

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

July 16 to 31, 2022

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Monarch Returns: Following two years with only a handful of records of this species in Washington and looking like it would become extirpated, several Monarch sightings at past breeding sites have been received! District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra went to follow-up on some reports and collected this photo of a nectaring male Monarch on milkweed at the Windmill Wildlife Area Unit. The species' surveys still have frighteningly low winter counts for the Western Monarch population.



Monarch at Windmill Unit of Sunnyside Wildlife Area

White-nose Syndrome Bridge Sampling: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra collected guano from bridge sites he had placed collection tarps at last month. Two bats were seen, and small amounts of guano were collected at most tarps. This was a second collection to add sample for species identification and White-nose Syndrome (WNS) testing.



A small bat nestled into a gap in concrete underneath a bridge

Chronic Wasting Disease Response Plan Review: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra joined staff members and partners from around the state for a day in Ellensburg to workshop scenarios together related to the potential first detection of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Washington. This was only a test! CWD has not yet been detected in Washington, but the objective was to put the response plan to some mock testing. Overall, things were good with some suggestions for the plan made.

Waterfowl Brood Survey: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra conducted his annual brood survey in the Potholes Canal. Fewer broods were detected than in past years, but high water and weed growth could have hidden some broods. Data was submitted to the Statewide Waterfowl Specialist.

Dove Trapping and Banding: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra and Migratory Bird Technician Kleinhenz baited and trapped mourning doves in Franklin County for annual research on movements and harvest. Capture numbers are high this year due to increased trap effort, good local productivity, and delayed grain harvesting due to the cool spring.



Hatch-year dove released after banding

Monarch Breeding Confirmed at Windmill Unit: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra followed up on reports of caterpillars at a historic Monarch breeding site on the Wildlife Area. Sign of multiple caterpillars were located including one late-stage larva. A welcome sight after near-extinction of the Western Monarch a few years ago.



Monarch caterpillar foraging on milkweed hostplant

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Wenas Public Access and Recreational Opportunities Meeting: Regional Director Livingston, Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Hughes and Kittitas County Commission Wright toured the northern part of the Wenas Wildlife Area focused on Hanson Pond Road and Strande Road where the public has historically driven through Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and accessed WDFW ground. Commissioner Wright was interested in seeing the different recreational opportunities in the area and assess routes within the area. Hughes went over the

Manastash Ridge Trails management area and showed them the different forms of use throughout the area and directly to the south. The Durr Road Shooting Area was also visited. Hughes went over the proposed site plan that will be developed once we get enough funding to implement the project. Commissioner Wright was supportive of the project and was interested in seeing if the County could help if possible. Hughes is working on an applying for a Firearms and Archery Range Recreation grant with the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to implement this project in the near future.

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Rattlesnake Hills Elk Summer Bull Permits: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored hunting activity on damage prevention permits (DPP) in elk area 3721. These permits expired on June 30th with 19 bull elk harvested. Hunting activity during this unique opportunity provided benefits in pressuring elk away from valuable crops.

Rattlesnake Hills Elk Damage Prevention Permits: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand prepared and delivered DPP's to landowners on Rattlesnake Mountain to address elk damage issues along Hanford's southern boundary.

Ice Harbor Deer: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand responded to a deer damage complaint in Franklin County near Ice Harbor Dam. Several new blocks of fruit trees (mainly apple and cherry) have had significant browse damage by deer. The landowner is in the process of erecting permanent fencing and has exhausted several non-lethal hazing strategies. A new Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement was developed, and damage permits issued to address the issue.



Orchard Deer Damage

Basin City Deer Damage: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received a new deer damage complaint from an orchard in the Basin City area. Deer have been browsing on several newly planted cherry trees. Fortunately, the newly planted block is small, under five acres, so two critter getter acoustic and visual deterrent devices were loaned to the landowner for hazing purposes. The landowner is also trying some new chemical deterrent sprays provided by a chemical distributorship he works with.

Prosser Nuisance Fox: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand responded to a call concerning a family of foxes just outside the City of Prosser that have been raiding and killing chickens on the neighbor's property. Information on preventative measures and contact with a Wildlife Control Operator was provided as well as reference to the "Living with Wildlife" WDFW resource publication.

Rattlesnake Hills Elk Damage Permits and Hazing: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored hunting activity on damage prevention permits (DPP) in Elk Area 3721. Only one elk had been harvested during this period of the damage permit season. Extreme heat and potential fire danger issues have limited hunting opportunities. District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to spend time this past week hazing elk near the top of Rattlesnake Mountain. Animals are continuing to leave the Hanford site to forage in winter wheat crops on the southern exposure of Rattlesnake Mountain mostly during nocturnal hours. Fox lights were checked and are in working order, although several elk were observed walking within three feet of a device undeterred. Hand continued to spend time this past week hazing elk near the top of Rattlesnake Mountain. Increasing numbers of animals are leaving the Hanford site to forage in winter wheat crops on the southern exposure of Rattlesnake Mountain.

Hanford Elk Damage Claim Report: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand completed a new report required for crop damage claims by Olympia HQ. This claim involved elk damage to numerous wheat fields along the southern border of the Hanford National Monument and has been in dispute since last fall.



Night-Time Hazing Elk in Winter Wheat

Kahlotus Wheat Harvest: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored wheat harvest at several fields near Kahlotus that experienced deer damage from last winter. Wheat harvest is in full swing with above average yields in most fields.

Kennewick Sheep Depredation: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand and Detachment 19 Officer Slusher responded to a sheep kill at a residence in Kennewick. An investigation was conducted but no evidence of a cougar or other wild animal could be determined. The dead sheep was disposed of prior to our arrival to the site, so we could not decide on what killed the sheep.

Silver Dollar Damage Permits: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand prepared and delivered Damage Prevention Permits to a landowner in the Silver Dollar area to address elk damage in his alfalfa hay crop.

Critter Getter's: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand loaned two "Critter Getter" acoustic deterrents to a Franklin County orchardist a few weeks ago and received the returned devices. The landowner will be purchasing some of his own after seeing the initial results from these deterrents. The deer damage areas were small which likely helped the deterrent work.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Wenas Umptanum and Observatory Thinning Field Visit: A field visit for external partners was done for additional input on the Umptanum and Observatory thinning. Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Hughes and Forester Nequette went over each site with WDFW habitat biologists and Yakama Nation. Everyone is on board with moving the project forward. The proposed prescription for each site, stream crossings and a log barb placement were discussed. Hughes and Nequette expanded the proposed thinning area to include about 100 more acres of land. The proposed thinning will take place a year from now.

Wenas McCabe Restoration Fields: About 45 acres at McCabe was mowed for controlling cereal rye. The site was reseeded in fall of 2021 with a native upland grass mix. The grasses are coming in well throughout the area. Aerial spraying has occurred twice this season for controlling Russian thistle and other broadleaves. The plan for this site will be to continue to aerial spraying and mowing through spring and summer of 2023. After this, the site will be reassessed and potentially ready to be left alone as natives continue to develop.

Stemilt Basin Prescribed Fire: Colockum Wildlife Area staff members participated in a tour with the steering committee of the Washington Prescribed Fire Council. The group toured WDFW, Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR), U.S. Forest Service and Chelan County properties in the Stemilt and Squilchuck Basins and discussed ways to accomplish prescribed fire treatments across land ownerships.



WA. Prescribed Fire Council tours the Stemilt and Squilchuck Basins

Hutchins Thinning Weed Photo Point: Assistant Manager Winegeart completed photo monitoring points in the Hutchins Forest thinning and prescribed fire site. The site was thinned in 2018 and burned in 2019. With funds from a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) grant, Canada and Bull thistle were targeted for weed control with great success.



Hutchins photo point site 3, June 2020 with the patch of Canada thistle



Hutchins photo point site 3, June 2022 with native grasses have replaced Canada thistle

Quilomene Restoration Project: Assistant Manager Winegeart toured the Quilomene restoration site with a Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) project coordinator as part of the close out process for the grant which supplied funds for the restoration activities. Over the course of a couple years, several gates were installed, miles of roads were abandoned, and disturbed ground was seeded in order to improve wildlife habitat.

Taneum Creek Wood Replenishment Project: Wildlife Area Manager Bates and Natural Resource Specialist Nass attended the Taneum Creek Wood Replenishment RCO grant close-out tour led by Kelly Clayton with the Yakama Tribe.



Taneum Creek Wood Replenishment Project

Oak Creek Pre-Commercial Thinning Rock Creek Unit: Contract thinning work continues in the Milk Creek drainage. This project aims at reducing densities closer to those of the historic range while stimulating faster growth into larger diameter trees which are more resilient to wildfire. In addition, the thinning provides an opportunity to shift species composition towards those that are more resilient and adapted to wildfire and which make longer-lasting trees and snags on the landscape to promote better wildlife habitat in the long run.

Oak Creek Weed Control: Oak Creek Staff members wrapped up planned weed control activities for the season by controlling Canada thistle in a high elevation meadow in the Rock Creek Unit. Additionally, signage was erected to control off road vehicle traffic in the area.



Signage Rock Creek Unit

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area - Weed Control: Assistant Manager Winegeart treated weeds at the L.T. Murray Unit Ragland restoration site. The site will remain fallow into the fall of 2023 when it will be planted with native grasses followed by forbs and trees.



Early morning herbicide application at the Ragland restoration site

Whiskey Dick Weed Control: Assistant Manager Winegeart worked with Natural Resource Technician Blore to treat Russian thistle at the Whiskey Dick Unit Corrals restoration site. Much of the native grass which was seed dispersed last fall has established successfully. Russian thistle is an aggressive early successional plant that typically declines as plant succession proceeds but with diligent effort, the successional process can be accelerated greatly.



Weed control at the Corrals restoration site

Providing Education and Outreach

Outdoor Hunting Show: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand responded to a request of information from a national hunting television show who purchased a Landowner Hunting Permit through an auction and was seeking advice on hunt timing and elk herd dynamics at Hanford.

Oak Creek WLA Green Dot Reader Boards: Oak Creek staff members completed installation of remaining green dot reader boards this period.



Green Dot Road Reader Board Oak Creek Unit

Oak Creek Prescribed Fire: Oak Creek staff, Burn Team personnel, and DNR staff members met in the field to discuss collaboration on an across ownership prescribed burn. Additionally, the group met in an office setting to go over fuel loading and behavioral models in order to add the additional DNR acres to an existing WDFW burn plan.

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Statewide Private Lands Program Workshop: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett, District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra, and Wildlife Program Regional Manager Huffman attended a workshop for private lands program staff members. It was a productive in-person workshop that ended with a tour showcasing two Region 3 habitat projects with partners and private landowners.

Other

Managers Quarterly Meeting: The L.T. Murray Wildlife Area staff members attended the managers quarterly meeting which was hosted by the Oak Creek Wildlife Area. Oak Creek Staff members discussed new acquisitions at Bear Canyon and in the Cowiche drainage totaling over 4,000 acres. A recently completed range fence project, and demolition and removal of existing structures was also discussed.



Region 3 Managers Quarterly meeting on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area. School bus and tower located on a Cowiche acquisition requiring removal

The L.T. Murray WAAC: Assistant Manager Winegeart contacted people that are associated with the Roughed Grouse Society, Trout Unlimited, and the Pacific Northwest Four Wheel Drive Association, looking for individuals that may be interested in sitting on the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC).

Wenas Facility Maintenance: Assistant Manager Taylor, Technician Stoltenow and Technician Rodriguez removed an old pump house on the Department of Fish and Wildlife grounds. This was replaced by a new pump house built by the team throughout the week. The old one was uninsulated and had been pushed off its foundation from a tree growing into it. The tree was removed to properly build the new pump house at the Mellotte site.



New pump house built by Wenas team

L.T. Murray Drone Training: Assistant Manager Winegeart attended a drone training session in Joe Watt Canyon with employees from the habitat program. The drone flew well in 15 mph winds but had trouble going directly against the wind. This could be a useful tool for locating a break in stock or elk fence when the break needs to be fixed soon.



Practicing with the habitat program's new drone

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Bat Captures: Biologists Moore, Waddell, and Licence wrapped up assisting Wildlife Conservation Society Canada (WCSC) with bat conservation work at maternity colonies at Baker Lake Lodge, in Darrington and Sultan, Washington. District biologists have been working with WCSC Biologist to complete four rounds of bat captures (includes application of PITT tags), conduct maternity roost exit counts, reconnaissance of newly reported colonies received from the public, and appropriately implement WNS treatments (e.g., probiotic cocktail, vaccine) to evaluate their efficacy.



Wildlife Biologist Licence handles a Yuma myotis to collect measurements and apply unique identification markings

Wildlife Mortalities: Biologist Licence responded to multiple reports of suspicious wildlife mortalities in Snohomish and Island counties. This included a barred owl in Granite Falls, a black-tailed deer fawn in Freeland, and multiple American White Pelicans in Langley. The barred owl and pelicans were swabbed for Highly Pathogenic Avian influenza (HPAI). The results from the owl and pelican submission returned negative for HPAI. A full necropsy will be completed on the pelican to further investigate the mortality event. The fawn was suspect for Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease (AHD) and thankfully results from samples collected returned negative for the disease.

Band-tailed Pigeon Surveys: District Biologists Waddell and Moore conducted annual surveys for band-tailed pigeons in Whatcom County. Biologists conduct these surveys statewide each July to monitor the number of pigeons visiting and leaving mineral sites between sunrise and noon. The surveys, conducted in Whatcom County and elsewhere in the state, serve as the

management index for population status of band-tailed pigeons, which inform harvest regulations for this game bird.



A band-tailed pigeon survey site in Whatcom County

Bat Acoustic Monitoring: District Wildlife Biologists Waddell and Moore conducted acoustic monitoring for bats at four sites in Skagit County. Similarly, District Biologists Anderson and Smith conducted acoustic efforts in King County. This effort was part of the North American Bat Monitoring Program, a multi-national, multi-agency coordinated bat monitoring program across North America. This collaborative bat monitoring program is made up of an extensive community of partners across the continent who use standardized protocols to gather data that allows assessment of population status and trends, informs responses to stressors, and sustains viable populations. A detector is left overnight at each site and records the acoustic signatures of each bat species within proximity to the detector.



A bat acoustic detector is positioned next to a stream in Skagit County

Bat Maternity Site Monitoring: District Biologists Anderson and Smith collaborated with property owners and managers to survey three maternity colonies in King County. Unfortunately, all three colonies are showing drastic drops in occupancy this season. Anecdotally, the drop in numbers range from approximately 4% of past colony numbers to 68% of past occupancy, given the site. The colonies may have moved but it is a bit odd that all three, in entirely separate areas, show the same sudden drop in occupancy. This follows two to three pupping seasons of bats being reported flying during the day, for extended periods, over multiple days, at same sites. All with no human disturbance or colony alterations known to have occurred.



A maternity site in District 12

Glacial Streamfly Surveys: District Biologist Anderson teamed with Diversity Division Listing and Recovery Biologist Stinson to survey meltwater areas near the Chimney Rock Glacier in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Samples of streamflies (stoneflies, mayflies, caddisflies) were taken with hopeful targets of various Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SCGN). See the Washington State Wildlife Action Plan ([SWAP](#)) for further information.



Biologist Stinson at target site finding the flies



Chimney Rock (south face) and glacier with target meltwaters



*What possibly may be a Pacific folding door spider (*Antrodiaetus pacificus*) and likely a “great gig” or “monster haglid” – a species of humpback grig (*Cyphoderris monstrosa*) – related to crickets.*

Final streaked horned lark surveys – Boeing Field International: Biologist Anderson conducted the third and final survey for the streaked horned lark, a SCGN species. [Streaked horned larks](#) are listed as federally threatened and state endangered. None were observed this

entire season. However, from a wildlife watching standpoint, Boeing Field International (BFI) is dripping with savannah sparrows if anyone ever wants to get great looks. The public park on the north end of BFI is nice for public observing from the appropriate side of a fence.



A savanna sparrow is vigilant on a perch due to the bipedal wildlife biologist walking a straight line through its habitat; found in between the runway areas and tarmac at BFI

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Rabbits: Biologist Anderson and Veterinarian Haman worked with Puget Sound Region Communications Manager Gunnell to provide for interviews with Seattle Times. The interview discussed the ongoing but anecdotal “bunny boom” in Western Washington – in particular urban and suburban areas such as Seattle and surroundings. One can find the interview in the [Seattle Times](#)

Conserving Natural Landscapes

North Leque Island Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, the Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP), and Tiger Construction initiated construction of the project. Tiger began mobilizing equipment and set up surveying during the last week of July and will break ground in August. The project involves removing 0.5 miles of dike to improve access into the site for juvenile salmon and other aquatic species.



The North Leque project involves removing dike (shown in red) to improve access into marsh habitat for juvenile salmon - Photo by Desmul



Habitat Biologist Lindsey Desmul captured aerial footage of the Leque Island restoration area for use by Projects Coordinator Brokaw in presentations and communications materials

Providing Education and Outreach

Native wildlife and plants artwork assistance: Biologist Anderson worked with artist Susan Hass and librarians at a local Kent library to provide for forthcoming artwork on corner electrical boxes down the street from the library near Clark Lake Park.



*Native wildlife and plant artwork for municipal art and wildlife outreach efforts in Kent –
artwork by Susan Hass*