

# Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

December 16 to 31, 2020

## **DIVERSITY DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **GAME DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **HUNTER EDUCATION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **LANDS DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **SCIENCE DIVISION**

Nothing for this installment.

## **REGION 1**

Nothing for this installment.

## **REGION 2**

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

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

**Pygmy Rabbit Population Monitoring -Winter Burrow Surveys:** Each winter, we conduct active burrow surveys/counts within their known range and the release sites to determine survivorship of release pygmy rabbits and distribution and trend of the wild populations.

Snow conditions provide reliable ways to locate and identify active burrows. At each active burrow site, we additionally collect fecal samples that partners from University of Idaho conduct genetic analyses on. These analyses identify the number of individual pygmy rabbits within each

survey area, allowing us to determine post-release survival on release sites and provide a wild population estimate.

Thus far, we have nearly completed surveys on the Beezley Hills Recovery Area. We found 40 active burrows, which is up significantly from only 10 last winter. Their distribution is also growing in this area as they have expanded beyond the release area into adjacent private lands and those owned by the Nature Conservancy. There is more suitable habitat we plan to check out so the total could increase.



*An active pygmy rabbit burrow in the Beezley Hills Recovery Area*

**Using Canines to Detect Pygmy Rabbits:** Technician Smith coordinated a pilot project to utilize scat detecting dogs (Rogue Detections- NE Washington) to assist with annual pygmy rabbit winter survey efforts. These efforts normally require a huge labor force of staff members, partners, and student volunteers. The success rate can vary considerably if there are poor snow conditions, making their active burrows and fresh scat difficult to detect. This effort focused on Sagebrush Flat Recovery Area where the canine teams conducted occupancy searches for pygmy rabbit burrows. Two canine teams were used and conducted searches over a week-long visit. The teams were able to visit about half of the cells in the survey area, though pygmy rabbit detections were not as numerous as we hoped. The final number of detections and occupied cells will be provided by the canine teams soon, so we do not have results yet.

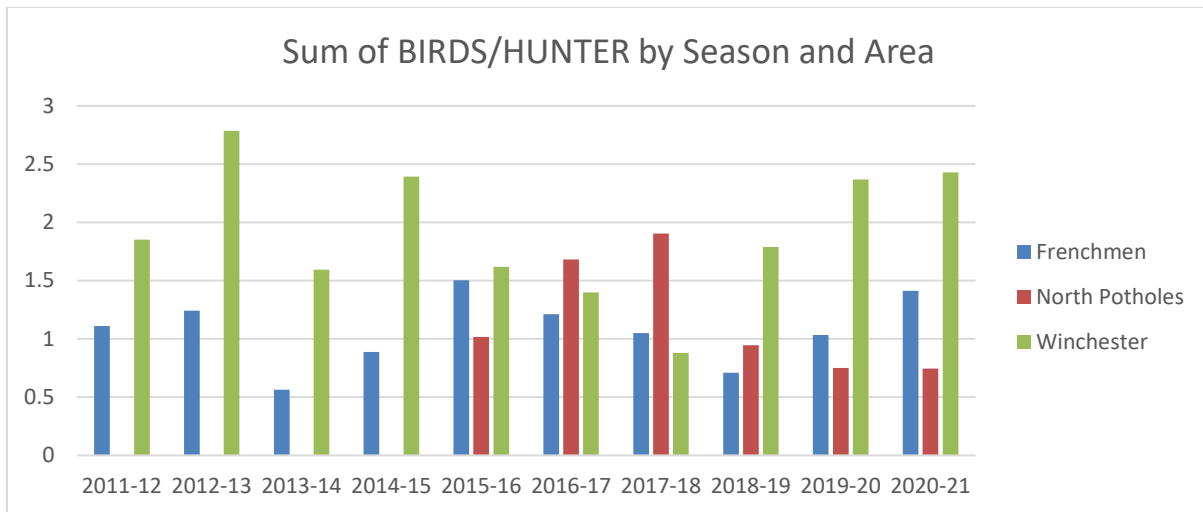


*Suzie Marlow with Rouge Detections and her dog after finding a pygmy rabbit burrow*

**Northern Leopard Frogs:** Biologist Grabowsky continued working on the northern leopard frog recovery report that is due to USFWS at the end of the year. At this stage, Grabowsky is coordinating with partners (Washington State University, Oregon Zoo, Idaho Department of Fish and Game to name a few) to organize accomplishments for the year. Part of this coordination involves attending and contributing to yearly meetings. Biologist Grabowsky attended the American Bullfrog Action Team meeting and Pacific Northwest Northern Leopard Frog Recovery meeting. Fortunately, some projects were only minimally impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, and fieldwork was allowed to continue (almost) normally. WDFW's partners in British Columbia were able to locate a record number of northern leopard frog egg masses and bullfrog control continued in Idaho. The story of northern leopard frog recovery looks different than last year due to work restrictions, but vital data was collected. We're hopeful that reintroduction efforts can resume next year and will be even more successful.

## **2) Providing Recreation Opportunities**

**Columbia Basin Regulated Access Areas:** Regulated access areas are starting to freeze up with colder temperatures setting in. At the Frenchmen, hunters can still find some open water around water delivery channels and at the Winchester and North Potholes, hunters will have to break ice to be able to hunt in all wetland basins. Hopefully with snow and colder temperatures hunters will see an increase in waterfowl activity allowing for better hunting opportunities.



**Okanogan County Water Access – Winter Opportunities:** Snow is piling up just above valley floors and snowplowing is in full swing. Region 2’s new service truck is now fully equipped with plowing hardware and accessories. The normal winter activities, ice fishing and ice skating, are popular at a number of sites like Patterson Lake and Davis Lake. Small ice hockey rinks are also popping up where they’re usually not. It seems the high usage from summer and fall is carrying over into this winter season.

**Mule Deer Ground Surveys:** Biologists Rowan and Dougherty wrapped up the 2020 deer road surveys. In coming weeks, biologists will analyze the collected data to determine if there are any actions that need to be taken. Biologist Cook and Biologist Hughes completed the Whitehall mule deer survey in Douglas County. Hughes demonstrated and explained the Survey 123 protocols to Cook.



*Mule deer survey route along Sagebrush Flats* – Photo by Hughes



Private Lands Biologist Braaten completed three different road survey routes in Douglas County and just over 400 deer were counted. Much of the routes were within Pearl Hill fire boundary and observations were minimal.



*2020 road deer surveys in Douglas County* – Photos by Eric Braaten, WDFW

### 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Okanogan Nuisance Elk:** Conflict Specialist Heilhecker spoke with a landowner about elk in his haystacks. She hears from this landowner about the same time every year. He has finally placed panels around the haystacks this year. Heilhecker will issue him a kill permit and renew his Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement.

**Okanogan Cougar Information:** Conflict Specialist Heilhecker communicated with a homeowner about cougars in his neighborhood. His wife likes to walk their dog off leash, at night, and had a confrontation with a cougar last year. They discussed several ways to help minimize interactions with cougars. The landowner was reminded that it is never a good idea to walk a dog off leash, especially on a winter night in Okanogan County.

### 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

**Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) Meeting:** Biologist Hughes attended the three-day WACD meeting. Conservation districts throughout Washington State and nationwide representatives attended and spoke at the virtual meeting. Local partners who WDFW works with in Region 2 attended, including Grant, South Douglas, and Chelan County conservation districts. This was an opportunity to hear about current projects, ongoing challenges, and successes that conservation districts in Washington have. Some topics and presentations encompassed forest health, fire recovery, urban agriculture, soil health, water quality concerns, and conservation easements.

**Safe Harbor Program:** The Nature Conservancy (TNC) contacted Biologist Hughes about wanting to trim sagebrush on their property that is enrolled the Safe Harbor Program. The sagebrush trimmings will be used by Foster Creek Conservation District for Beaver Dam Analogs. Hughes coordinated with Biologist Gallie on the proposal. Biologist Hughes surveyed

the area for pygmy rabbits and potential suitable pygmy rabbit habitat. No signs of pygmy rabbits were found. Hughes gave clearance to TNC to proceed. The project proposed will have little to no alteration in habitat, therefore a notification to the USFWS is not required. Biologist Hughes additionally reviewed a small parcel the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is planning to begin grazing on after Fall 2022. The potential area was burned during the Pearl Hill fire this past year.



*Area surveyed on TNC for safe harbor* – Photo by Hughes

**Habitat Project Planning:** Biologist Hughes completed cultural resource compliance documentation for two habitat project sites. Both areas are ongoing efforts which DFW has worked cooperatively with the landowners on enhancing and developing plots. Hughes forwarded project proposals and cultural forms to Access Manager Strickland. One project is planned to start in late spring 2021 and will have food plot mix seeded. This site is being expanded from its original plot to have additional tree and shrubs rows as well as native cool and warm season grass seeded fall 2021 in between shrub rows. Hughes worked on developing food plot mixes and grasses mixes for the specific site.

**Recreation Strategy and Planning:** Lands Operations Manager Haug has been participating in a number of committees associated with the agency's new recreation strategy and planning efforts. The virtual meetings involve issues of capacity in the planning effort, inventorying agency infrastructure, and opportunity surrounding recreation and stakeholder engagement. The initiative continues to move forward and progress on a number of topics provides hope that these efforts will produce a comprehensive and effective strategy towards recreation on WDFW lands.

## 5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

**Sinlahekin Road Repairs Near Blue Lake:** Okanogan County Public Works installed a new bridge at the drivable forde at Sinlahekin Creek. This will be a huge improvement to the road and will make travel through the valley much nicer for all vehicle and trailers. The bridge is set on ecology blocks and it is made from cattleguards so it can easily be moved in the event of a washout in the area.



*The new cattle guard bridge where the drivable forde used to be near Blue Lake. The structure now allows for Sinlahekin Creek to flow across the county road during high runoff periods –*

Photos by Wehmeyer





*Long-eared owl on the Driscoll-Eyhott Island Unit* – Photo by Justin Haug



*Great horned owl on the Driscoll-Eyhott Island Unit* – Photo by Justin Haug





*Northern pygmy owl above Sinlahekin Creek on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area* – Photo by Justin Haug



*Trumpeter swans on Forde Lake, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area* – Photo by Justin Haug



*Wolf tracks on the Sinlahkein Wildlife Area* – Photo by Justin Haug

## 7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

## **REGION 3**

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

#### 1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Winter feeding operations began at Oak Creek Wildlife Area's Cowiche, Oak Creek, and bighorn sheep sites on December 28, 2020. However, animal counts have been hard to determine thus far. Initial estimates reveal calf recruitment estimates (calves per 100 cows) in the high teens, but it is still too early for a good number. Elk sign has been nonexistent near the Nile site, which is probably due to increased human activity over the holiday season.

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Blore and Natural Resource Scientist Nass took the new feed truck out for its maiden voyage. There were an estimated 500 elk at the Watt feed site and surrounding area.



*Feeding elk on the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area*

**Sage Grouse Working Group Meeting Goes Digital with Great Turnout:** District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra and over 60 people, including WDFW staff members and partners from over a dozen agencies and groups, attended the online annual Working Group meeting for updates on status and projects surrounding greater sage grouse in Washington. Topics covered statewide status, fire, restoration, and predator interactions.

## **2) Providing Recreation Opportunities**

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area staff members posted winter closure signs for the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area. Staff members continue to monitor elk numbers near the feed sites and trap rodents in the Joe Watt elk hay barn.



*Gate closure and signage installation for the L.T. Murray winter closure*



Sunnyside Wildlife Area staff members worked hard this past fall to get water to the Johnson Wetland. This wetland provides waterfowl habitat and hunting opportunities with an ADA blind installed in 2019. The wetland is located close to the Yakima River, which puts it in a major waterfowl flyway.



*Johnson Wetland – Sunnyside Unit*

Sunnyside Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber disked areas within corn circles at the Windmill Unit in December to provide landing areas for geese that will offer field hunting opportunities.



*Disking a portion of corn stubble at the Windmill Unit*

Mild weather in December made for some slow waterfowl hunting. The recent change in weather patterns should start bringing more migrating waterfowl into the Columbia Basin.



*Scout waits for his hunting companion to pick up decoys after a limit of ducks at the Phase 1 wetland of the Windmill Unit in mid-December*

### 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Tri-Cities Airport Deer:** District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand assisted USDA's Wildlife Services with coordinating lethal removal of two deer from the Tri-Cities Airport after failed attempts to haze them from the property. The use of Agency Kill Authority permits was utilized, and the meat was donated to a non-profit charity in Walla Walla.

**Kahlotus Deer Monitoring:** District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand checked on deer activity and damage in several winter wheat fields near Kahlotus. Increasing numbers of deer were observed and reported by damage permit hunters near Lower Monumental Dam along the Snake River. Additional landowner damage permits and activation of several youth hunters from the new Region 3 youth deer special permit hunt roster were initiated.

**West Richland Deer Damage:** District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand followed up with a landowner who was experiencing deer damage to several stacks of quality alfalfa hay along the Yakima River. Currently, extra tarping and fencing as well as moving the hay out of the area is working well.

### 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

**Greenstrip Firebreaks Moving Forward:** Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett continued to coordinate on the final Greenstrip Project. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has finished all job sheets and is waiting on signatures from the landowner and Farm Service Agency (FSA) before the final seeding can take place. Additional seed has been ordered to help counter any reduction in germination rates of the forage kochia.



Sunnyside Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber and Assistant Manager Rodgers planted shrubs at riparian sites within the Esquatzel Unit.



Sunnyside Wildlife Area Manager Kaelber and Assistant Manager Rodgers nearly finished seeding upland restoration sites at the Mesa and Windmill Units that will provide better nesting cover for upland birds and waterfowl in the future.



*Restoration site close to Powerline Lake*

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

Nothing for this installment.



## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Colockum Wildlife Area staff members took advantage of December's winter weather to work indoors and spruce up the Colockum headquarters residence. Planned improvements include interior painting, new carpeting, drywall repairs, and lighting and window covering upgrades. These were clearly attempts to make sure Pete and John made Santa's "nice" list.



## 7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

## **REGION 4**

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

#### 1) Managing Wildlife Populations

**Swan Issues:** District Wildlife Biologists Waddell and Moore assisted seasonal Swan Biologist Zimmerman with retrieval of sick, injured, or dead swans in Whatcom County. Though the use of lead shot by waterfowl hunters has been banned for almost 30 years, swans can become sick or die when ingesting "legacy" lead shotgun pellets or lead fishing tackle (e.g., lead sinkers) that remains in the environment. Swans are also injured or killed when they fly into powerlines. The department works with several important partners to collect and document where injuries or lead-related sickness or mortalities occur and transport live swans to a Whatcom County wildlife rehabilitator for possible rehabilitation. Biologist Zimmerman also addresses the same issues in several other counties, including Skagit, Snohomish, and King.



*While searching for swans, Biologist Waddell encountered a flock of several thousand snow geese near Sumas - Photo by R. Waddell*

## 2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

**Region 4 Private Lands Access Program Waterfowl Habitat and Access Program:** Region 4 Private Lands Access Program has partnered with Snohomish County to provide waterfowl hunting access to Smith Island, a newly restored estuary in the lower Snohomish Delta. Final agreements have been signed and the property is ready for hunters. The access agreement allows for public access from Oct.1 through Feb. 28 every year. There are seven parking spaces available and a hand-carry launch for small watercraft. This property is tidally influenced, so people should be cautious and mindful of property boundaries and neighboring city of Everett property.



*Natural Resource Technician Deyo installing “Safety Zone” signage at Smith Island*





*Region 4 Private Lands Access Program took advantage of a high tide and used a swamp boat to more easily move through Smith Island and install signage*



*Newly installed signage at the parking area for Smith Island*

**Cherry Valley ADA Blind:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm reports that the ADA duck blind is getting regular use this season. Father and son are all smiles below.



*ADA hunter and son enjoying the ADA blind at Cherry Valley*

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

**Coyote Conflict:** District 12 followed-up on multiple coyote complaints and concerns, mainly with outreach and discussions on what to do short and long term. Firstly, don't feed coyotes or other wildlife that can habituate and become a nuisance due to such inappropriate interactions (yes, the coyote with a broken leg will be fine – please don't feed it!!!). One field incident involved a very habituated and likely young animal hanging in a backyard and adjacent natural area. The animal was not creating issue but seemingly playing with various yard items and using a yard stump as a lookout. This playful but concerning habituation/too comfortable in human areas behavior has been seen before and can be a slippery slope regarding nuisance behavior. WDFW recommends removal of any and all attractants at the community level, exclusion from areas deemed “no coyote” (e.g., common areas used by humans regularly on a property) and hazing where/when appropriate. This is the basic, science-driven advice for the bulk of wildlife habituation and resulting nuisance or potential nuisance behaviors in wildlife. It is not the individual animal's fault, as nuisance wildlife and the habituation that creates it is a human created problem. Keep your properties wildlife friendly to attract the wildlife you want but in a manner that keeps them wild! Learn more here:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living>

Learn to attract species that you are comfortable with (e.g., songbirds) here:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/backyard>



*Coyote in Woodinville that recently showed its skills at tossing sticks and other fun objects in the air, to itself, as WDFW biologists observed in a follow-up to an online report regarding wildlife in the area – Photo by M. Smith, WDFW*

#### 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes



*Project Coordinator Brokaw and Habitat Engineer Channing Syms visited Leque Island to discuss and adaptive management idea with Stillaguamish and Tulalip tribal biologists, which would include connecting channels that are rapidly forming in the mudflats to the restoration area*

#### 5) Providing Education and Outreach

**Wild Washington Lesson Plans – Christmas Bird Count:** District 12 worked with public affairs to provide for a middle school aged lesson plan called “[Counting Birds for Science](#)”. Counting Birds for Science takes middle school students into the world of birding and



community science. Students are introduced to Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, the nation's first community science project. The lesson is aligned with Common Core State Standards in math and Next Generation Science Standards in life science. Students record, graph, and analyze data and identify trends based on resource availability and interactions with other species.



*Merlin falcons use a dead top portion of a tree in north Seattle. This species is increasing in observations in winter Christmas Bird Count survey-wide; as well as in Washington State -*

Photo by B. Diehl

**Non-native Species – Be on the Lookout:** District 12 worked with Olympia to provide for a blog entry regarding a seemingly accidental transfer of wildlife from California to Washington; likely via landscaping materials. The blog can be found [here](#). Report non-native species [here](#). If uncertain, report general wildlife observations [here](#).

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

**Temporary Natural Resource Technician:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that seasonal Natural Resource Technician, Brooks Estes, continues to support the Boater Access and Snoqualmie Wildlife Area programs. Brooks has been busy keeping seven water access sites clear of litter and illegal dumps. Brooks worked with Access Program Supervisor Derek Hacker to remove three trailer loads of accumulated recyclables, trash, and obsolete materials stock-piled at the Cherry Valley barn facility.

**Cherry Valley Hazard Trees:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated a hazard tree removal project at the Cherry Valley Unit this December. Manager Boehm worked with WDFW Contracting and Budget staff members, WSDOT, K&D Traffic Services and Mike's Affordable Tree Service to remove ten hazard trees along State Highway 203 that were threatening traffic safety. The project went smoothly, and the trees remained onsite as habitat trees.



*WSDOT and K&D Traffic Services provide traffic control along State Highway 203 while tree work progresses at Cherry Valley*

**Osprey/Protected Bird Nest Destruction; Non-Breeding:** District 12 trained Region 4 customer service staff members to provide for osprey nest destruction permits on built structures during the non-breeding season. Often these nests are on cell towers and are a safety hazard for workers that need to access equipment or provide maintenance to the infrastructure underneath any given nest. The nests of most birds in Washington are protected year-round – occupied or not. If you have questions about Washington protected wildlife, reach-out to your local WDFW office and/or district wildlife biologist. They can help you understand what may apply to a situation and what management needs may be necessary...or not!



*Even osprey need a drink now and then! Ack! Permitting needs – maybe I will keep my head under water... - Photo by M. Hamilton*

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.



## **REGION 5**

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

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

**Columbian White-tailed Deer Surveys:** Biologists Stephens and Holman conducted five replicates of a Columbian white-tailed deer survey on Puget Island during the months of November and December. The survey consists of two separate driving routes surveyed, simultaneously counting and classifying deer seen on each route. The purpose of the survey is to get a minimum count of deer on the island and to get an index of fawn recruitment. Of the five surveys, the highest count of deer was 149 on Dec. 1. The highest fawn:doe ratio recorded was 37:100 and the highest buck:doe ratio recorded was 55:100.



*Columbian white-tailed deer on Puget Island*

#### **2) Providing Recreation Opportunities**

**Access Sites:** Access staff members Rhodes and McKinlay found that someone had dragged a large boulder into the parking lot creating a hazard for vehicles at the I-5 Bridge access site. Using their winches and pulleys, Rhodes and McKinlay were able to drag it back into place. Rhodes and McKinlay also cleared two fallen trees from Olequa Creek access site that were blocking the parking lot.



*Moving a boulder back into place*

### 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

**Orchard Damage Follow-up:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen visited an apple orchard after a snow event to check the trail cameras that he deployed a few weeks ago and to inspect deer tracks in the week-old snow, in hopes of gaining a better understanding of deer movement in and out of the orchard. Deer tracks were notably absent from the blocks of young trees which exhibited signs of deer damage. Most of the deer tracks were congregated in areas with mature apples on the trees and windfall apples on the ground. It is likely that the deer damage to the young trees occurred earlier in the year before the apple crop was ripe. Now that there is an abundance of post-harvest apples available, the deer will likely focus on those for some time. Jacobsen will work with the orchard manager to monitor the young trees for new signs of deer damage.



*Post-harvest apples remaining on mature apple trees and windfall apples on the ground, providing an ongoing food source for the local deer*

**Odd Sightings:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen followed up with a landowner who was concerned that “an army of animals” was marching through his property and tearing up vegetation but not leaving tracks. The landowner also believed all the deer on his property were getting scratched up by some animal, and was concerned about flying rods and orbs, and some 24-winged insects that he stated he had caught on his security cameras. Jacobsen suggested that the orbs on camera were possibly insects, water droplets, dust particles, or smoke being picked up by the camera. The landowner had seen UFOs before but didn’t believe these were UFOs. Jacobsen requested that the landowner send in photos of the deer and flying rods/orbs to help with identification.

**Depredation on Goat:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen contacted a landowner who reported a cougar depredation on one of her goats in Clark County. The landowner’s seven goats had been left out at night to consume the brush around the heavily wooded property. The landowner found the dead goat on the morning of Christmas eve, but waited until the weekend to report the incident. The carcass was gone by the time the landowner called it in, but she sent photographs of the carcass to Jacobsen. Though it was not possible to confirm the cause of the depredation without inspecting the carcass, Jacobsen believed the damage to the carcass was consistent with the feeding patterns of coyotes, contrary to what several of the landowner’s neighbors had told her. Advice was given on securing livestock at night, hazing devices, and livestock guardian dogs.

**Deer Damage to Orchard:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with an orchard manager in northeast Klickitat County to inspect deer damage to young apple trees and to discuss possible solutions to the issue. Deer have been browsing on new shoots as well as ripping new tree grafts from old stumps, thus rendering the stump and new graft useless. Jacobsen installed trail cameras to monitor deer movement patterns around the orchard and deployed a Master Hunter to the orchard. The Master Hunter was unable to locate and harvest a deer there, as the deer have been coming to the orchard strictly at night. Jacobsen will work to deploy various hazing tools to the orchard over the next several weeks.



*Temporary deer fencing around the outside edge of a block of young apple trees*





*Deer browsing damage to young apple tree*

**Cooperative Fencing Project Inspection:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with an organic produce farmer in Clark County to inspect his cooperative fencing project. Earlier this year, WDFW utilized legislature-appropriated funds to enter a cooperative fencing project with the landowner, who had incurred several thousands of dollars in damage to his organic produce from the local deer population annually over several years. The fencing project had recently been completed and looked excellent. The landowner was extremely appreciative of the fencing assistance and can now grow his produce without having to worry daily about deer decimating his kale and Brussels sprouts.



*Completed deer fence around an organic produce farm*

**Elk Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen deployed a youth damage pool hunter on an elk hunt in Clark County to help alleviate elk damage to a hay/pasture operation. The hunter harvested an elk, but unfortunately, the elk returned to the field the following day. Jacobsen met

with another landowner to discuss over 30 elk entering a large fruit orchard via the cattle guard outside the orchard fence. Jacobsen issued a Kill Permit and will continue to work with the landowner to deter the elk from entering the orchard.

**Injured Chicken:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen fielded a report from a landowner regarding two wolves attacking a chicken in Klickitat County. The chicken was injured and taken to a veterinarian but was going to be alright. The description provided of the animals (less than 50 pounds and coyote-colored) and their behavior most closely matched that of coyotes. Jacobsen provided advice on securing fowl, and the landowner plans on installing a trail camera to monitor his property.

**Scavenged Goat:** A concerned landowner in Clark County contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen concerning one of his goats that had been scavenged. The goat kid was born stillborn and the landowner left the carcass outside the goat pen. The following day, the goat carcass was found approximately 300 yards away with just the head and neck missing from the carcass, but no other damage was observed. The landowner was concerned that a cougar could be in the area. Jacobsen indicated that it was unclear what had carried the carcass off, but suspected that a domestic dog might be the culprit. Jacobsen discussed livestock husbandry with the landowner and provided advice on securing the remaining goats in a wildlife-proof structure and recommended deploying fox lights. The landowner also indicated that he was looking into getting a livestock guardian dog to protect his 30 goats.

**Injured Deer:** A landowner in Skamania County had been observing a young deer limping around her property all summer and recently contacted WDFW to report it. The landowner believed that the deer had something wrapped around its leg. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen followed up with the landowner to assess the situation. WDFW will monitor the deer to determine if the injury is human-caused and if it warrants an attempt to immobilize the deer and remove the obstacle on the deer's leg.

**Elk Crossings:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen delivered a handful of posts for the installation of wildlife-friendly fence crossings to two Klickitat County ranchers. These ranchers have been experiencing extensive elk damage to their fences. The elk regularly plow through these fences during their daily travels. One landowner has a seven-strand barbed-wire fence that the elk continue to break. These broken fences often allow the landowners' cattle to escape. Jacobsen hopes these crossings will minimize damage to the rest of the landowners' fences and will also help prevent elk from becoming entangled in the barbed wire.



*Example of an elk-friendly crossing that Conflict Specialist Jacobsen plans for the landowners to install*

From: Paige, C. 2012. "A Landowner's Guide to Fences and Wildlife"

**Elk Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey worked with landowners throughout the district as elk conflicts start to increase heading into the winter months. Hazing supplies and landowner permits were issued.

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

**Balloon Challenge:** At the onset of 2020, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Biologist Wickhem initiated a year-long challenge to see who could collect the most derelict mylar/latex balloons while out and about during their daily travels for work and on their own personal time as well. By the end of 2020, Jacobsen had accumulated a whopping total of 39 balloons to Biologist Wickhem's 26 balloons. Jacobsen scored with a three-fer balloon grab on December 29 while travelling to deal with a deer damage issue in eastern Klickitat County. Because these helium-filled balloons can travel far and wide when released, Jacobsen and Biologist Wickhem often found these derelict balloons in remote locations around Region 5. In addition to being unsightly, these environmental pollutants provide a health hazard to wildlife – particularly to birds and to marine animals when the balloons find their way to the ocean. Jacobsen and Biologist Wickhem encourage other members of the public to start their own balloon challenges in 2021!





*Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen's three-balloon snatch at the end of the 2020 challenge season*



*Biologist Wickhem with one of her balloon snatches*

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

Nothing for this installment.

## 6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

## 7) Other

**Cowlitz Wildlife Area:** The Cowlitz Wildlife Area is under new management! As the new Wildlife Area Manager, Richard Vanderlip has completed the hiring and onboarding of his team with Nicholas Steveson as the Assistant Wildlife Area Manager and Jerika Wallace as the new Natural Resource Technician – welcome aboard!



*Meet Nicholas Steveson*

Nick is the Assistant Manager of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area in Region 5. Nick started with WDFW in October of 2014 as a career seasonal employee. In his current position, Nick assists with the maintenance of and the assessment, design, and implementation of wildlife habitat improvements on over 14,000 acres of WDFW managed lands. Nick was born and raised in Western Washington and attended Washington State University where he received his bachelor's degree in Natural Resource Sciences and a minor in Rangeland Ecology and Management. Nick has had the joy of working at multiple Wildlife Areas throughout the state and with numerous employees while pursuing his career with the agency. When not at work, Nick spends most of his free time outdoors hunting and hiking.



*Meet Jerika Wallace*

Jerika is the Cowlitz Wildlife Area's new Natural Resource Technician 2. Jerika was born and raised just outside Oregon City, OR and while growing up, spent a lot of time outdoors hunting, camping, fishing, and even working on a farm for a while. Jerika credits these early experiences for creating her passion for wildlife, the environment, and generally just being outdoors. Jerika studied Fisheries and Wildlife Science at Oregon State University where she earned her Bachelor of Science Degree. Through college Jerika volunteered with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife working as a seasonal field technician on multiple fish projects with an eye for ultimately working for a fish and wildlife agency. Following an environmental education internship, Jerika's love for teaching detoured her towards education and interpretation. This and her love for the outdoors, led her to teach outdoor school in California and Alabama. After a while, she returned to Oregon and worked as an Interpretive Park Ranger on the Oregon coast leading lighthouse tours, talking to visitors about tide pools and whales, assisting with education programs, and performing park maintenance. Three years later, Jerika circled back around to her original desire to work with fish and wildlife and accepted the Cowlitz Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician 2 position. When not at work, Jerika loves to hang out with her cat, Cojack, bake, be crafty, read, point her camera at anything that catches her eye, and drink a lot of tea. When the weather is nice, she loves to hike with friends, kayak calm waters, and go camping.



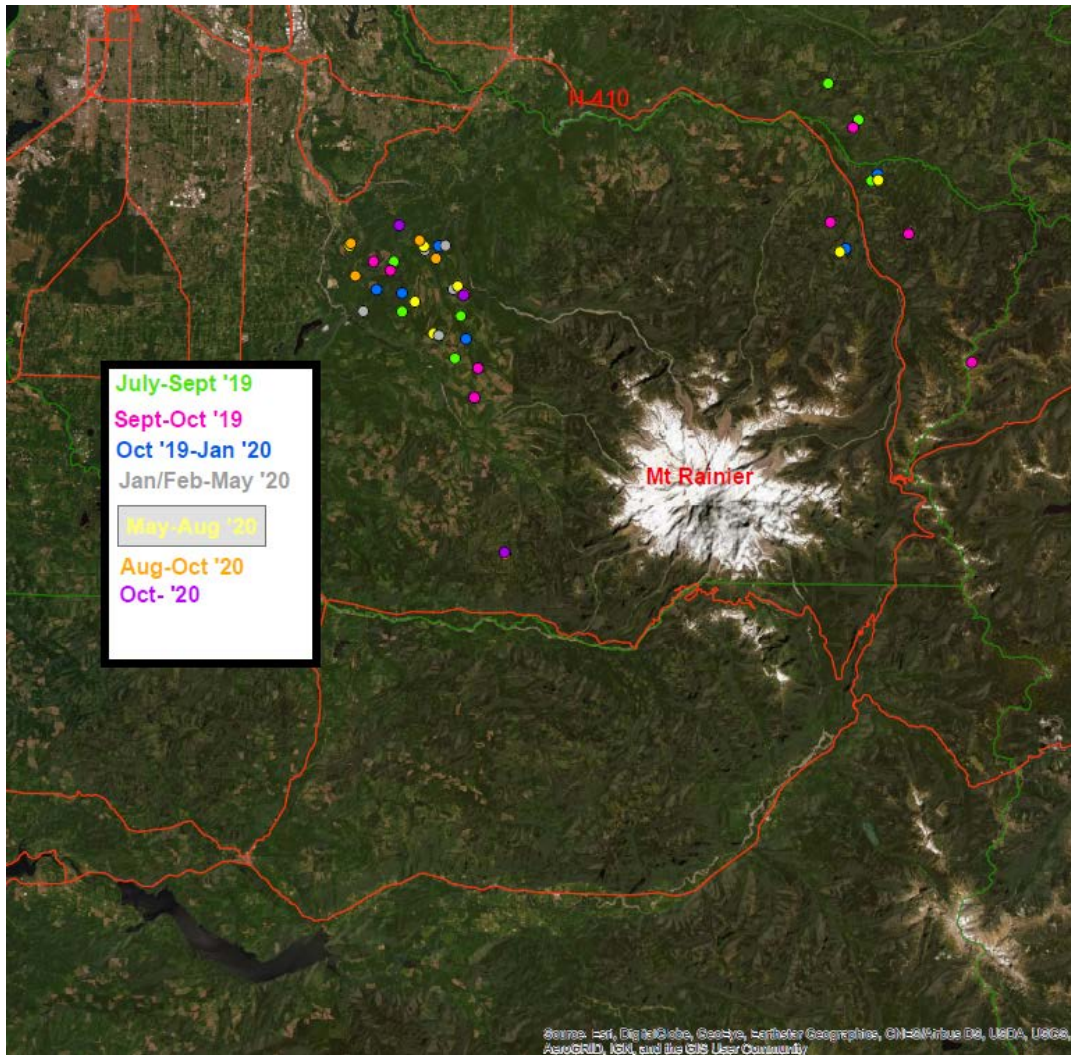
**Shillapoo Wildlife Area:** Please welcome Zach Breitenstein as the new Assistant Manager for the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. Zach grew up in southeast Missouri where he became interested in conservation early in life helping his family restore their 110-acre property back to a native forest. Even before becoming the Assistant Manager, Zach worked at protecting and enhancing habitat on Shillapoo by controlling illegally set wildfires and helping conduct prescribed burning on the Wildlife Area during his employment the past two years with Washington Department of Natural Resources as a Forest Health Specialist and Engine Boss. Prior to moving to Washington, he worked several years in Texas for The Nature Conservancy helping to manage nine natural preserves. His activities on the preserves included forest management, weed control, habitat restoration, maintenance of equipment and facilities, vegetation monitoring, wildlife surveys, and conducting prescribed burning on over 20,000 acres. He has also worked in Colorado as a soil conservationist for the USDA, a forestry aid in Idaho for the USFS, and helped restore prairie habitats in Minnesota. Prior to his work in the field of conservation, Zach served as combat medic in the US Army for over four years, including two and a half years in Afghanistan, where he received a Bronze Star. He also served three years in the Missouri National Guard as a medic. When not working or remodeling his house, Zach enjoys spending time outdoors hiking, biking, and skiing.

## **REGION 6**

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

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

**Wolf Monitoring:** WDFW Biologist Tirhi updated wolf camera monitoring and mapped locations of the six cameras District 11 has circulating on private industrial and public forestlands, on the east and west sides of the district where wolf observations have been reported by public and staff members.



***West Mount Rainier***

**Wolf Monitoring:** Biologists Tirhi (WDFW) and Mueller (NW Trek) spent a day snowshoeing to retrieve a remote wolf camera on commercial timberland just north of the Glacier View Wilderness in Pierce County. Elk and deer have migrated lower than the location of the camera which means wolf are unlikely. The camera will be redeployed to a location with higher probability of seeing wolves. A variety of tracks were seen throughout the day and the Mount Rainier sunset was spectacular.







**Oregon Spotted Frog:** Biologist Tirhi spent time planning and preparing orders for installment of vegetated coir mats at a spotted frog management site on Salmon Creek in Thurston County. Tirhi is considering purchasing coir (coconut fiber) mats that have been plugged (e.g., pre-vegetated) with native wetland plants conducive to spotted frog breeding from the Sustainability in Prison Project (<http://sustainabilityinprisons.org>). An alternative may be to follow the lead of the Whatcom County Amphibian Monitoring Program (<https://whatfrogs.wordpress.com/>) who hand cut and remove invasive reed canary grass thatch, roll out and stake BioD coir rolls (RoLanka Int) and then plug with native wetland plants from a local nursery (Fourth Corner). The Whatcom County Amphibian Monitoring Program (WCAMP) has had survival success for two years using this approach. Funding for the Thurston County project is generously provided through a grant from the ASRP Chehalis Basin Strategy (<https://chehalisbasinstrategy.com/asrp/>).

## 2020 EVM Installation

- Manually removed RCG
- Supplemented clay with organic material
- Planted Aug 22 - Sept 6 (time for plants to root-in before water levels rose)
- *Carex utriculata*, *C. sitchensis*, (*aquatilis dives*) *C. exsiccata*, *Eleocharis palustris*, *Juncus arcticus littoralis*, *J. supiniformis*

Aug 26, 2020



Sept 13, 2020



Sept 29, 2020




## Completed 5<sup>th</sup> pool (Pool E)

Used pruning saws to cut sections of RCG floating root mat for removal





Stephen Nyman's presentation:



OSF Habitat Restoration at the Samish River Preserve -  
Southeast Meadow: 2020 Highlights

Stephen Nyman, WCAMP

**2019 Emergent Vegetation Mat Performance**

- Survival from 2019 varied by mat (~25-74%).
- Plants that survived grew well.
- *Carex utriculata* and *Eleocharis palustris* spread vigorously by rhizomes, increasing coverage.
- *Carex sitchensis* coverage did not spread by rhizomes.
- No RCG from rhizomes.
- Some RCG seedlings in Aug-Sept (but easily removed).
- Mannagrass and spikerush seedlings on some mats (not removed).
- Additional planting (Aug 24) to fill gaps.

Apr. 1, 2020

Sept 13, 2020

**2) Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this installment.



### 3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education



*A mobility impaired hunter made good use of a damage prevention permit provided by a landowner experiencing damage to their crops*

### 4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

**Thurston County HCP:** Biologist Tirhi spent time reviewing the 2020 draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) in preparation for a WDFW-Thurston County overview meeting later in the week. This has been a five-year process. Tirhi is particularly interested in how comments sent for the 2016 draft were incorporated/resolved in the 2020 draft. More information can be found here: <https://www.thurstoncountywa.gov/planning/Pages/hcp.aspx>

**Key Peninsula-Gig Harbor-Islands (KGI) Watershed Council:** Biologist Tirhi attended the virtual December general meeting of the KGI council. Applicants that received project funding in 2020 from the council presented project summaries. Projects for 2021 were also discussed. This is the first council meeting Tirhi has attended and was primarily possible due to it being a virtual meeting.

### 5) Providing Education and Outreach

**PHD Dissertation:** Biologist Tirhi attended T. Ganz's University of Washington general exam for her dissertation *Ungulate responses to predators in complex landscapes of northern Washington*. This research is being done in partnership with WDFW as part of the larger Washington Predator-Prey Project.

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

**Bear Public Disclosure Request (PDR):** Biologist Tirhi completed a PDR from the public requesting data, calls, emails, and materials on bear management and harvest, including damage removals from 2018-2020. More on PDR requests can be found here:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/about/administration/public-records>

## 7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.