22 and Oct. 23. At this station Nizer trained six Washington State University students how to extract the Retroperitoneal Lymph Nodes and the two front incisors out of harvested mule deer for testing and aging purposes. Nizer also trained these students how to input the data on paper format and in Survey 123.

Natural Resources Technician Heitstuman operated a CWD check station in Asotin on Oct. 22 and Oct. 23 with Scientific Technician Garcia and three volunteers from WSU. It was a slow weekend with low hunter turnout. Three samples were taken Saturday and seven on Sunday. Heitstuman

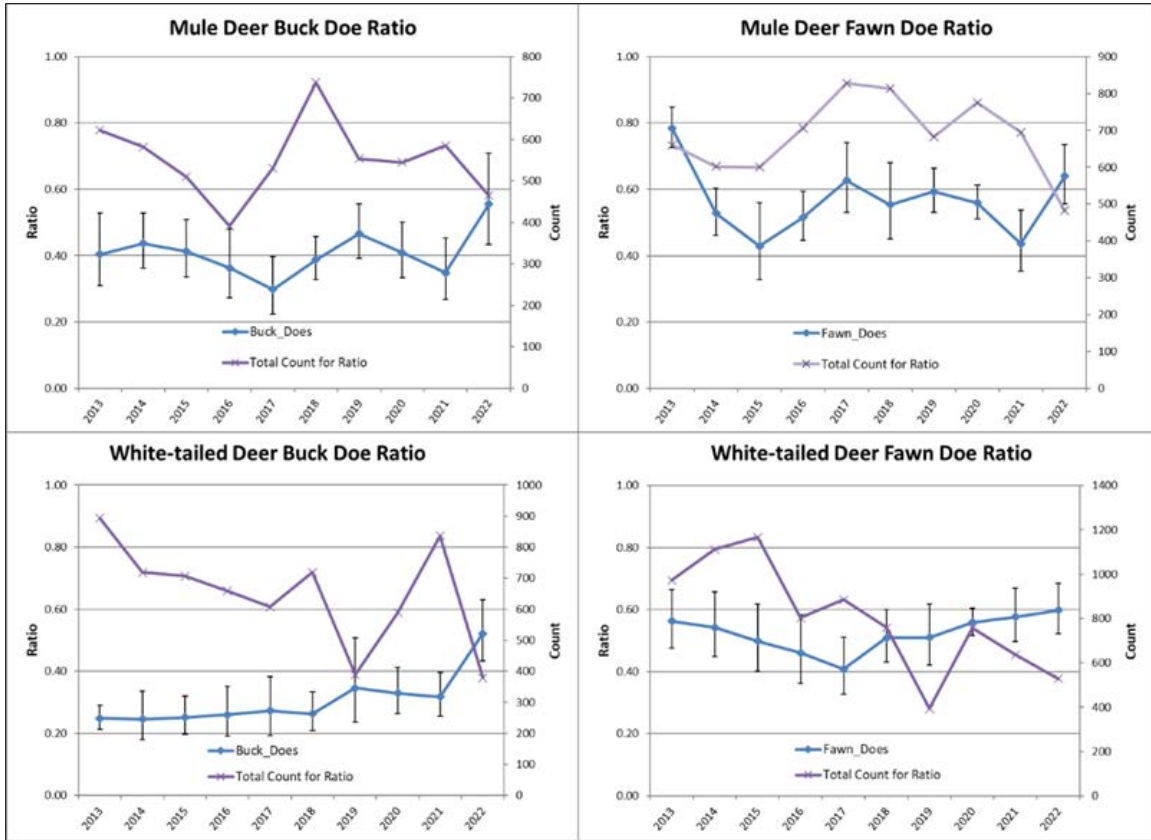
and Garcia were able to present two WDFW First Deer Awards to successful hunters. Public response to the check station was reasonably well received. Most of the week was spent checking hunting camps for potential CWD samples. The check station was closed for the season and the supplies returned to the Spokane Office for storage.

Bog Lemming Sampling Wrap Up Meeting: Biologist Turnock attended a season end meeting to discuss how the 2022 sampling season went. Biologists from three districts sampled four sites and collected scat samples that will be analyzed for species identification to document bog lemming presence. The biologists were enthusiastic about the season and about future surveys to detect bog lemmings at other sites. In a bog, under a log, by a frog, after a jog with your dog, before eggnog, that's how you sample for bog lemmings.



Wildlife Biologist Prince proudly displays a scat collected as part of the District 1 bog lemming survey effort. Technicians from the Newport Regional Director Forest Service office record location and collect a sample from a bog lemming site.

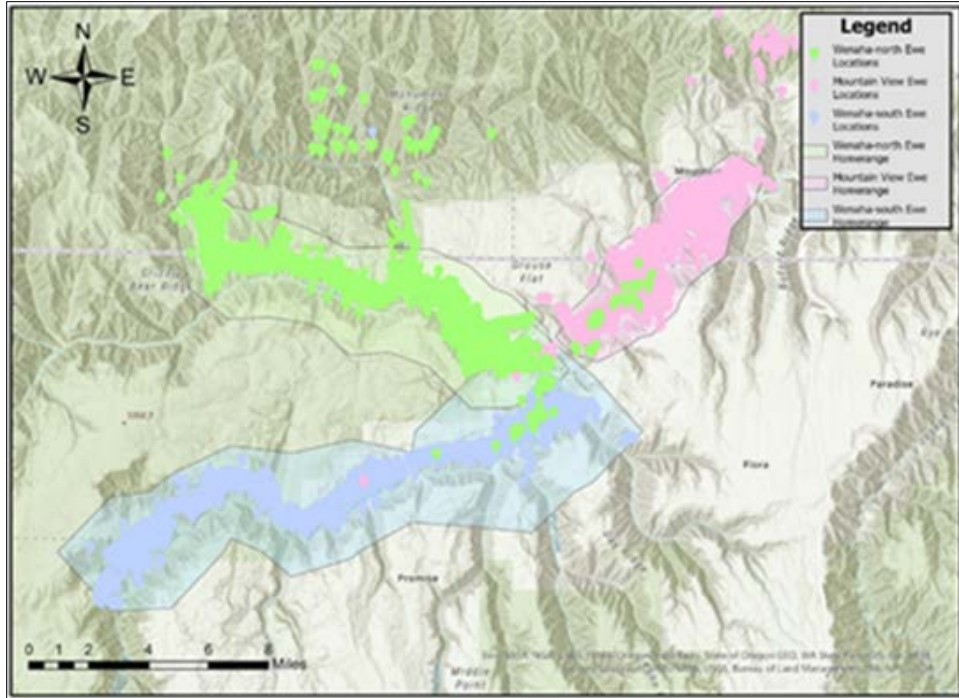
Deer Pre-Season Ground Surveys: Biologist Atamian completed import of the Survey 123 data into the District 2 access database and the entry of volunteer data into the access database. Deer counts were down this year, but fawn to doe ratios were on the higher end of average and the buck to doe ratio was highest observed to date.



Pre-season Mule and White-tailed Deer fawn to doe and buck to doe ratios from ground surveys for the past ten year in District 2

Bighorn Sheep Captures: District Biologist Wik along with Biologist Stewart and University of Idaho PhD Candidate Huggler started the annual fall captures of bighorn sheep in Asotin Creek. This capture is part of a study designed to answer important research questions related to nutritional carrying capacity, lamb recruitment and survival, and adult survival. During four days of captures, three ewes and one ram were captured. Assistant District Biologist Vekasy prepped equipment for ground captures.

Bighorn Sheep Mortality Investigation: Stewart responded to a bighorn sheep ram mortality in the Grande Ronde Valley region. Stewart located the deceased ram, assessed cause of death, and packed-out samples from the carcass for testing and analysis.



Location fixes and corresponding 95% home range estimates of bighorn sheep (n=141) captured, marked, and surveyed within the Wenaha-north (green), Wenaha-south (blue), and Mountain View (pink) herds, Grande Ronde River Valley, Oregon/Washington, 1997–2022



Wik darting a 2.5-year-old bighorn sheep ram (21AS05) in the Asotin subpopulation. This ram was recaptured to retrieve its malfunctioning GPS radio collar and replace it with a functioning collar



Bighorn sheep photographed during sheep captures in the Asotin subpopulation by WDFW RB Stewart. Pictured is 16AS54 (blue 7 radio collar), her ewe lamb (born 05/06/2022), and 20AS42 (ram)

Chronic Wasting Disease: Wild Area Manager Dingman collected CWD samples from three hunter harvested deer at the Last Resort, as well as three illegally killed deer that Enforcement had confiscated.

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Pheasant Release: Biologist Baarstad picked up pheasants from the vendors facility in Endicott, released pheasants at the Fish Trap release site and met with Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer with the pheasants to be released at Sherman Creek.

Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley contacted and coordinated with volunteers for the upcoming pheasant release for opening pheasant season weekend. Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley contacted the pheasant vendor to confirm delivery of pheasants and delivery time. Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley took U.S Army Corps of Engineers Northern Rocky Mountain Manager Lead Ranger Mill Creek Project Biologist Morris along during the pheasant release at Bennington Lake release site. Many points of contact were made with the public and lots of discussion was had regarding wildlife, habitat, and future partnering endeavors.

Hunting Access: Technician Janowski worked on a new 640-acre Hunt by Written Permission agreement for a landowner in Stevens County. This agreement is ready for signature and Technician Janowski will meet with the landowner next week.

Technicians Janowski and Barron worked together to post signage on a newly enrolled Hunt by Written Permission property in Stevens County. This property is a little over 600 acres and the landowner will allow fall and spring turkey hunting. Technician Janowski also worked on a Hunt by Written Permission FAQ document to pass out to interested landowners in District 1.

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge Hunt by Reservation: Private Lands Biologist Gaston met with other WDFW staff members and Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) personnel to discuss future hunting opportunities at Turnbull. The goal is to open a fall turkey season using the Hunt by Reservation system in 2023 with the potential to also incorporate future elk or spring turkey hunts if things go well.

Access Area Maintenance: Access Area Manager Dziekan performed routine maintenance and cleaning at his access areas. His supervisor Wildlife Area Manager Juli Anderson joined him one day. Dziekan also photographed access area ramps at Davis Lake, Sacheen Lake, Loon Lake, and Deer Lake. He provided the photos to the Lacey Construction Shop, to help their planning for upcoming ramp maintenance and improvements.



Davis Lake Ramp

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Producer End of Season Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett spoke with five producers on grazing season activities. Most producers are still gathering or counting cattle. More information will be coming in the next few weeks.

3-D/Bio Fence: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb received a call from a Walla Walla County producer about a 3-D/Bio Fence they are interested in purchasing. The producer wanted to know if there are any cost-sharing dollars available to assist with the cost. Kolb asked the producer to provide additional information about the product, services, and total cost.

Bear Conflict: Technician Janowski also continued coordination efforts with the Veterans Services Office in Stevens County and Defenders of Wildlife. Stevens County is fronting the bill

to pay for an electric fencing kit for a veteran in Springdale experiencing perpetual bear issues. Technician Janowski picked up an energizer from North 40 and is awaiting purchase of the netting kit from another store in Colville.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Projects: Private Lands Supervisor Earl met with two landowners to discuss possible projects on their properties to improve elk foraging as the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation deadline is approaching for this year’s application process.

Farm Bill: Biologist Baarstad submitted the quarterly report information for Conservation Reserve Program State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement activities to Farm Bill Coordinator Reseland. Biologists Braaten and Baarstad prepared a presentation for the upcoming sage grouse workshop.

Restrictions Lifted: WDFW lifted all seasonal fire and shooting restrictions on its lands, effective Friday, Oct. 14. Wildlife Area Assistant Managers Finch and Palmer, and Access Manager Dziekan, finished removing restriction signs early this week.



Access Manager Dziekan removing sign at Rustlers Gulch Wildlife Area

Habitat restoration: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Finch traveled to the Revere Wildlife Area to broadcast a grass seed mix on seven acres of wetlands spoils, after earlier wetland restoration work was completed. He used an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) with a broadcast spreader and dragged a two-section spike tooth harrow behind it to incorporate the seed.



Timber Theft: A Fish and Wildlife Officer interrupted a timber theft in progress at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area, on Bisbee Mountain. Wildlife Assistant Area Manager Palmer later took measurements of the two downed trees, plus another that is believed to have been cut earlier and left to cure by the same party and forwarded the information to WDWF Forester Rod Pfeifle. Once Pfeifle determines commercial value of the downed trees, Enforcement will determine the level of the charges to be filed. Palmer then removed the downed trees and took them to Sherman Creek WLA headquarters, where they will stay until the investigation is complete. Afterward, the wood will be offered to folks who apply for \$10 firewood cutting permits on the wildlife area.

Chief Joseph Wildlife Area Green Gulch Trail: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice looked at the road to Shovel Creek on Wednesday for user compliance and storm damage areas. All in all, the public has been respecting the trail and have been keeping ATVs where they belong during this open use period for the months of October and November. There is some disturbing damage from intense downpour events last summer in the Birch Creek and Shovel Creek areas. We will have to take our WLA machinery back there to make repairs eventually.



One of the numerous washouts covering the road near Birch Creek



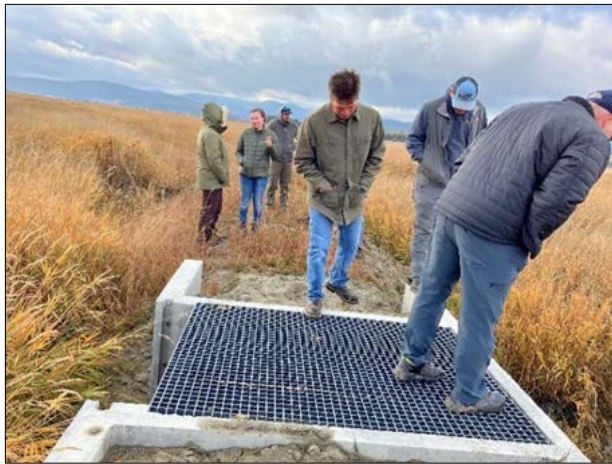
Smooth Sumac fall colors along the Green Gulch Trail

Providing Education and Outreach

International Wolf Symposium: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett participated in the symposium where the current status and research associated with wolves were shared with people from all over the world. Information on deterrents and upcoming trainings were compiled for application in Washington.

Eastern Washington University Wildlife Conflict Lecture Series: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett provided information about northeast Washington wildlife conflict to 74 students.

Cross-agency field tour: Wildlife Assistant Area Manager Palmer and Wildlife Area Manager Anderson participated in a field trip to the Kalispel Tribe Reservation and some of its habitat restoration sites, by invitation of the Tribe's Terrestrial Division. Other WDFW Wildlife and Habitat Program biologists attended, along with Region 1 Wildlife Program Manager Kevin Robinette. The two agency's professionals discussed habitat restoration techniques, hunting seasons, staffing, and ways they can better coordinate with each other for better results. At the Tribe's Natural Resource Department office outside of Usk the group also walked a half-mile interpretive loop trail. The trail had some very nice vegetation identification signs, innovative park benches along a river overlook, and a sturdy yet simple kiosk at the parking area. These trail features could easily be adapted for WDFW's pedestrian trails on wildlife areas.



Kids and Shrubsteppe: WDFW Habitat Biologist Melissa Mackelvie brought out two different classes of West Valley public school students to Swanson Lakes WLA this week. The students have been working with her on a shrubsteppe vegetation propagation project for about two years. This week they planted some of the stems they have grown, including plugs of big sagebrush, wax currant, and common yarrow. Wildlife Assistant Area Manager Finch used a small planting auger to pre-drill about 100 holes for the kids to plant the plugs. Also, out with the students were WDFW's Public Affairs Officer Staci Lehman, Outreach Specialist Autumn Eckenrod, and Habitat Biologist Jeff Lawlor.



Conducting Business Operations and Policy

WDFW and Kalispel Tribe Coordination Meeting: WDFW staff members from the Wildlife and Habitat Programs met with Kalispel Natural Resources Department personnel this week. The group toured a wetland restoration area and the Indian Creek Office/Education complex. The group will meet again soon to discuss projects where collaboration can further the two agencies' goals.



REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Raptors in District 7: In the last biweekly report, Biologists Jeffreys and Eilers responded to an incident report about a bald eagle stuck in a net at a golf course near Lake Wenatchee. The veterinarian determined that the eagle had extreme muscle fatigue in its legs and feet and was unable to grip with their talons. After a couple days of getting pampered with rest, water, and food, the eagle made a successful recovery and was released back into the wild. Yay for happy endings!



A northern bog lemming – Photo by Jim Reichel Montana Natural Heritage Program

Northern Bog Lemming Surveys in District 6: The Northern Bog Lemming (*Synaptomys borealis*) is a boreal species found in high elevation wet meadows, bogs, and fens (dominated by Sphagnum moss) in northern Washington. It is also a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) under the WDFW State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). Species-specific data on the current distribution, habitat requirements, and population demographics of Northern Bog Lemming (NBL) are needed for the development of effective conservation measures. Biologist Heinlen collected scat samples for DNA analysis to determine presence or absence in Long Swamp, a high elevation sphagnum bog which has had historical NBL occurrences and encountered what was a likely a NBL in the flesh.

Biologists Jeffreys and Eilers surveyed three sites in northern Chelan County in search of northern bog lemmings (NBL) occupancy. This small mammal species is restricted to subarctic climates and found primarily in sphagnum bogs and wet meadows. The bulk of this species' range is in Canada, and northern Washington represents its southwestern range limit. Due to its dependency on cold, wet environments, the northern bog lemming is particularly vulnerable to climate change. The NBL occurs in low numbers in Washington in small, isolated populations, and is designated as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need by WDFW. Little is known about this species throughout the country, but it is thought to be declining in many areas, so WDFW is joining with other northern states to collect more information on NBL occupancy.



Biologist Eilers collecting scat samples next to a downed log

Two of the sites that District 7 biologists searched – Lake Ann and Rainy Lake – did not have suitable habitat. However, the bogs and wetland complex near Washington Pass Observation Site showed promise, and biologists were able to successfully collect 50 fresh scat samples that will be used for DNA testing to confirm NBL occupancy. A northern bog lemming was documented in this location in 2016; however, the site has not been surveyed since. For more information about these critters, visit [Northern bog lemming | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#).



Biologist Jeffreys collecting the very first scat sample



A probable Northern Bog Lemming and small mammal scat found in optimal sphagnum bog habitat — Photo by J. Heinlen

Amphibians in District 7: Biologists Eilers and Jeffreys were out surveying for northern bog lemmings when they stumbled across thousands (yes, thousands!) of Western toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*) toadlets. Even though this survey site did not have ideal habitat for lemmings, it did not disappoint in mountain views and other wildlife species! Western toads are listed as one of Washington’s SGCN under the State Wildlife Action Plan. These toadlets were only the size of a thumb nail, but they will become anywhere from two to five inches long when full-grown. For more information about Western toads in Washington, you can visit [Western toad | Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife](#).



Please note: It is not advised to hold toads (or any amphibians) with bare hands. Human hands frequently have chemicals from lotions, sunscreen, and bug spray – all which can be toxic to an amphibian’s sensitive skin. Biologist Eilers ensured to have very clean hands before briefly handling the toadlets in the pictures, which were used to confirm species identification.



Photo compilation of Western Toad toadlets and their habitat near Lake Ann in the Cascade Mountains — Photo by Biologists Jeffreys and Eilers

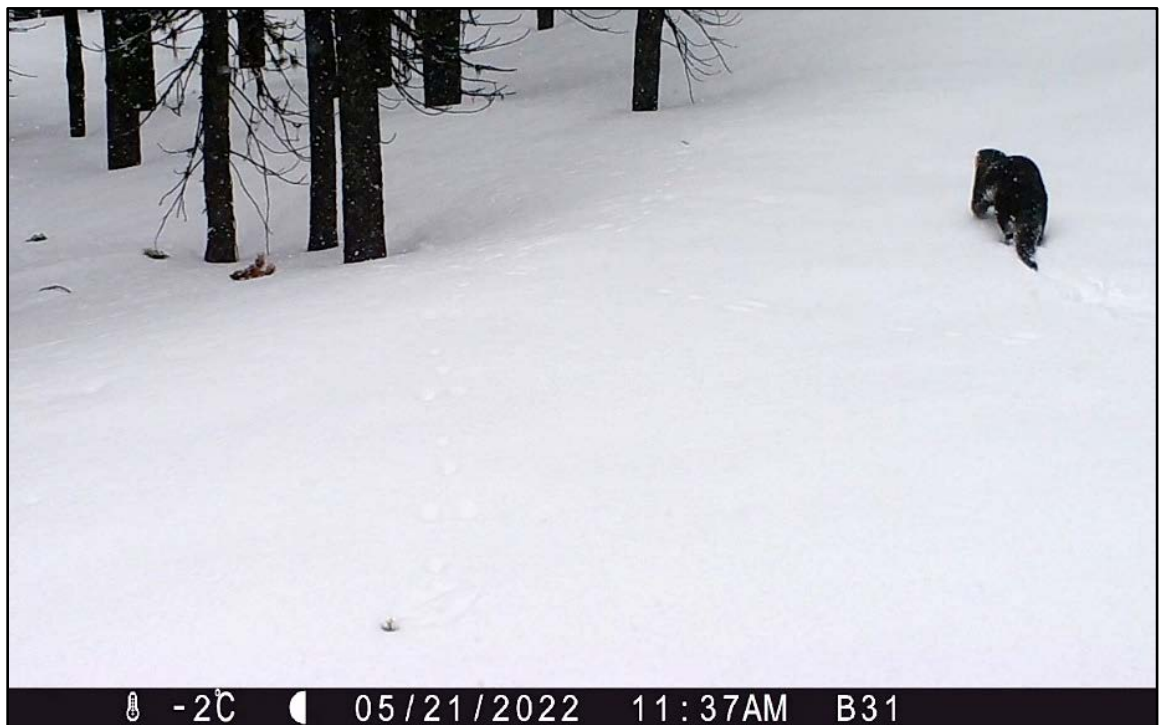
Lynx Monitoring: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen retrieved four remote cameras deployed in the Pasayten Wilderness after a year and a half delay due to fires and blowdown. The cameras captured many lynx detections in the high country including a mother and kitten. In addition to lynx, the cameras documented other species of interest as well. Perhaps the most unusual photo was of a river otter crossing a high pass in the snow a long way from suitable habitat. This effort is part of a long-term lynx occupancy modeling project spearheaded by Washington State University (WSU). This recent dataset will help compare the efficacy of winter versus summer camera deployment.



Lynx with kitten – Photo by WDFW/WSU remote camera



Adult Lynx — Photo by WDFW/WSU remote camera



River otter travelling — Photo by WDFW/WSU remote camera

Duck Banding: Biologists N. Cook and J. Morris assisted district biologist staff members with banding ducks on Alkali Lake. Ducks were trapped using rocket nets. When a banded duck is recaptured or a hunter report shooting a banded duck, it gives Biologist S. Dougherty information about the location of the duck to help better understand movements and harvest of ducks. This information is also included in a national database of banded birds managed by the United States Geological Survey (USGS).



Biologists and volunteers work on banding a Northern pintail duck — Photo by J. Morris



Cow moose with twins — Photo by WDFW/WSU remote camera

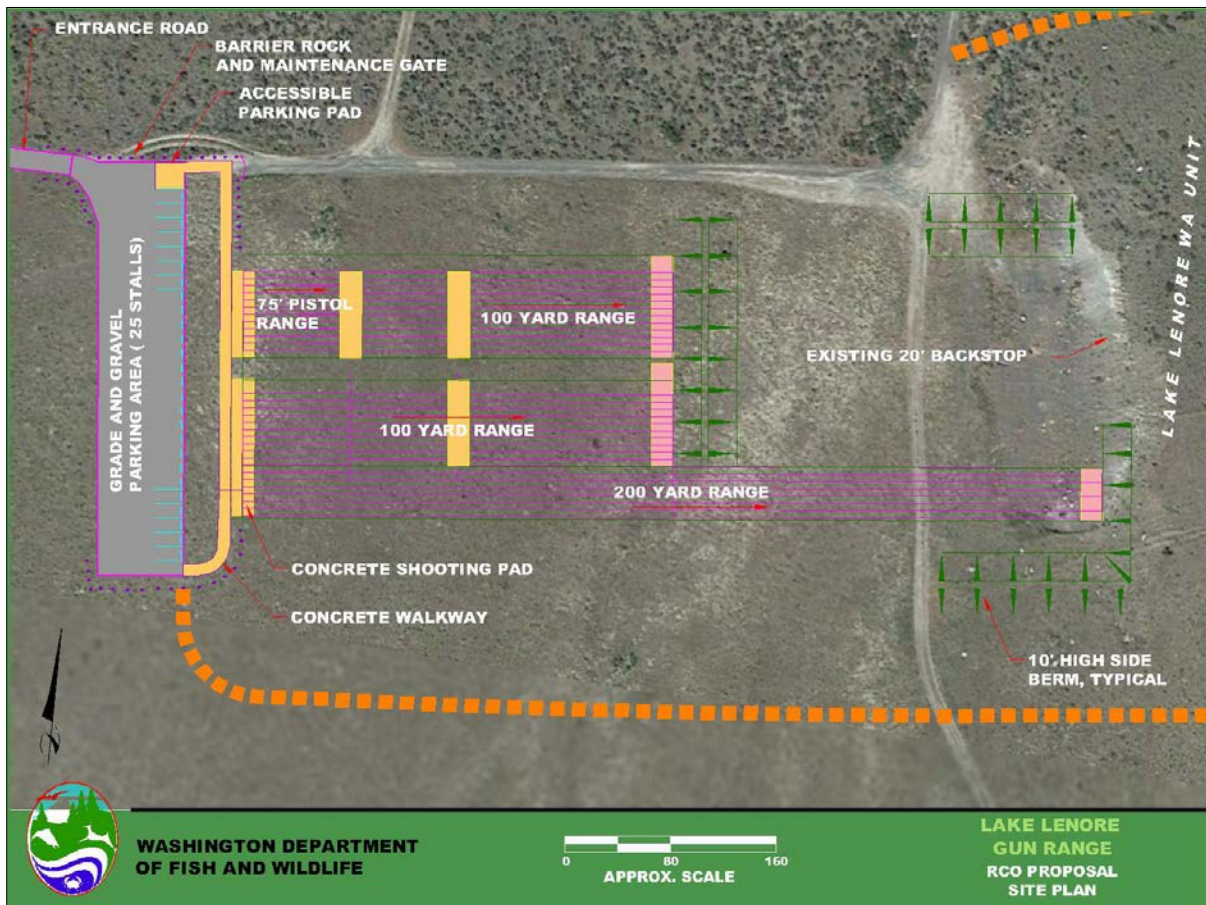
Providing Recreation Opportunities

Ring-necked Pheasants in District 7: Biologists Jeffreys and Eilers, and Assistant Wildlife Area Manager A. Pavelcheck, released ring-necked pheasants at Chelan Butte and Swakane Wildlife Areas in anticipation of the upcoming hunting season.

Hunter Access: In anticipation of upcoming hunting season, Biologist N. Cook has been checking and reposting signs, as needed, on many Hunter Access properties in Adams County. Cook removed signs from one property where the contract expired. The landowner was not interested in renewing the hunter access contract and was leasing land to another farmer. Biologist Morris completed a contract for a new Hunter Access property in Grant County and will begin posting the property with signs and loading the property information onto the private land's website as soon as the contract is signed.



Ring-necked Pheasants being released at Chelan Butte Wildlife Area — E. Jeffreys and J. Eilers



Conceptual Design by CAMP engineer Hansen

Lake Lenore Shooting Range: Lands Operations Manager Finger and Wildlife Area Manager Eidson met with Capital Asset Management (CAMP) Project Manager Hansen to discuss design plans for the Lake Lenore target shooting development project.

Currently, this area receives moderate use, but few users take advantage of the large backstop by shooting to the east, instead they shoot south in the direction of houses, and the backstop is much less effective. This project aims (pun intended) to improve public safety, reduce wildfire risk and create an enjoyable target shooting experience. Additionally, is a 300-yard gong built into the hillside which would be installed and removed seasonally, to prevent wildfire risk.

Seep Lakes Road: Lands Operations Manager Finger, Wildlife Area Manager Eidson, and Lands Agent Ramirez met with landowners and managers in the Seep Lakes area to discuss updating an old agreement to maintain public access through private property in exchange for continued road maintenance, management of seasonal access, signage, and a gate replacement. Staff members will draft an agreement for the landowners to review.

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nuisance Bear Call: Specialist Heilhecker responded to two bear calls from landowners in Okanogan County. The first call involved one small, and likely young, bear, which had been observed off and on for a month getting into garbage and into the chicken coop to eat grain. Unfortunately, there is no weekly garbage service in these small, rural communities, which often leads to landowners stockpiling garbage on their properties. The landowner likely could have stopped the situation if they had cleaned up their garbage and fortified the electric fence around the chicken coop as soon as the bear appeared in the area. The delayed response to take appropriate action resulted in the bear getting habituated to the food source and the landowner killing the bear. The second call was about a bear compromising a fence surrounding fruit trees. Specialist Heilhecker discussed fortifying the fence with additional rows of wire and electrifying the fence to over 0.7 joules. In both cases, she reminded the landowners of their right to protect their property and that bear hunting season is currently open.

Elk Damage: Specialist Heilhecker received an elk damage complaint in Game Management Unit (GMU) 204. She renewed the landowner's damage prevention cooperative agreement and issued one elk kill permit valid for ten days. The permit expired prior to opening day of archery season.

Cougar Call: Specialist Heilhecker responded to a cougar sighting report. The reporting party was just interested in notifying WDFW that she saw a cougar. There was no confrontation. The cougar was passing through the area, and it ran off as soon as it saw the reporting party.

Conserving Natural Areas

Habitat Projects, Coordination and Compliance: Lands Operations Manager Finger, Wildlife Area Manager Eidson, Assistant District Fish Biologist Peterson, District Habitat Biologist Pentico and Assistant Habitat Program Manager Barg discussed plans for long-term habitat management projects on the wildlife area, including tasks such as removing Russian olives, prescribed burning, wetland contouring, mechanical vegetation control, new roads, gates, parking areas, and development of ADA/youth/senior waterfowl hunting blinds.

Road 11.5 Leopard Frog Project: Lands Operations Manager Finger, District Wildlife Biologist Dougherty, Leopard Frog Specialist Grabowski, and Bureau of Reclamation's Natural Resources Supervisor discussed the potential for a leopard frog project involving habitat improvement through Russian olive removal and tall emergent vegetation control, and northern leopard frog augmentation to make use of an old fish hatchery for rearing leopard frogs. This site is not currently managed by the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area due to management concerns, such as safety around remaining concrete foundations, public access, and weed issues, but this project could bring in funding from both grant sources and Reclamation to address some issues and the site closer to suitable for WDFW management.

Spring Developments: Chelan Wildlife Area staff members have completed two spring developments on the Chelan Butte, recovering old, developed springs, and installing new water troughs for wildlife. While uncovering old pipes, we found this long-toed salamander, which has now been included on the newly started species inventory for the Chelan wildlife area. Other

species documented on the Chelan butte include the giant Palouse earthworm, gopher snakes, rattle snakes and sagebrush lizards.



Long-toed salamander — Photo by A. Pavelchek

Habitat Plots: Biologist Cook has been ordering shrubs for plantings this fall. The main shrub planting project will be replacing some shrubs and increasing species diversity on existing shrub rows on a property west of Royal City. These shrub planting are alongside annual food plots.

Biologist Morris and Biologist Cook evaluated plant vigor at a habitat plot and watered junipers that Morris planted earlier this year. The supplemental water helps the junipers to establish and is not necessary after the first one-to-two years post-transplanting. Several junipers were very drought stressed, but hopefully the watering will help them survive until seasonal rain and snow arrive. Biologist Morris also mowed the Great Basin wildrye grass in the area this spring and was pleased to see that the grass had grown tremendously and will provide great winter cover habitat.



Biologist Morris watering a small juniper — Photo by N. Cook



Biologist Cook standing in Great Basin wildrye that is over six feet tall — Photo by J. Morris

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

L.T. Murray Nesting Box Checks: Wildlife area (WLA) staff members conducted their annual kestrel box checks on the wildlife area.



A Kestrel box installed in Upper Parke Cr. appears to have been utilized this year in the Quilomene WLA

Elk Crossing: Natural Resource Specialist Nass on her way to conduct Vantage Fire Restoration work stopped to let a large herd of elk safely cross the road.



Herd of 400 plus elk safely cross Vantage Highway into the Quilomene WLA

Johnson Wetland Monitoring: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin have been monitoring and unclogging the intake for the water at Johnson Wetland and are beginning to see water filling and some hunter and waterfowl usage.



Johnson Wetland Filling with Water and Assistant Manager Ferguson Cleaning out the canal intake for the wetland system

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Manastash Ridge Trails: Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Hughes and Lands and Recreation Specialist Frame conducted the first meeting with a smaller committee of for the Manastash Ridge Trails. This committee is made up of one to two representatives from each user group including equestrian, hiking, mountain biking and trail running. A smaller committee was formed from the Manastash Ridge Coalition to spend more time and focus on implementing the approved management plan for the area. The meeting went well, and the group will be focusing on developing signs this winter to be posted by spring. Manager Hughes submitted a Recreation and Conservation Non-Offroad Vehicle Association grant for the trails as well in hopes to cover additional costs related to cultural resource surveys needed for trail maintenance and reroutes, additional signs and restoration efforts throughout the area. Frame posted “No New Trail Construction” signs at the site along with other areas on the Wenas where users are creating more trails that are not approved.

Unique Partnership Leads to a Great Hunting Opportunity: Private Lands Biologist Hulett prepared and maintained the private land access site “Wild Horse Wind Farm” for the modern firearm elk season. This season draws large amounts of interest and allows for 50 hunter reservation per day during the Modern Firearm Elk season. Hulett also attended the Hunters Breakfast put on by Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and Kittitas Field and Stream the day before the start of modern firearm elk season. Here hunters were able to get information about the Wild Horse

Wind Farm, the elk season regulations, and even win a raffle. This year the Yakima-Herald was also in attendance and put together an article about Private Lands and the relationship with PSE.

Mission Ridge Ski Area: Colockum Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky, WDFW Forester Pfeifle, and WDFW Habitat Biologist Muir visited Mission Ridge Ski Area to discuss the installation of a new ski lift on WDFW property. WDFW personnel and Mission Ridge staff members drove to the top of the hill and then walked the new lift route down, discussing lift details and timber management needs along the way.



WDFW and Mission Ridge Ski Area staff standing at the top of a new proposed ski lift on WDFW property, Colockum Wildlife Area

Additional Private Land Opportunities Available: Private Lands Biologist Hulett worked with multiple landowners to enroll their land into the hunting access program.

- Bauermister Road Register to Hunt (RTH): 2600 acres of wheat and Conservation Reservation Program (CRP).
- Bauermister Road Hunted by Written Permission: 2700 acres of wheat and CRP
- Ridge Road Feel Free to Hunt: 2600 acres of wheat and CRP
- Meals Road 1 and 2 Hunt by Reservation: 150 acres incorporating two crop fields for waterfowl opportunities
- Mabton-Bickleton HWY RTH: 3100 Acres of rangeland and CRP

Waterfowl Reservation Sites Now Open: Private Lands Biologist Hulett updated waterfowl sites for the upcoming Waterfowl Season. Five Hunt by Reservation sites will be open for the 2022 Waterfowl Season and will be available to hunt on goose only days.

- Snake River Department of Natural Resource land 1, 2, and 3
- Meals Road 1 and 2

Release the Birds: Natural Resource Technician Blore and Natural Resource Worker Hamlin and Schnieder released pheasants at Green Gate with Biologist Wampole.



A pheasant shyly walks out of the transportation crate

New Waterfowl Blind at Johnson Wetland: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area volunteers, Assistant Manager Ferguson, and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin assisted with the first pheasant release of the year before the opener. Wascisin and Manager Kaelber put in a new waterfowl blind at the Johnson wetland area. Wascisin has been continuing to add mowed paths for recreationists throughout the wildlife area.



(Left) Pheasants being released before the opener (Right) New blind at Johnson

Hunting Access Sites Prepared for Hunting Seasons: Private Lands Technician McKaden Manderbach maintained and monitored all private lands access sites. Manderbach also prepared all new private lands hunting opportunities for the upcoming hunting seasons. Sites were signed and parking lots were built, many with registration boxes for hunters to check in and to record harvest data.



Parking lot for two Hunt by Reservations fields at Meals Road Private Lands Hunting Opportunity

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Yakima County: Conflict Specialist Wetzel worked with several hay growers who were having problems with elk in crops in Yakima County.

Kittitas County: In Kittitas County, Conflict Specialist Wetzel worked with several hay growers who were having problems with elk in crops. Several landowners in the Badger Pocket area had large bulls end up in agriculture areas. These bulls were injured in what appeared to be vehicle strikes. Both were harvested and tagged by hunters with permits.



(Left) Older bull with injuries (Right) Another bull with some type of injury, but highly mobile

L.T. Murray Off-Road Vehicle Illegal Access: During hunting season the WLA sees the most illegal Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) access issues and staff members must stay vigilant to post signage and educate our users.



Natural Resource Specialist Nass installed signage in areas of the L.T. Murray WLA to discourage off-road motorized travel with plans to re-seed these areas this fall

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Wenas Fall Spraying: Technicians Rodriguez and Stoltenow, Assistant Manager Taylor, as well as Natural Resource Specialist Frame, sprayed for Diffuse and Russian Knapweed throughout the Roza restoration site, Hardy Canyon Trail, along various roads throughout the wildlife area, and along the Umtanum and Umtanum Falls Trails.

Wenas Shrub Planting: The Wenas team planted a variety of shrub plugs along areas of Newland Road impacted by the Evans Canyon fire. In total, over 3,000 plugs were planted over the span of two days. The species being planted included Wyoming Sagebrush, Golden Current, Antelope Bitterbrush, Woods Rose, Elderberry, and Serviceberry. Additionally, areas will be planted this fall within areas of the Cow Canyon Fire and several riparian areas such as McCabe, Black Canyon and Cottonwood. The team will be planting over 7,000 shrubs. Majority of this funding came from a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Grant.

Habitat Restoration Opportunity: Private Lands Biologist Hulett worked with an Orchard around Moxee to plan a pollinator project and greenstrip fuel breaks around the exterior of their farm. Hulett created custom seed mixes for both projects including an 18 species pollinator mix and created a schedule of operations for projects. These projects will begin fall of 2022 and will be scheduled to be completed during the fall of 2024.

Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch Maintenance: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Rodgers removed debris from an outflow water structure at the Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch Unit to restore flowing water at the stick wetland.



Assistant Manager Rodgers restoring water flow

Colockum Prescribed Fire: WDFW staff members and a private contractor crew completed 271 acres of prescribed fire treatment to timber stands on the Colockum Wildlife Area this period. This project has been a long time in the making and staff were very happy to get it accomplished. Goals of the project include reducing the substantial downed woody debris as well as stimulating fire-dependent vegetation.



Colockum Wildlife Area Assistant Manager John Hagan assists in lighting prescribed fire



Prescribed fire treating ground fuels while leaving large Ponderosa Pine trees unharmed, Colockum Wildlife Area

Whiskey Dick WLA Vantage Fire Restoration: Assistant Manager Winegeart, Natural Resource Specialist Nass, and Natural Resource Technician Blore treated Russian knapweed and Canada thistle in the Vantage highway Fire area. While the Canada thistle is in rosette form, Russian knapweed wasted no time taking advantage of nutrients made available by fire and the lack of competition for those nutrients and space. Many of the plants have bolted and a few have flowers.



Assistant Manager Winegeart, Natural Resource Technician Blore and Natural Resource Specialist Nass conduct weed control in the Whiskey Dick WLA post Vantage Fire



Natural Resource Specialist Nass accompanied WDFW archaeologists to assess and inventory areas of cultural significance as part of the post wildfire restoration plan in the Whiskey Dick WLA

Oak Creek Prescribed Fire: WDFW staff members and Department of Natural Resources continue a multiyear project of prescribed fire treatments in Cougar Canyon on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area this period. 85 acres were completed in Spring of 2021 and crews are working to complete an additional 42 acres this fall as conditions allow.



WDFW and DNR firefighters observe and discuss test fire before lighting prescribed fire unit in Cougar Canyon



DNR firefighter lighting edges of prescribed fire line in Cougar Canyon

Providing Education and Outreach

L.T. Murray Kiosk Updates: Natural Resource Technician Blore and Natural Resource Worker Hamlin installed the last interpretive panel on the L.T. Murray at the North Fork Manastash Kiosk.



The new photographic interpretative panel in the top left corner

Snipes Reserve Line Maintenance: Assistant Manager Ferguson mowed paths along the safety zone area by the shops and office and a path along the Snipes Reserve line. This allowed Ferguson and Natural Resource Technician Wascisin to replace and repair and safety zone signs and reserve signs that had been damaged in the past few years.

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Start-Up: Manager Bates, Environmental Planner English, and Assistant Manager Winegeart attended the first L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Advisory Committee meeting of the year and for the new planning session at Hal Holmes.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Spring Development: WDFW staff members and contractors completed a new spring development along Reynolds Creek in the Cowiche Unit of the Oak Creek Wildlife Area. The goal of this project is to improve stream habitat by providing water for domestic cattle grazing on state land to eliminate need for cattle to drink from Reynolds Creek.



New stock tank and exclusion fencing around spring to protect wetland from domestic cattle

Other

Wolf Activity: Conflict Specialist Wetzel worked on submitting Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements – Livestock invoices and Contracted Range Rider invoices for range riding costs. Wolf activity has been routine for the remaining Teanaway Pack. Agency range riders are working in the Teanaway and Naneum Pack areas.

Snipes Reserve Culvert Project: Sunnyside Snake River Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Ferguson has begun filling in the hole in the road that was involved in the culvert replacement project in the Snipes Reserve. Once covered and electricity is restored the pump will begin filling the haystack drainage area and provide more waterfowl hunting opportunities at the HQ Unit.



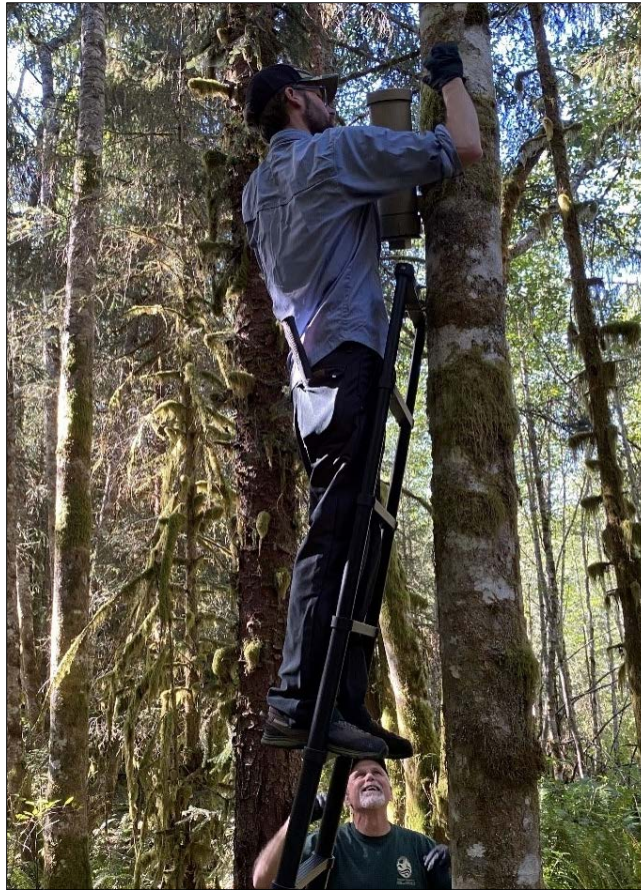
Assistant Manager Ferguson filling in the hole in the road using a backhoe

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

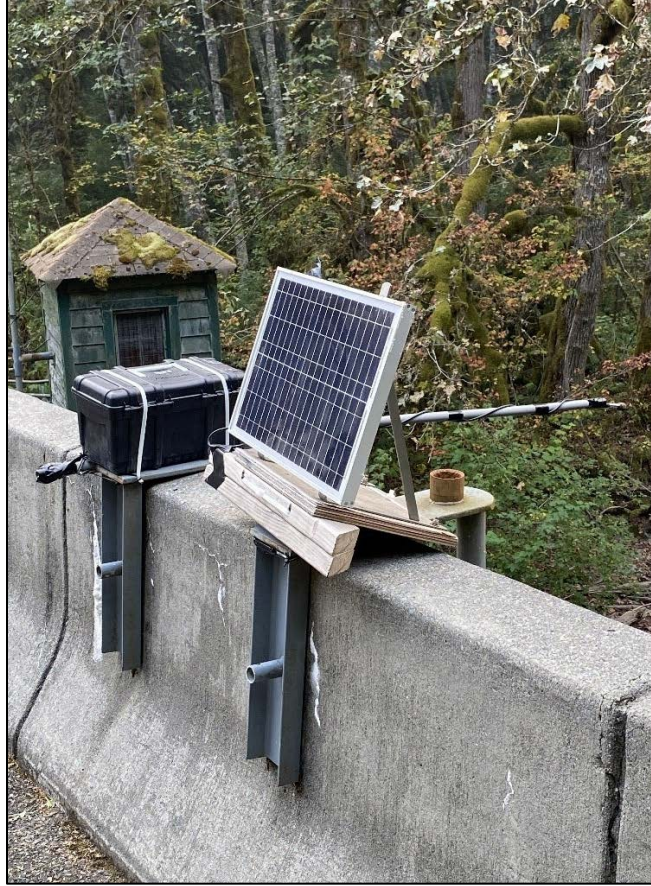
Managing Wildlife Populations

Fisher Monitoring Efforts in South Cascades: Biologists Anderson and Smith worked with local landowners and manager to put up various scent-camera stations with hopes of catching fisher over the next eight months of active efforts. Fishers are a type of weasel. This species is state endangered. From 2008 through 2021, WDFW and partners have been actively reintroducing this species. Fishers has been extinct in the state of Washington in recent times due to overharvesting. These efforts are to provide for healthy populations of this species once again in Washington. WDFW has more [information on the management of fishers](#).



Biologist Smith and Seattle Public Utilities Biologist May putting up a lure dispenser — Photo by C. Anderson, WDFW


Bat Activity in Area of First White-nose Syndrome Case in Washington: Biologists Anderson and Tobin put up solar bat acoustic monitoring units in the district. These were put at spots where large pushes of activity were noted in fall and late winter/early spring in the past with regular occurrences of certain bat species of interest. They will be left out through the spring.



A long-term solar bat acoustic monitoring unit in King Co. along the Cedar River — Photo by C. Anderson, WDFW


Bat Migration Research: Biologist Anderson followed-up on a reported hoary bat roosting in Seattle. Interest in this individual largely hinged on the fact that another hoary had just been located at Billy Frank, Jr. Nisqually Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in “reverse migration” (heading north when the bulk of population was known to be heading in the reverse direction at that time – heading south for winter). Sometimes this reverse migration can occur due to unfavorable weather events in the desired migratory direction – in birds individuals can head north to better weather to wait out a bad weather front. This is perhaps the case in migratory bats too. Biologist Anderson and Habitat at Home Coordinator Desautels examined trees and related roost habitat at the Seattle Park in hopes of scanning the bat for a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag for individual identification of the animal. Unfortunately, one night had progressed and the animal was nowhere to be found that next day. A bit of searching and outreach but no bat to scan (boo!). Anderson noted that this Seattle Park had the densest amount of racoon latrines in one spot he had ever seen – so hopefully the bat, while on its way to wintering grounds in Mexico, did not become a raccoon snack. Hoary bats are our biggest species of bat in WA. Find out more about this species [here](#).



 Billy Frank Jr. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge · Follow
3h · 🌐

The latest detection from our Motus tower (read about it here: <https://www.fws.gov/story/detecting-birds>) picked up not a bird, not a plane, but... a BAT! The hoary bat is a real traveler. They can fly 24 miles in a night, devouring moths. And they migrate great distances, between North and South America. This particular bat was tagged by Gabriel A. Reyes of the U.S. Geological Survey, Western Ecological Research Center in Dixon, California, only 16 days ago!

Photo of a bat with shining black eyes, fluffy, silver-tipped fur, and large rounded ears on either side of its small face, mouth slightly open to show sharp teeth and a pink tongue. Credit: J. N. Stuart



The second migratory hoary bat that Biologist Anderson has been requested to check on in just one year – year of the hoary bat apparently. First was in spring migration; now, again in fall! — Photo, reporting party

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Annual GMU 485 Green River Permit Hunts (Quality Bull, Antlerless Elk, Youth Antlerless Elk, Quality Buck, Disabled Buck): Biologists Anderson and Smith assisted hunters and collaborating land managers (Tacoma Water – Green River Watershed Officers) in the annual permit hunts located in the Green River Unit (the Green River Municipal Watershed, Tacoma Water). The hunt was more successful than folks were anticipating given the very hot, dry, windy, and smoky conditions. One odd aspect was many bears were moving about during the hunt and a number were taken.



Biologist Smith removes a premolar tooth from the bear for mandatory ageing and sexing purposes — Photo by C. Anderson, WDFW



Biologists Anderson and Smith ageing a ram. A bullet lodged in the left horn — Photos E. Thomas

Harvest Marking – Bighorn Sheep Ram Pinning: Biologists Anderson and Smith both pinned rams from two hunters. One ram had an old bullet in the horn which was interesting and made for an even more unique specimen.

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Possible Cougar Depredation – Snohomish County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kevin O'Connor and Officer Weidert performed a depredation investigation for possible cougar attack on a goat on Snohomish County. No determination was made on the of cause of death for the goat, as the carcass had been unreported for about 36 hours and obvious signs of scavenging from possible coyotes was observed. O'Connor and Officer Weidert help to identify areas where predators could have access to the other livestock at the property and discussed additional proactive measures to reduce the likelihood of predator-livestock interactions. O'Connor and Officer Weidert discussed electric fencing, penning the animals at night, guardian animals, and provided WDFW *Living with Wildlife – Cougars* literature to the property owner.

Possible Cougar Depredation – King County: Kevin O'Connor performed a site visit to a possible cougar depredation in King County following a report of two goats and two sheep killed in a paddock behind a local residence home. This site visit was education focused as the carcasses of the livestock had been removed from their location and buried locally, negating the opportunity to identify puncture marks, lacerations, or feeding patterns of the predator. O'Connor focused on providing biological information on cougars, bobcats, bears, and coyotes to the residence. O'Connor provided ideas on how to increase the effectiveness of the exclusionary fencing at the property by adding electric fencing, motion activated noise makes and lights, and the possible addition of a guardian animal. O'Connor emphasized the importance of proactive deterrence measures to protect both livestock and wildlife from experiencing these types of negative interactions. O'Connor additionally asked that the residence inform neighbors of the activity in the area and help direct them to our agency's website WDFW *Living with Wildlife – Cougars* for additional information on proactive deterrence measure.

Injured Bear – Preston Area: Specialist Kevin O'Connor and District Assistant Biologist Mike Smith responded to a report of an injured bear in the Preston area of King County. The reporting party (RP) had excellent video of the injured animal who had a limp on the hind leg. Unfortunately, the video was excellent due to the proximity of the cameras to the availability of attractants on the RP's property. The bear had mobility in its hind leg and was able to utilize the leg to maneuver into different positions. O'Connor and Smith were able to provide education in reducing attractants, securing a chicken coop, and they observed that the bears injuries were mostly likely not fatal and would recover. We can only guess as to what caused the injury for the bear. However, urban attractants often lead to vehicle collisions as these animals move around neighborhoods at night, from one attractant to another. An injured limb or limping behavior is often an indicator that there was a vehicle related incident. In many urban or semi-urban environments, vehicles can be the leading cause of death for bears and reducing attractants is the best proactive measure we can take as a community to reduce the likelihood of vehicle related incidents.

Osprey Management: Biologist Anderson has been in discussions with Seattle Parks and Recreation regarding osprey management. Anderson provided information on building and siting platforms, permits needed for nest destruction (thanks to Administrative Assistant Taylor for processing inactive nest destruction permits), and other details for providing successful platform efforts while ridding nests from built structures. Hopefully a couple platforms are in the future for area Seattle parks.



Almost done! A past Seattle Parks osprey platform effort that WDFW collaborated with due to opportunity (Burlington-Northern was willing to foot the bill) — Photo by C. Anderson

Providing Education and Outreach

Suburban Eastern Cottontails – Seattle Times Follow-up: Biologist Anderson went through life history and personal observations of shifts in habitat use and food preferences of local suburban eastern cottontails as we move into the fall. Anderson discussed the switch to woody browse materials and other food items retained outside the growing season as grass becomes much less of diet due to dormancy. They also discussed breeding ramp-down and cottontails becoming all very independent in habits and haunts now. This inquiry came up due to reporter Brendan Kiley following-up on his past summer story regarding urban cottontails. In this case – where have all the bunnies gone?

Cougars Pelt Seal: During the month October, Kevin O’Connor performed four cougar pelt seals around King and Snohomish counties. When available, O’Connor performed these cougar seals at the hunter’s home to help build and maintain relationships with the community. On multiple occasions O’Connor was thanked for the excellent customer service of the WDFW staff members for providing biological information about cougar hunting and harvest regulations, customer service, and overall positive experience.

Habitat at Home Download: Biologist Anderson met with Habitat at Home Coordinator Desautels to discuss history of Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary, various iterations, recent collaborations, recent past goals, opportunities, ideas for projects that have been successful/likely worth repeat due to past success and interest, future new efforts – sky is the limit! It is very exciting to have an expanding education unit within the Communications and Public Engagement Division. This has been needed for a couple decades now and has already quickly made an impact over the past few years in coming to fruition. Find out more about your backyard wildlife, managing your habitats, and now that you have attracted wildlife – how to manage those individuals that may be causing some strife here at [Living with Wildlife](#) and included subpages such as [Habitat at Home](#).



A mason bee condo at a local Seattle p-patch. Learn how to help your local pollinators at WDFW Habitat at Home — Photo by C. Anderson

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Regional New Personnel Onboarding: District 12 has been onboarding the new South Region 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist this past month. O’Connor comes to us with a wealth of background in conflict reduction management. He has worked in a similar position in Region 1 in the past. He has already dealt with at least two depredations in his short time on and has been doing a bang-up job while learning the area and Region 4 nuisances. We are excited to have O’Connor as part of the team and appreciate his expertise and background in providing for bear, elk, deer, and other human-wildlife interactions that require more hand-in-hand management assistance or education from WDFW staff members. Welcome to O’Connor!

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Fisher Reintroduction Monitoring: Biologist Butler, Tirhi, and volunteer Terry completed deployment of all eight baited camera stations for photo documenting and collecting hair samples of fisher and other wildlife in District 11. This monitoring of reintroduced fishers into the South Cascades is a [collaborative project](#) of WDFW, Muckleshoot Tribe of Indians, Puyallup Tribe, United States Forest Service, Northwest Trek, Woodland Park Zoo, Mount Rainier National Park, and volunteers. See previous weeklies for overview and pictures of this collaborative project.

Western Pond Turtles: Biologist Butler attended a western pond turtle health team meeting this past week. The western pond turtle health team was founded after the discovery of an ulcerative shell disease affecting western pond turtles in the state of Washington. This disease causes lesions that eat away at the turtle's shell causing a Swiss cheese appearance in very severe cases. The health team is led by WDFW's veterinarian Dr. Haman, and the members include state biologists, managers, zoo veterinarians and staff members, and various researchers and students from across the country. Through previous research, a new species of fungus, *Emydomyces testavorans*, was discovered in the lesions. The team is working to understand what role this fungus plays in shell disease, how it spreads, and how it affects the turtles over time. In addition, veterinarians are working to develop and test possible treatments. This was the first meeting of the year discussing the previous year's work and a second meeting will follow to discuss upcoming priorities.

Biologist Butler attended a fencing pre-construction meeting at the Pierce County western pond turtle site. Currently the site has an old, dilapidated fence that is beyond repair. Western pond turtles, mainly breeding females, have gotten out through the fence and have been found crossing a busy road. To protect this important recovery site, funding for a new fence was allocated. All the proper permitting was obtained, and the project went out to bid in August. This was the first on site meeting with the fencing company, WDFW project managers, and biologists to cover any questions and point out areas of concern. Construction will start in the next few weeks after all fencing materials have been received.

Fishers: Biologists Butler and Tirhi finished deploying scent stations at all eight of their assigned fisher hexes. Each station has a scent dispenser attached ten feet up in a tree that will release a small amount of scent lure onto a bone below for up to nine months. About 16 to 18 feet across from the scent dispenser, a remote camera is attached to a tree. Any animal that comes to investigate the site should trigger the camera with the hope that a few fishers will be amongst those curious animals. The overall goal of this effort is to determine the distribution and occupancy of fisher since the release of 81 fishers within the South Cascades.



A fisher scent station

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Sealing Game Species: Biologist Tirhi met with a hunter to seal his legally harvested bobcat and cougar.



Local District 11 hunters with their cougar and bobcat legally harvested on Weyerhaeuser's Vail Tree Farm, GMU 667, Thurston County

Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Goat, and Bobcat Inspections: Biologist Butler met with a successful mountain goat hunter this past week. Hunters are required to present mountain goat for inspection so the goat can be aged, and a nasal swab collected. Biologist Butler also met with two successful bobcat hunters to seal their bobcat pelts.



A successful mountain goat harvest

South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Union River Unit Duck Blind: Biologist Murphie assisted WLA manager Laushman to clear out an overgrown foot trail to provide walk-in access to a duck blind at the Union River Unit of the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area.



Before and after photos of the duck blind trail

Region 6 Access Team Activities: The access team worked on a variety of projects throughout the eight counties of Region 6. Gravel work, vegetation control and sign placement has been the recent focus of efforts. The team has also spent additional time in Pierce County getting familiar with the individual sites and routes while assessing maintenance needs.



Lost Lake, Mason County



Before and after photos at Tanwax Lake, Pierce County

Clallam County – Sol Duc River: Access staff members posted DFW signage at the newly leased Sol Duc access, this site is located across river from Whitcomb Dimmel. Access is directly off Highway 101.



Pictures taken from highway approach to Sol Duc River, Clallam County

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Amphibian Concentration and Road Mortality Data: Biologist Tirhi met with Habitat Program Environmental Planner Michalak and volunteer Blessing to review amphibian concentration and amphibian road mortality data collected across four locations of Thurston County from 2015-2018. The meeting was to discuss the entry of this data into WDFW’s Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) program, one of the recommendations that came out of the final report. The findings of the study identified locations along road stretches in Thurston County that produce significant amphibian road mortality due to their placement near or across some wetlands that have high use by amphibians for seasonal migration. In other words, these road segments bisect seasonal

migration pathways and cause significant amphibian road mortality. Several recommendations came of these studies but have yet to be implemented. One was entry into WDFW PHS system as locations of importance. Another was working with the City of Olympia and Thurston County Roads Department to mitigate impact. Unfortunately, neither entity is interested in mitigation at this time.