

# Chelan Wildlife Area

2021-22 Management Plan Update



This document is intended to highlight accomplishments of the goals and objectives identified within the Chelan Wildlife Area Management Plan. The plan addresses the status of wildlife species and their habitat, ongoing restoration efforts and public recreation opportunities at the Wildlife Area. Every 10 years, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) develops a process for revising the management plans for each wildlife area to identify new management priorities and actions. In between plan revisions, the update focuses on recent accomplishments over the last two years.

## Management Highlights

### **Beebe Springs Recreation (Goal/Objective 9.G).**

Beebe Springs Unit has become a birding hotspot, and a very popular one. There are two main habitat types at Beebe Springs, riparian and upland. The riparian habitat extends along the Columbia River and encompasses the two Beebe creek channels. Beaver have expanded the riparian zone by damming the creek and ponding water. Away from the water, grassland and shrubsteppe are dominant, stretching away from the river to the granite cliffs. The large granite cliff faces offer habitat for birds of prey and other cliff-nesting birds.

According to eBird, 170 bird species have been documented. One local birdwatcher from Chelan has dedicated herself to birding here monthly and reporting her observations. The Leavenworth bird festival leads guided field trips, during which they recorded 39 bird species in 2023. In addition to bird life, Beebe Springs also supports many mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects. A game camera placed in December 2022 documented beaver, muskrat, mink, river otter, raccoon, and cougar.

A new flail mower attachment for the mini excavator has allowed for improved maintenance of trails and viewpoints. This has also opened some areas of dense understory to enhance habitat and improve weed control. Himalayan blackberry chokes much of the riparian corridors and some of the grasslands are dominated by non-native plants. The beaver pond is also being overtaken by reed canary grass, purple loosestrife and yellow flag iris, and efforts are underway to manage these weeds.



*Beebe Springs beaver pond in winter.*



*Beebe Springs Unit trail, showing willows, roses, and the upper portion of the wildlife area. October 2022.*

**Swakane Unit Forest Thinning (Goal/Objective 2.A).**

After years of discussion and planning, commercial thinning on Burch Mountain (90 acres) and upper Swakane Canyon (553 acres) were completed in 2022 in partnership with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) foresters. Both areas were evaluated as overstocked mixed conifer forest with heightened risk of forest pathogens, insect outbreak, and high risk of severe wildfire. Benefits of forest thinning included reduced fuel load, removed fuel ladders, increased resources for dominant trees, and altered species composition favoring fire- and drought-tolerant species. Thinned stands will reinvigorate browse vegetation for mule deer and the retention of larger diameter trees will benefit cavity nesting birds.



*Thinned forest on the Swakane Unit.*

### **Swakane Target Shooting Range, Phase 1 (Goal/Objective 9.C).**

Phase 1 of the Swakane Target Shooting Range was completed during mid-summer of 2021. After emergency fire restrictions were lifted, the range saw steady use of the 100- and 200 -ard ranges. Amenities include parking, gravel paths, concrete pads at the firing lines, and an informational kiosk. After Phase 1 completion, all target shooting in Swakane Canyon was restricted to the designated range, leaving the rest of the canyon safer for other recreational activities. Funding for phase 1 was provided by the Firearms and Archery Range Recreation Program of the Recreation Conservation Office, National Rifle Association Public Range Fund Grant, a donation from the Wenatchee Sportsman’s Association, and state funds. Phase 2 will be completed in 2023 and include a 25-yard pistol range, a sheltered firing line, and shooting benches.



*Swakane target shooting range at the completion of Phase 1.*

### **WLA Staff (Goal/Objective 12.A).**

The Chelan Wildlife Area hired its first Assistant Manager on August 16, 2022. It was truly a great day for the Wildlife Area.

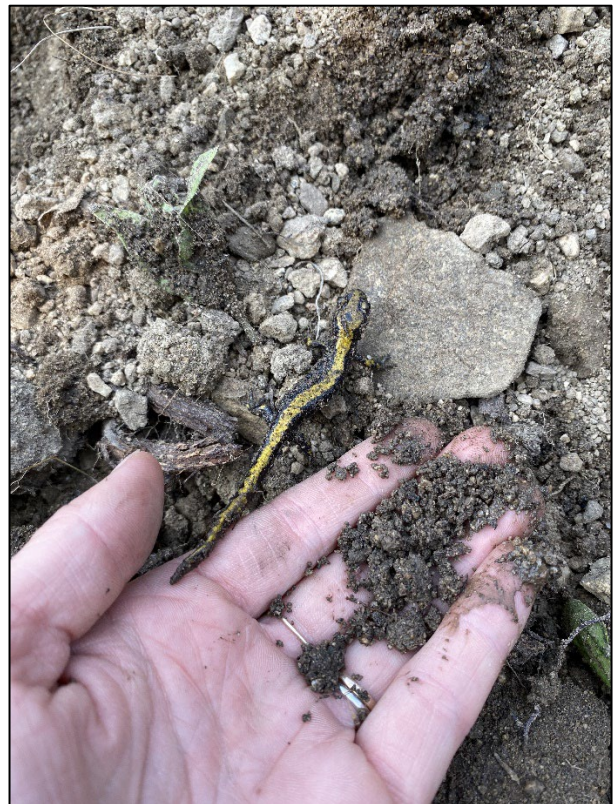
## **New Issues**

### **Protect Tiger Salamander Habitat (Goal/Objective 4.G).**

Chelan Wildlife area staff have begun surveying and documenting species encounters with the goal of informing habitat management decisions with an emphasis on species diversity. Staff are currently documenting distribution of tiger salamanders (*Ambystoma tigrinum*), a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) highlighted in the 2018 Chelan WLA Management plan.

Protecting and restoring tiger salamander habitat is a primary management objective for Beebe Springs, Cashmere Pond, Swakane and the White River units. During these survey efforts, incidental observations of amphibian species are likely, and will provide additional information to guide management actions.

Likely actions may include weed control in wetland areas, planting of native species, additional amphibian monitoring, and creation of small wetlands and ponds. The presence of American bull frogs may necessitate removal (where feasible) or control in some way to improve the habitat for native amphibians and other wildlife.



***A pacific chorus frog (Pseudacris regilla) on Swakane Unit (2023) and a long-toed salamander (Ambystoma macrodactylum) on the Chelan Butte Unit (2022).***