



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, December 12, 2008

NORTHEAST REGION

Craig Ely, Regional Manager

Fall Hunting Seasons

Deer and elk seasons in Northeast Region are wrapping up this month with a few damage hunts remaining. Deer hunters had below average success opening weekend. Deer were scattered throughout summer and winter ranges due to the unusually pleasant weather early in the season. Weather conditions offered a variety of hunting from short sleeve warm weather early to three to four inches of new snow in the higher elevations the last few days. During a 12 day deer season the majority of the hunters are gone by the fifth day of the season even though the last week can hold some of the best opportunities. Back country hunters tend to hunt later in the season hoping for early snow to increase buck vulnerability. Biologists believe the high cost of fuel at that time kept some people at home.



Fall bull hunts also had below average hunter success. After the 2007 bull rifle hunt Northeast

Region biologists recorded above average bull carryover, therefore the 2008 season had many mature bulls available for harvest. Weather plays a major role in hunter success for elk. The first rifle bull season started very warm but last two days of the season a cold front dumped three to four inches of snow at 7000+ feet. First season hunters had some success during the first two days, but most elk stayed in heavy cover through the season and weren't available to hunters unwilling to hunt these habitats. Second season hunters had unseasonably warm 35-50° F days at elevations up to 7000 feet. Success was again slow because hunters had difficulty finding elk. Bull escapement should be high for the second year in a row.

District biologists are currently conducting fall helicopter flights to assess post season buck escapement. Bull escapement will be measured in the spring of 2009.

Currently winter range conditions are excellent with green-up occurring across all elevations. Body condition and fat accumulation for both deer and elk is quite high.

Waterfowl hunting in Northeast Region has been slow. Goose hunters with access to cultivated fields have had some good success. Duck hunting in general has been slow due to the pleasant weather. As more severe weather arrives and birds move into Northeast Region from the north we expect duck hunting success to improve.

Upland bird hunting in Northeast has been slow as well. Chukar and quail hunters are finding a limited number of birds. Pheasant hunters had average success early in the season.

Payette National Forest Bighorn Sheep

The Payette Forest recently issued for public comment a supplemental draft environmental impact statement to amend its Forest Plan for the protection of bighorn sheep. As part of the Hells Canyon Initiative the states of Oregon, Washington and Idaho, the Nez Perce and

Umatilla Indian tribes, Forest Service and a host of private organizations including Foundation for North American Wild Sheep and Oregon Hunters Association are working to restore bighorns to Hells Canyon. Diseases transmitted to bighorns from domestic sheep and goats grazing on federal allotments of the Payette National Forest pose a significant risk to the success of this effort. The purpose of amending the Payette Forest Plan is to better balance the needs of bighorn sheep and domestic sheep allottees with this restoration effort.



As part of the Forest Plan amendment effort Northeast Region participated on an Interdisciplinary Team convened by the Payette National Forest Supervisor to develop amendment alternatives for public consideration. Seven alternatives were developed ranging from the existing grazing allotment scheme to one that eliminates domestic sheep and goat grazing altogether. The preferred alternative eliminates the domestic sheep grazing allotments along the Snake and Salmon rivers in Hells Canyon while maintaining allotments outside the areas generally frequented by bighorns. ODFW biologists believe the preferred alternative will increase the potential for success of the Hells Canyon Initiative.

HIGH DESERT REGION

Chip Dale, Region Manager

Deschutes Watershed - Elk Season Hunter Success

Mid-Columbia District saw its usually low hunting pressure during the first season. Warm dry conditions made hunting difficult, with very few elk harvested. The Dalles Watershed hunt had 30 hunters participate and they harvested one spike and one cow elk.

The Ochoco District conducted hunter/harvest surveys in all 3 units with the greatest effort in the Ochoco unit to administer the South Boundary and Rager Cooperative Travel Management Areas. Hunter success was better than expected given the mild and sunny conditions, 175 hunters contacted had 27 bulls of which 20 (74%) were mature (3+ points), and 7 (26%) yearlings.

2008 DWD 1 st Elk Season Hunter Success			
WMU	Hunters Checked	Harvest	% Success
The Dalles Watershed	30	2	7
Maury	21	1	5
Ochoco	115	22	19
Grizzly	39	4	10
Total	205	29	14

The second elk season saw hunting conditions improve with rain and mild conditions making the woods more quiet. Hunting pressure in the White River Unit appeared up with over 80 vehicles counted opening morning on a nine mile stretch of the North/South Road bordering the Badger Creek Wilderness.

In the Ochoco District, weather conditions were mild with spotty snow at higher elevations. Most surveys were conducted in the two travel management areas. Similar to first season, older aged bulls were more prevalent in the harvest. A total of 156 hunters were checked, with 13 elk harvested of which 10 were mature bulls.

2008 DWD Opening Weekend 2 nd Elk Season Hunter Success			
WMU	Hunters Checked	Harvest	% Success
White River	120	4	3
Maury	10	0	0
Ochoco	114	13	11
Grizzly	32	0	0
Total	276	17	6

Elk Season Hunter Success – Klamath Lake Watershed District Cascade Elk Season

Weather conditions during the general Cascade Elk Season remained mild and dry which attributed to fairly low hunter success. Branch-antlered bulls comprised 50% of the harvest. No major enforcement issues were reported by OSP.

2008 KLWD 1 st Elk Season Hunter Success			
WMU	Hunters Checked	Harvest	% Success
Keno	94	4	4
W. Sprague	34	2	6
W. Ft. Rock	6	0	0
Total	134	6	4

2008 MAWD 1st Season Elk Hunter Success			
WMU	Hunters	Harvest	% Success
Silvies	94	10	11
Beulah	12	0	0
N Malheur R.	40	7	8
Total	146	17	9

Rocky Mountain Elk Seasons

Weather conditions during the first period Rocky Mountain Elk Season remained mostly dry and mild with low overall hunter success. Weather improved slightly with some rain and snow during the first half of the second season, but moderated later in the season. Elk numbers remain low especially in the Klamath Falls and Interstate Units. OSP worked the Silver Lake area pretty hard during the first season which likely helped curb the opening morning shootout problems that have occurred in the past.

2008 KLWD 1 st Elk Season Hunter Success			
WMU	Hunters Checked	Harvest	% Success
Ft. Rock 1 st	29	3*	10
Sprague 1 st	36	2	5
Interstate 1 st	12	0	0
Silver Lake 1 st	30	1	3
Klamath Falls— no information			
Total	107	6	5

*one cow take by PDP hunter

2008 KLWD 2 nd Elk Season Hunter Success			
WMU	Hunters Checked	Harvest	% Success
Ft. Rock 2 nd	0	0	0
Sprague 2 nd	n/a	3	n/a
Interstate 2 nd	0	0	0
Silver Lake 2 nd	n/a	3	n/a
Klamath Falls—no information			
Total	0	6	0

Elk Season Hunter Success – Malheur Watershed District

Hunting conditions in the Malheur Watershed were fair for the opening of the first bull season and improved later in the season with cooler and wet weather. Hunter success measured on the second day of the season was similar to last season in the Silvies and North Malheur River Units.

Second season was cool and wet for most of the season, however opening weekend success was much lower than measured for first season. The drop is attributed to the good success rates in first season and a significant number of elk finding refuge on private lands and other remote areas. Hunter checks later in the season indicate success improved significantly.

2008 MAWD 2nd Season Elk Hunter Success			
WMU	Hunters	Harvest	% Success
Silvies	81	2	3
Beulah	14	0	0
N Malheur R.	41	1	2
Total	136	3	2

Malheur County Feral Hogs

The week of November 10, 2008 Malheur District Staff confirmed a small population of free ranging swine about 10 miles northwest of Vale.

Extensive contacts with area landowners, Oregon Department of Agriculture and others failed to develop any information on escaped swine in the area. Around November 15, about the same time the pigs could be classified as feral under the feral swine rules, local hunters began eradicating them. Subsequent efforts by ODFW staff have not turned up any additional live swine in the area. Wildlife Services is planning an aerial search of the area during the first week of December and motion cameras will be set on bait sites to confirm eradication efforts

have been successful. This represents the third time since 2007 that feral swine have been confirmed in Malheur County.



Roger’s Access Area – Malheur District

In 2000, ODFW acquired an 80 acre parcel from private ownership near Nyssa. Since that time, the Roger’s Access Area has been managed by Malheur District staff to provide habitat for upland birds, big game, and waterfowl, as well as public access hunting and fishing opportunity. Given declines in public access and changes in agricultural practices in the surrounding area, the Roger’s property has become highly regarded as one of the only public access pheasant and quail hunting areas in the district. For the previous three years, use of the property has been monitored through a voluntary permit station. Results of information gathered through the voluntary permits are summarized below.

Roger’s Access Area Public Use			
Access Data			
Year	# Hunters	Total Hours Hunted	Average Hunt Duration (Hours)
2006	70	224.5	1.62
2007	140	217.25	1.92
2008 (9/1-11/25)	115	162	1.95
Harvest Data			
Year	Pheasant Harvest	Valley Quail Harvest	Mourning Dove Harvest
2006	13	12	137
2007	17	12	109
2008 (9/1-11/25)	11	7	34

**Note: Compliance rate unknown.

Comments received have been positive, and have often encouraged ODFW to pursue additional upland hunting properties. Clearly, the continued loss of public access in the area

has created a substantial demand for such opportunities, and ODFW has benefited greatly from providing such an area in Eastern Oregon.

NORTHWEST REGION

Chris Wheaton, Region Manager

North Coast Salmon Rendezvous

The North Coast Salmon Rendezvous was held November 5, 6, and 7. Fishing was a little slow, as expected with this year’s fall Chinook returns, but a good time was had by all. This event is put on by local fishing guides and volunteers, and raised a net profit of \$75,600 for the North Coast Salmon and Steelhead Enhancement Fund, Inc. This has been an important funding source that has been used to improve boat launches, upgrade hatchery operations, and enhance habitat throughout the north coast area.



Winning (and Retired) Guide Marty Peterson with a fall Chinook caught on the last day of the Rendezvous

Coastal Elk Rifle Seasons

The first coastal rifle bull elk season went smoothly in most areas. Harvest seemed to be lower than average, primarily due to weather conditions (fog) the first 2 days of the season. The second season also appears to have been comparable to past years, with a slow but steady harvest. As usual, the hunting pressure was down considerably from the first season. On opening morning of the second season Tillamook OSP staff was largely diverted to an unfortunate waterfowl hunting accident on

Tillamook Bay, where a hunter was shot in the leg.

Western Meadowlarks

ODFW biologists were contacted by an interested citizen who noticed at least three western meadowlarks killed by vehicle collisions within a span of several days. The collisions all happened at a particular spot west of Monmouth, and the citizen wanted to know what he could do to help. Apparently the meadowlarks are flying low over the road to avoid raptors, making them vulnerable to traffic. An ODFW biologist is looking at options and working with ODOT and the county to see if it is possible to install some simple barrier bars along this particular section of the road, to encourage the birds to fly higher and avoid collisions.

Jewell Elk Viewing Tours

Staff at Jewell Wildlife Area began taking telephone reservations for their popular elk feeding tours on December 1, at 8:00 a.m. There were also several walk-ins at the area just prior to 8:00 a.m. The tours are available on a daily basis from December 2 through March 1, except for Christmas Day and most Wednesdays. By 9:30 a.m. all the available weekend days were reserved. The last opening was filled shortly after noon. The program gets some publicity, but is generally known only by word of mouth. It is becoming more and more popular each year.

SOUTHWEST REGION

Steve Denney, Region Manager

Winter Wildlife Trapping

Winter is an extremely busy time of year for Southwest Region wildlife staff. In addition to wildlife census, crews are busy trapping a variety of wildlife species for transplanting.

Roseburg wildlife staff have been conducting trap operations for Columbian white-tail deer (CWTD) to re-establish these deer in historic habitat in Douglas County. This is the fifth year of a six-year project with an objective of trapping and moving 100 CWTD this year. Thus far, nine CWTD have been trapped and moved.

Roseburg wildlife staff are also conducting trap and transplant operations for wild turkeys to resolve damage problems. These birds are being transplanted to areas based on a statewide transplant list that meets criteria identified in the Wild Turkey Plan. A total of 19 birds have been trapped and transplanted.

Mountain quail are currently being trapped and held at the Roseburg facilities for transplant into Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Over 200 birds have been captured. ODFW currently contracts with a private operator to trap mountain quail. This operator has become very proficient at trapping birds based on scouting and pre-baiting trap sites.

Finally, Medford staff have started operations to trap elk adjacent to the Medford city limits for transplanting into the Umpqua National Forest. These elk have a bad habit of crossing two major highways to feed on orchards, causing a potential public safety hazard.

Lemolo Lake Management

Brown trout and tui chub population estimates were the objective of a project conducted on Lemolo Lake during the summer and fall of 2008. Brown trout were marked with elastomer color (dye) while tui chub were marked with a paper hole punch in the caudal fin. Mark-recapture estimates were obtained using the Chapman variation of the Peterson Mark/Recapture Index. A total of 329 brown trout were captured and marked, while 430 tui chub were marked and released. Preliminary population estimates show approximately 3600 brown trout +/- a standard deviation and 178,172 tui chub +/- a standard deviation in Lemolo Lake. This project will provide important information in determining potential causes for blue-green algae outbreaks at Lemolo Lake and will help identify potential solutions to the problem.

Coquille Boat Motor Ban

The Oregon State Marine Board met in Medford and North Bend to discuss potential Marine Board action on a boat motor ban on a portion of the South Fork Coquille River. ODFW manages a hatchery steelhead acclimation and release program on the South Fork that is very successful and popular with anglers. Concerns have been raised by anglers regarding boat motor users dominating fishing holes by repeatedly drifting through the holes without regard for bank anglers and their boat motors causing wakes that rock or swamp smaller craft causing safety concerns. Landowners are concerned about the erosion caused by the wakes of motorized boats as they travel upriver, motor boaters being discourteous to landowners, and concerns about boat motors disrupting steelhead redds. Most of these issues are being attributed to guides and guided anglers, but other private anglers are also using motors. This issue has reached a point where private landowners are threatening to discontinue fishing access to the public for both boat launch sites and bank angling access. Landowners currently control all boat launch sites on the South Fork Coquille except for two public boat accesses. ODFW is concerned about reduced angler access, satisfaction, and enjoyment due to poor behavior by a segment of the public. The Oregon Marine Board meets in March, but may be considering some rules on this issue during the interim. This issue is also being raised on a number of rivers in the state.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Roger Fuhrman, Administrator

ODFW Web Site

Another new service has been added to the ODFW web site. RSS, which stands for Really Simple Syndication, makes it easier for users to stay up to date on new information on the web site. Instead of having to constantly check the ODFW web site for the latest information, RSS feeds notify the user when something new is added. An RSS reader is used to view a summary of the new material with a link to the appropriate web page. Free RSS readers are readily available for download on the internet and can be used to view RSS feeds from many different websites. Currently, the ODFW site offers RSS feeds for news releases, the recreation report, and sport fish regulation

updates. Additional feeds will be available in the future.

Staff continues to make other improvements to the site. Users can once again use a search engine to find information on the site. The search function had not been working due to outdated software and equipment. The Oregon.gov search engine is being used to search the site until a permanent solution is found.

Web staff is also working on a new look for the ODFW home page and main landing pages. The goal is to make the front page of the site more user-friendly and easier to navigate. A longer term goal is to completely redesign the ODFW site, which includes nearly 6,500 web pages and more than 23,000 files.

Mentored Youth Hunter Program

The House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee received an update earlier this month on the success of the Mentored Youth Hunter Program established by Senate Bill 892. As of the end of November 3,206 youth had registered for the program. The majority of program participants are male (78%), are between the ages of 9-11 (71%) and are first time hunters (60%). The MYHP has proven to be a family program, with the vast majority of listed mentors being parents (83%) and grandparents (14%). ODFW hopes to enroll 7,500 youth in the program within five years. Future plans for the program include providing online registration and linking the program to the POS system. This will make it easier to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Additionally, a marketing campaign will be developed to encourage MYHP participants to enroll in hunter education classes.

OREGON CONSERVATION STRATEGY

Holly Michael, Conservation Strategy Leader

ODFW has begun to revise the Conservation Strategy to more fully address climate change. We are incorporating information from research conducted over the past three years and the work of the Fish, Wildlife and Habitats sub-committee to provide recommendations and help with setting priorities. There are several state, regional and national initiatives underway

to develop climate change related funding for state's wildlife action plans. ODFW is part of the technical review committee for the national effort and is teaming up with Washington Fish and Wildlife, and Idaho Fish and Game on a funding proposal to collect baseline data for climate change assessments and monitoring in the Pacific Northwest. The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has also established a climate change committee, which ODFW will participate on.

The Western Governor's Wildlife Council is working on identifying crucial habitats and corridors for use by the Western Renewable Energy Zones Council in their assessment of wind, solar and geothermal energy areas and transmission corridors. This is the first project of the Council, which in the future will be looking at transportation, climate change, land-use change, and other habitat and corridor issues.

MARINE RESOURCES PROGRAM

Kelly Ames, Groundfish Management and Developmental Fisheries Program Leader

Working with the Recreational Fishing Alliance

The Recreational Fishing Alliance, Oregon Chapter (RFA-OR) in conjunction with the Marine Resources Program (MRP) will begin a study to determine if special hook and line gear can be used to access underutilized yellowtail rockfish seaward of the Oregon 40-fathom recreational management line while minimizing bycatch of overfished species. This project is a significant step in developing ways of accessing healthy target stocks with reduced levels of bycatch. Anglers and managers will be challenged in upcoming years to develop and conduct fisheries under very low amounts of allowable harvest of bycatch species such as yelloweye rockfish. Projects such as this one will provide the information needed to successfully access healthy groundfish stocks.

Ten charter vessels from Bandon (2), Charleston (1), Depoe Bay (1), Garibaldi (4), and Newport (2) will make a total of 30 trips in 2009, to spread the effort both over time and geographic area. The gear to be used will be designed to place the hooks in a mid-water location to avoid bottom dwelling species, such as yelloweye rockfish. The proposed gear would employ the use of a long leader between

the sinker and hooks. Leader lengths will begin at 30 feet; a change of length up to 60 feet will only be made if incidental impacts on non-target species are higher than expected or access to target species is low. A float will be affixed to the upper end of the leader to prevent hooking gear from descending below the upper level of the leader. The maximum number of hooks (3) will conform to current regulations, although anglers may be encouraged to use fewer hooks.



Yellowtail Rockfish

At-sea sampling for each trip will be provided by MRP staff. Samplers will collect data on the species and numbers of all fish caught, as well as biological data on species of concern. Data collected by samplers will be analyzed within MRP. At the end of each trip, catch data will be sent to RFA-OR to monitor the bycatch rates, so as to not exceed limits of individual species set by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC).

This project, complementing research initially conducted by MRP staff in 2008, was formally approved by the PFMC at their September 2008 meeting. The project was extensively reviewed by the management, industry and enforcement advisory bodies and the public.

Humboldt Squid Make an Appearance in Oregon

Humboldt squid, also known as jumbo squid, are a large, predatory animal commonly found from the coast of Peru through the Gulf of California. Recent changes in the ocean environment have resulted in an expansion of their range. Since 2003, numerous sightings in Oregon have been reported. With lengths up to 7 feet (2m) and weights to 100 pounds (45kg), these squid have made quite an appearance!

In mid October hundreds of Humboldt squid washed up on Oregon beaches. Shortly thereafter, shoreside Pacific whiting fishermen

reported very high catches of squid, averaging 10 to 20 percent of the catch with some catches greater than 50 percent. The processors tried to sell as much as possible and fishermen used some for crab bait.

Predators to Humboldt squid include sperm whales, sharks, seals, swordfish, and marlin. Schools of Humboldt squid, up to 1,200 individuals, aggressively hunt lanternfish, shrimp, mollusks and Pacific whiting. Some researchers have expressed concern that the Humboldt squid are impacting whiting populations. Given their aggressive hunting strategies, a permanent range expansion could have far-reaching effects on West Coast fisheries and marine ecosystems.

OREGON STATE POLICE FISH AND WILDLIFE DIVISION

Captain Walt Markee, Division Director

Hunting with Illegal Tags

Senior Trooper Bean, Gilchrist patrol office, stopped a pickup truck westbound on Bear Flat Road for a minor traffic infraction. The subject was from California and had been visiting his brother in Christmas Valley. The subject consented to a search of his vehicle that revealed fresh deer meat in a large white cooler in the back of the truck and two trophy buck heads and capes hidden under a tarp. The bucks were tagged with 2008 Silver Lake deer tags. The subject also had a shoulder mount trophy elk in the rear of the cab. The story the subject gave was not consistent with the fresh meat in the cooler. He later admitted that he had killed one of the bucks the previous day on a ranch in Christmas Valley where his brother is employed as a ranch hand.

Further investigation revealed that the brother assisted the subject in killing the buck the previous day. In addition the subject admitted that the 7x7 buck in his brother's vehicle had in fact been killed at the ranch in the Wagontire Unit and tagged with his Silver Lake Tag. Trooper Hayes contacted the subject's wife and in talking with her found the same to be true of the forked horn buck she killed during the season.

The subject stated that the trophy mount in the vehicle was killed on the last day of the 2007 elk

season in Silver Lake. The subject's brother had taken the elk to California to have it mounted. The two buck's heads and capes hidden under a tarp in the vehicle were being taken to California to be mounted.

The first suspect Sr. Trooper Bean contacted on Bear Flat road was cited for Two (2) counts of Taking Buck Deer Closed Season and one count of Borrowing a Big Game Tag. The two heads, capes, mount, deer meat and a rifle were seized as evidence.

The ranch employee was cited for Three (3) counts of Aiding in a Game Violation, Taking Buck Deer Without a Valid Tag, and Lending a Big Game Tag (2007 Deer). His wife was cited for Taking a Buck Deer without a Valid Tag and Lending a Big Game Tag. They were allowed to keep the forked horn deer. Two additional rifles were seized.

2008 Oregon State University Fish and Wildlife Class

The Division conducted the OSU Fish & Wildlife Class this year a little differently from the usual Tuesday and Thursday classes. The class began with classroom instruction on Friday and Saturday, and concluded on Sunday with a field trip to EE Wilson where officers setup scenarios and walked the students through mock investigations. These scenarios included locating a gall bladder in a bear, contact with an angler in possession of a sturgeon, a hunter contact where a buck was taken, a trapping scenario, and use of a metal detector to locate a bullet in a road kill deer, to list a few.

END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR December 12, 2008