



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
April 21, 2017

EAST REGION

Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

David B. Marshall Award

Russ Morgan, Oregon's Wolf Program Coordinator, received this year's David B. Marshall Award presented by Oregon Chapter of the Wildlife Society. David Marshall was a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist and after retirement worked as a consultant to ODFW on developing the first Oregon non-game plan. He was a founding member of the Oregon Chapter. The David B. Marshall Award recognizes an individual for their outstanding contributions to wildlife research, management, education, law enforcement, and/or public service in Oregon.



Russ is a graduate of Oregon State University as well and had held a number of positions with the department before becoming the Wolf Program Coordinator. In addition to his work on the Oregon Wolf Plan Russ worked on improving habitat and hunter access in the Columbia Basin while working in the Heppner Wildlife District. He was instrumental in the creation of the Boardman Conservation Area, a 22,600-acre conservation easement to protect intact Columbia Basin shrub-steppe habitat for a number of species including the Oregon Endangered Species Act listed Washington Ground Squirrel.

Russ has been the Wolf Program Coordinator for 11 years. Directing the management of wolves is more a social than biological task. Wolves elicit diverse opinions and emotions that are, often, difficult to reconcile. Russ has seen Oregon through wolf's recolonization under the Wolf Plan, ODFW's initial response to depredation and the associated conflict, establishing our current evidence based incident investigation process and staff training, two reviews of the Plan and the recent delisting of wolves under the state Endangered Species Act.

Congratulations Russ, on this is well-deserved recognition!

Deschutes River Redband Trout Status

Mid-Columbia Fish District staff recently completed the fourth consecutive year of monitoring to evaluate the relative health of the lower Deschutes River redband trout population. The work conducted was in response to concern that change in water temperature and discharge imposed when Portland General Electric's Pelton-Round Butte Hydroelectric Project's relicensed might adversely affect this popular resource.

As part of this effort in four representative reaches of the lower Deschutes, redband trout are captured and measured with boat-based electrofishing. Sampling examines trout growth rates, age distribution, body condition, and diet. This work replicates surveys done in the 1980s and can be used to suggest how the lower Deschutes trout population is changing over time.

This year's survey suggests Deschutes redband trout are doing very well. There is no indication the population has been adversely effected by the changes in water management under the new Pelton-Round Butte Hydroelectric Project license. Deschutes redband a have very high growth rates from one to three years of age; similar to, if not slightly better than, rates of growth observed in earlier surveys. Population age distribution has remained consistent and now is similar to that seen in the last four years.



Redband trout caught during this year's monitoring were robust in form. They exhibit a high condition factor compared to other trout populations and are very similar to the condition of Deschutes trout sampled historically.

Food habits of Lower Deschutes redband trout appear similar to historical observations. Immature aquatic insects, especially stonefly nymphs, made up the largest part of their diet.

Deschutes redband appeared to be in good abundance based on how easily they were to catch during this year's monitoring. The 2017 sampling experienced the highest catch-per-unit of effort of the last four.

WEST REGION

Steve Marx, Region Manager

Legacy Oak Restoration in southern Oregon

In Central Point, 30 acres of encroaching trees and shrubs around legacy oak trees recently were thinned as part of the 1,200-acre Table Rocks Oak Climate Adaptation Project. The project is a landscape scale collaborative effort to restore declining oak ecosystems and increase their resilience to climate change in the Rogue Basin.

Oak ecosystems exist only in a small percentage of historic distribution, putting plants and animals that depend on them at risk. Historically, fires occurred in this area every few years, regenerating both oaks and browse shrubs for deer. Once fires were suppressed, brush and scrub overtook the landscape.

This project will reduce threats to legacy oaks such as large wildfires, protect oak habitat and oak-associated wildlife, and increase potential for oak ecosystems to withstand likely effects of climate change. Oak woodlands are an Oregon Conservation Strategy Habitat and Ceanothus shrublands are Specialized and Local Habitats in the Strategy.

Lomakatsi Restoration Project (a non-profit), The Nature Conservancy, USFWS, BLM, NRCS, Klamath Bird Observatory, and ODFW partnered on this project, which lies in the North Medford Conservation

Opportunity Area. Putting the Oregon Conservation Strategy to work on the ground is the result of projects like this one.



Corps Hatchery Mitigation Update

Last fall, the Corps advised ODFW that they would no longer be implementing mitigation hatcheries under a Cooperative Agreement with ODFW for 65 years and instead would put all or some of the program elements out for competitive bid.

In the past couple of months, ODFW has responded to the following market surveys from the Corps regarding qualifications and availability to bid. These include Willamette Valley trout production, fish marking and tagging, fish health, fish monitoring of hatchery programs, and Willamette monitoring and evaluation services. At this point, no solicitations to bid have been issued.

The Corps has issued an intent to sole source (not require a competitive bid) for Bonneville, Marion Forks, McKenzie, South Santiam, and Willamette hatcheries. Last Friday, ODFW received notice of the Corps intent to sole source Cole Rivers Hatchery.

The Corps notified ODFW that they would no longer allow the use of Leaburg Hatchery for trout production. ODFW will bid on the trout production using facilities other than Leaburg. Staff is working with the Corps on next steps for Leaburg Hatchery including a transition plan for fish production on station for 2018 release. Leaburg Hatchery is a hatchery wholly owned by the Corps. ODFW will submit a bid for the trout production once the request for proposal is released.

This remains a fluid process and the agency is continuing to coordinate with the Corps to ensure details of the contracts reflect the complexity and customer service needs of the programs.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Roger Fuhrman, Administrator

Spring means fishing in Oregon

Families will have many opportunities to fish together in the coming months. There will be at least one Family Fishing Event every weekend in April and May. There are nearly 20 events planned throughout the state to give aspiring anglers the opportunity to try the sport. To increase the chances of catching a fish, ODFW will stock the locations with hundreds of rainbow trout, including “pounders” just prior to the events. ODFW staff and volunteers will also be on site with rods, reels, tackle, bait, and instruction as needed. “We want to make it as fun and easy as possible by providing everything an inexperienced angler needs to be successful – lots of hard-fighting fish, plenty of equipment and bait, and experienced instructors who can demonstrate effective fishing techniques,” says Jeff Fulop, ODFW biologist in charge of the April 1 Family Fishing Event at Canby Pond. A complete list of Family Fishing Events is on the ODFW website.

As a lead in to the Family Fishing Events, ODFW held a Learn to Fish for Trout Workshop March 25th at EE Wilson. The event, geared towards families, focused on the basic techniques needed to fish for trout in lakes, rivers, and streams throughout Oregon. Participants learned how to fish with bobbers, lures, and flies and where to find fish in a water body and other skills, like knots, cleaning the catch, and how to read the regulations.

Family Fishing Event or workshop participants over 12 years old need a license; a \$10 youth license for 12-17 year olds or an adult license. A license is not needed for two weekends this spring; April 22-23 and June 3-4 are Free Fishing Weekends. Residents and non-residents of all ages can fish, crab, or clam without a license. There will be two additional Free Fishing Weekends over the Thanksgiving and New Year holidays in 2017 (November 25-26 and December 31.)

Archery in the Schools Program

The National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) is off to a strong start with ODFW. In August, Miranda Huerta started as ODFW’s Archery Education Coordinator. A volunteer, Greg Rodgers from Grants Pass., previously managed the program in Oregon. NASP introduces students to international style target archery as part of the physical education curriculum. Although NASP focuses on target archery, it exposes students to an activity they can participate in their entire life. In addition, if they wish, they can continue on to bowhunting. Thirty Oregon schools are currently participating in NASP and instructors will be certified at five additional schools in April.

On March 11th, 73 archers from seven different schools participated in the Oregon NASP State Championships in Grants Pass; Bend High School won the tournament. In addition, for the first time in Oregon, an elementary school - Ione Community Charter School – participated in the NASP State Tournament.



2017 Oregon NASP Champions – Bend High School

MARINE RESOURCES PROGRAM

Caren Braby, Marine Resources Program Manager

Unusual Species Observed

Recently, several unusual creatures have washed up on Oregon’s beaches, and they are far from home. At the beginning of March, thousands of pelagic red crab (*Pleuroncodes planipes*), native to southern California and Mexico, washed up in Newport and along the southern Oregon Coast. Newport is the farthest north this species has ever been seen. This is a species rarely seen north of San Francisco.





These crabs were likely transported north thanks to strong offshore currents and a series of blustery winter storms, combined with remnants of last year's El Nino. These small, red crabs look like small lobsters or crayfish, and are often referred to as squat lobsters or tuna crab since they are sometimes found in the bellies of tuna.

About a week after the crabs littered the beaches, a Pacific Snake Eel (*Ophichthus triserialis*) washed up near Bandon, Oregon. This fish is a southern species, native to Mexico and California, and is the second one ever recorded in Oregon waters (one also washed up in January off of Lincoln City – which is the farthest north this species has ever been recorded). Prior to this year's sightings, the mouth of the Klamath River in 1975 was the farthest north this species was reported.

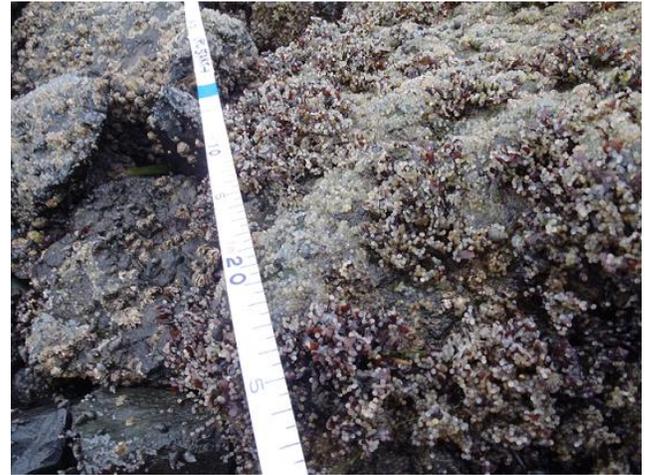
The eel in the photo is approximately 3 feet long.



Pacific Snake-eel *Ophichthus triserialis* - Marine subtropical eel

Yaquina Bay Roe Herring

Pacific Herring spawn in Yaquina Bay from January through April. Herring deposit eggs that stick to rock, eelgrass, and other solid substrates in intertidal areas with egg densities of up to 2,000+ per square inch.



A fishery for herring in Yaquina Bay began in the late 1970's, with the roe being the desirable product. A quota is set at 20% of the biomass of herring estimated to be in Yaquina Bay. There was no fishery between 2003 and 2017 because the estimated biomass was too low to support a commercially viable fishery.

Historically, staff has made biomass estimates by sampling herring eggs in the field and calculating the spawning biomass it would take to produce the estimated total eggs, then setting the following year's fishery quota based on that number. MRP has developed an acoustic survey for herring, using an echo sounder to produce near-real-time estimates of herring biomass in the bay. While staff is still refining the approach, the acoustic method clearly produces a much more current and accurate biomass estimate. However, it is extremely effort- and time-intensive.

Preliminary results from acoustic surveys conducted between January and March of 2017 suggested that there were approximately 4.4 million pounds of herring in the bay at the peak. Herring enter the bay, spawn, and leave over a short period, sometimes multiple times several weeks apart. A commercial roe herring fishery occurred in Yaquina Bay in 2017, harvesting just over 200,000 pounds of fish, or approximately 5% of the estimated biomass. Observations of offloads showed no bycatch and uniformly sized fish.

Due to success with acoustic surveys in Yaquina Bay for herring, MRP researchers are now working on developing acoustic methods for surveying some species of nearshore rockfish.

OREGON STATE POLICE

Captain Jeff Samuels, Fish & Wildlife Division

Saturation Patrol of Phillip Schneider Wildlife Area

Fish & Wildlife Troopers from the Pendleton and John Day offices participated in a two-day saturation of the Phillip Schneider and Bridge Creek Wildlife Areas. A Fish & Wildlife Trooper from the Burns office and a BLM Ranger from the John Day area also assisted. An OSP Fish & Wildlife airplane flew both days during the saturation. No subjects were contacted inside the wildlife areas but one individual was found on a closed road just outside the Phillip Schneider Wildlife Area and was cited accordingly. Numerous people were observed in the areas around the wildlife area shed hunting with ATVs or on foot.

Poacher of Blacktail buck deer caught

Fish & Wildlife Troopers from the Albany office assisted by Fish & Wildlife Troopers from the Roseburg office on a warrant service at a residence in Winston, Oregon. The search warrant stemmed from an investigation, which indicated trophy class blacktail bucks were taken and possessed unlawfully in 2014, 2015, and 2016 by a male suspect who had been hunting without licenses and tags. Three skulls with antlers, including a 4x6 buck, 4x4 buck, and a 4x5 buck, and a centerfire rifle were seized pursuant to the warrant and the suspect provided a full confession. Criminal citations were issued in lieu of custody for Take/Possession Buck Deer (x3).



Unlawful Take of Wild Steelhead

Fish & Wildlife Troopers contacted two subjects near a parked vehicle on SE Eagle Fern Rd. near Eagle Creek. The Troopers suspected there was a fish in the trunk of the vehicle. The subjects voluntarily opened the trunk and revealed a wild steelhead that was still alive. The Troopers investigation found that one of the subjects had just caught the wild steelhead in a closed area of Eagle Creek. The subject was cited for Unlawful Take/Possession of Non-Adipose Fin Clipped Steelhead. The wild steelhead was seized and donated to charity.



CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Andrea Hanson, Oregon Conservation Strategy Coordinator

The Conservation Program stepped up its social media outreach with the launch of a new twitter account and changes to the former Wildlife Viewing Facebook page. The program's goal is to create a balanced and wide-ranging audience that embodies Oregon's diversity, to encompass urban dwellers and rural folks who enjoy the great outdoors. Our audience for these social platforms should reflect the many and varied interests of Oregonians. We are strategically growing this audience by targeting people who have identified as wildlife photographers, outdoor recreationalists, hikers, campers, and regional explorers, among others.

Working with the Information and Education Division (I&E), staff launched the new Twitter account @ODFWConserve in May 2016. This account is reaching a new and diverse audience who is learning about conservation issues in Oregon, the Oregon Conservation Strategy and Nearshore Strategy, and species of conservation concern, including wildlife, fish, invertebrates, and plants. @ODFWConserve also engages in broader conservation topics nationally and globally, such as climate change, land use changes, and state-of-the-art research. The most popular Tweets included stories on turtle conservation actions, Trumpeter Swan banding, creating fish habitat, and estuarine habitats.

Some interesting statistics on the new Twitter account include:

- 688 followers
- 60% female (audience demographics)
- 126,041 organic impressions (the number of people we have reached)
- 3,636 engagements (the number of times people interacted with one of our Tweets by liking, clicking on it, or re-Tweeting it)
- 253 link clicks (the number of times people clicked on a link that we Tweeted)

The ODFW Wildlife Viewing Facebook Page was converted to the ODFW Conservation Facebook Page (@ODFWConservation) to highlight conservation and research efforts, and educate followers about Oregon's native species, viewing opportunities, and ways they can help. The conservation Facebook page had 6,531 followers in October 2015, and grew swiftly to over 16,000 followers by early 2017.

Some interesting statistics on the revised conservation Facebook account include:

- >16,000 followers
- 60% female (audience demographics)
- 35-44 year old women (core followers)
- 1,652,674 impressions (number of times a post from our page is displayed)
- 20,015 engagements (number of actions people take involving our posts)
- 4,690 link clicks (number of time people clicked on a link in our post)
- 16,263 likes
- 115,000 video views

The Conservation Program would like to thank I&E staff for all of their help developing and supporting the conservation social media platforms.



(Social Media logo)

**END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR
April 21, 2017**