



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
January 11, 2013

NORTHEAST REGION

Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

Elkhorn Wildlife Area

This is a busy time of year at Elkhorn Wildlife Area. From December through March the Elkhorn staff feed 1,400 elk and 800 deer to keep them from moving down into Baker Valley. Elkhorn Wildlife Area is located in the Elkhorn Mountains of Union and Baker counties in Northeast Region. The Elkhorn Mountains provide great summer forage for deer and elk. Unfortunately, heavy winter snows cover forage at high and mid-elevations and force deer and elk to migrate to



the Baker Valley floor in search of forage. There they find private lands managed primarily for production of cattle and agricultural crops.

Elk and deer migration to Baker Valley in winter has increasingly become a point of contention since the 1940's. These conflicts include deer and elk invading haystacks, grain fields, hay fields and other agriculture crops, utilizing pasture forage intended for domestic livestock and damaging fences.

Elkhorn Wildlife Area was established in 1971 after elk and deer damage to agricultural crops became a very serious issue. It currently encompasses 8,900 acres including 6,700 acres owned by ODFW, 1,700 acres of US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management land managed by ODFW and the remainder private lands leased by ODFW.

Elkhorn is managed to attract and hold wintering deer and elk with natural forage and supplemental feeding. The Wildlife Area is closed to all uses during winter to prevent disturbance to wildlife at a time critical to both wildlife survival and preventing deer and elk from moving into the valley. Natural forage is managed so it is in the best condition possible

for deer and elk in the fall. Supplemental feeding is provided in areas where natural forage can't support the deer and elk population. It occurs seven days a week at 10 sites throughout the winter. In an average year ODFW staff feed 500 to 900 tons of hay to deer and elk on the Wildlife Area.

In addition to its role in minimizing wildlife conflicts, the Elkhorn Wildlife Area provides opportunities for hunting, trapping, angling, wildlife watching and other outdoor recreational activities. Anglers, hunters and trappers spend over 4,660 use-days on the Wildlife Area each year while non-consumptive users spend 31,200 use days there annually. The highlight of the non-consumptive use is the horse drawn tour of the Antony Creek feed site. Many visitors take this unique opportunity to get up close to Rocky Mountain elk (see <http://traveloregon.com/trip-ideas/grants-getaways/elkhorn-wildlife-area>)

National Audubon Christmas Bird Count

This year is the 113th National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count. Counts occur in many areas of northeast Oregon including Willamette, Union, Umatilla and Grant counties. More than 100 birders participate in the annual event in northeast Oregon. It is the 35th time the count has taken place in Union County.

This year's count period runs from December 14, 2012 through January 5, 2013. Union County has one 15-



mile diameter count circle as does Willamette County but there are two count circles in Baker County. One of the Baker counts was done December 14; the other was scheduled for December 29. Willamette County conducted their count December 23 and Union County on the last day of

the count period, January 5.

Volunteers will be trying to find all of the birds they can but will be especially on the lookout for rare or uncommon winter species. Some of the "good" birds

recorded on previous counts and hoped for again this year include Bufflehead, Ring-necked Duck and other waterfowl generally uncommon in winter along with Ferruginous Hawk, Virginia Rail, American Bittern, Swamp Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Varied Thrush. Also, many of the forest species such as Red Crossbill, Clark's Nutcracker and Pileated Woodpecker will be sought. One species of particular interest this year will be Common Redpolls. They have been more common this year in Union County and volunteers are hoping they will be available so Redpolls will make this year's Union County count.

The Christmas Bird Count provides our Wildlife District and Wildlife Area staff a long term annual snapshot of birds in their area. In times of "doing-more-with-less" this citizen science is a valuable tool in helping us understand how wildlife populations are changing. It is especially important because it provides information on non-game species that generally receive little formal attention.

Most importantly, participants will be looking for a fun day of birding and a chance to add to this long running national dataset.

HIGH DESERT REGION

Chip Dale, Region Manager

Bighorn Sheep Relocation

During the last week of November, 50 bighorn sheep were captured from three herd ranges and released to supplement four other existing herds, all in Oregon. Twenty bighorns were captured from the Lower John Day River and released at Mann Creek on Steens Mountain; 10 bighorns were captured from the Deschutes River and were released on Abert Rim; and 20 bighorns were captured in the lower Owyhee River Basin (Leslie



Gulch and Birch Creek) and were split between Hart Mountain and Fish Creek Rim. The purpose of the supplements is to increase genetic diversity of bighorn herds that were re-established from the early 1970's through the middle 1990's using bighorns from Hart Mountain. The Mann Creek release was a second attempt to establish a viable sheep herd on an area of

Steens Mountain that currently has few bighorns. Research completed by ODFW in 2010 indicates that small supplements into existing herds can increase genetic diversity and potentially affect lamb survival and population abundance.

In addition to the capture for relocation 10 bighorn in the upper Owyhee herd range were captured and fitted with radio collars. This capture is Oregon's part of a study of radio marked bighorns in an effort to better understand bighorn movements among Oregon, Nevada and Idaho. Recent observations suggest these animals are not being surveyed within the same areas that they are located during hunting season, which makes tag allocation difficult and creates the concern of potentially targeting the same rams during hunts in two different states.

The capture event itself went exceptionally well; with only one mortality during capture and one mortality post-release. Disease testing on captured sheep showed nothing of concern.

Mining Proposals in SE Oregon

In mid June 2012, Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI) received a Notice of Intent from Calico Resources USA for a project to develop a gold extraction and processing mine in Malheur County, about 25 miles south/southwest of Vale, Oregon. The proposed Grassy Mountain Gold Project includes patented and unpatented lode mining claims, as well as private land currently under lease for mineral exploration and development. Calico is considering constructing an underground mine and surface mill complex to develop the Grassy Mountain gold resource.

This is the first proposed chemical processing mine since Newmont, the world's largest gold producer, proposed open vat chemical heap leach processing of gold at the same site in 1991. The Newmont application was highly contentious at the time and resulted 1994 legislation which significantly tightened DOGAMI's Division 37 rules. Newmont ultimately withdrew their mining application when the price of gold dropped making the project economically infeasible.

ODFW biologists are actively consulting with Calico, DOGAMI, and a myriad of other state and federal agencies regarding potential impacts to local wildlife resources in the project area. The permitting and public involvement process outlined in DOGAMI's rules is expected to take a minimum of two years. As part of this process ODFW staff time is reimbursed by the applicant.

In addition, ODFW staff has been contacted by Oregon Energy LLC regarding a proposal to construct the Aurora Uranium Mine in southern Malheur County near the Nevada state line. The proposed open pit chemical processing mine would be entirely on land administered by Bureau of Land Management (BLM), in sage-grouse Core Area habitat and adjacent to McDermitt Creek where federal ESA listed Threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout are present. No formal activities by ODFW personnel have been undertaken because the project proponents have not filed Intent to Proceed with DOGAMI, State Department of Energy, BLM or the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

SOUTHWEST REGION

Larry Cooper, Region Manager

Update: Restore Lake and Reservoir Fisheries

Rogue Fish District staff has joined with districts in other regions to work with Fish Division to combine resources toward restoring fisheries in lakes and reservoirs, especially trout fisheries.

The largest problems are associated with illegal fish introductions. One of the issues related to illegal introductions is finding methods to improve the trout fishery when rotenone is not an option. At sites like Fish Lake where tui chub and fathead minnows have been illegally introduced, rotenone is not able to kill all fish due to the presence of numerous springs at the bottom of the lake. This lake has been treated five times since the 1950s. Another example is Howard Prairie Reservoir, a very popular trout fishery known for producing large trout from fingerling releases. The trout fishery has declined since the illegal introduction of smallmouth bass. Releases of larger trout fingerling in the fall, instead of the more common spring release, have helped but more work is needed. The large size of this irrigation reservoir and the interests of downstream water users would complicate any treatment.

This group also sees an opportunity to consider alternate hatchery trout stocks for use in Oregon. We have used a single strain of hatchery rainbow trout in Oregon for decades for most of our trout programs. Other strains of hatchery trout may provide for better fisheries.

At the most recent meeting in Corvallis the group discussed goals and strategy. A survey of hatchery trout stocks in the western states and Canada is being prepared. Restoration priorities are being identified, along with opportunities to share information and resources. The next meeting will be held in

conjunction with the American Fisheries Society meeting in Bend in February.



Golden shiners

NORTHWEST REGION

Rick Klumph, North Coast Watershed District Manager

Jewell Meadows Elk Feeding Tours

Wildlife Area staff signed up 1,044 people in four hours



to fill up all of the available elk feeding tours. Thirty-four people show up onsite and phone calls filled all of

the remaining slots by 10:50 am. Many more calls were received during the week, including a large number of callers that were aware of the December 1 date but were surprised we took reservations on a Saturday. Elk were surveyed at Jewell in early December. Two hundred fifty eight total elk were counted, including 137 adult females, 62 calves, 20 yearling males, and 39 adult males.

Clear Creek Fish Weir and Trap

A combination fish weir and trap was installed in Clear Creek, a tributary of the lower Clackamas River. The trap will be operated from early December through May over the next four years, as part of a Portland General Electric funded study looking at hatchery and wild fish interactions in the lower Clackamas River. Abnormally high water made it difficult to install the weir and also led us to make design changes that hopefully will allow efficient operation. The trap will

initially be operated five days per week until an additional person can be hired to assist with operation.



Comprehensive spawning ground surveys of Clear Creek will also be part of this study. Survey crews will complete 30 randomly selected survey reaches over a 14 day rotation period. The spawning surveys will be used to correct counts of fish that may have bypassed the weir and trap in the lower portion of the creek.

Columbian White-tailed Deer Transplants

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) is proposing to make an emergency translocation of Columbian White-tailed Deer to the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge near Vancouver. The dike along the Julia Butler Hansen National Wildlife Refuge continues to collapse, with more than 30 feet of dike lost during recent high water.

The USFWS is completing a review of the proposed emergency translocation. Capture activities are planned to be conducted from January 21, 2013 through April 1, 2013 and volunteers from both Oregon and Washington agencies plan to assist the USFWS with operating drive nets and drop nets. All relocated adult deer will be fitted with a VHF or GPS radio collar for monitoring purposes. ODFW is requesting timely location information for any deer that enter Oregon, as the animal's listed status complicates management.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Roger Fuhrman, Program Administrator

Free Fishing Weekend

Discussions are underway between ODFW and the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation (OPRD) to develop a new marketing and branding strategy for Free Fishing Weekend and All Parks Day (due to a rule change, Free Fishing Weekend will now coincide with All Parks Day every year.). This creates the opportunity to market this "free" weekend as the kickoff for Oregon's outdoor season. ODFW and Parks will jointly promote this weekend to encourage Oregonians to fish, camp, hike or just get outside. Other natural resource agencies, organizations, retailers

and other partners will be brought into the effort in the future.

ODFW Outdoors Calendar of Events

More than 80 ODFW Outdoors events are scheduled for 2013. The schedule includes workshops and clinics on hunting, fishing, crabbing, clamming, shooting and other outdoor skills. One new event focuses on ice fishing at Diamond Lake. Nearly 40 Family Fishing Events will encourage families to introduce youth to the fun of fishing. The Family Fishing Events and many other events are free. Some workshops do require a registration fee to help cover the cost of equipment, ammunition, materials and meals.

The workshops are made possible through the assistance of dozens of volunteers, ODFW staff and several partners, including the Oregon Hunters Association, Oregon State Parks, private hunting preserves, gun clubs and many others.

MARINE RESOURCES PROGRAM

Caren Braby, Program Manager

Commercial Dungeness Crab Fishery

After two 15-day season opener delays due to poor meat-fill quality, the Oregon Commercial Dungeness Crab fishery opened on the last day of 2012 in good weather. In the first two days preliminary fish ticket data indicate 131,500 pounds were landed, promising for an average season for 2012-13. The season opened with the same negotiated price of \$2.30/lb as last year (\$0.30 higher than any other year with a negotiated price), but only locked in for the first 24-hours of the fishery.

Due to fairly extensive and industry-supported modifications to the Tri-State Protocol designed to improve and strengthen the procedures for preseason testing and the process for opening the crab season, delays in opening the season are becoming more common. After these past two season openings being delayed beyond the 'normal' opening day of December 1, there is renewed industry sentiment to revisit changing the season opener to a date later in December and re-evaluating the preseason testing protocols. The MRP will evaluate these possibilities with substantial industry involvement and discussions with the Tri-State management group.

Territorial Sea Planning Update

Oregon's planning agency, Department of Land Conservation and Development, has been leading the state's marine spatial planning process over the last four years to site Renewable Ocean Energy device (e.g.

wave buoys)opportunity areas in Oregon's Territorial Sea. The Marine Resources Program has been heavily engaged in supporting DLCD through this process in providing data, advice and guidance on ecological resource issues. The process has involved numerous work group meetings and public meetings on the Oregon coast and across the Willamette Valley. The current draft plan incorporates deliberations and opinions from all of Oregon's self-identified stakeholders and strikes a balance between potential development and conservation of Oregon's precious living marine resources. Statewide Planning Goal 19, which calls for protection of living marine resources over all else, has been central in formulating the plan. This month, the Land Conservation and Development Commission will be considering the plan. If adopted by LCDC and subsequently by federal agencies, it will help shape federal agency actions both inside and outside the Territorial Sea. With industry and federal interest in Renewable Ocean Energy siting on Oregon's Outer Continental Shelf, the Territorial Sea plan will be finalized just in time for important decision-making throughout Oregon's waters. For more information on the Territorial Sea Plan or planning process, visit *Oregon Ocean Info* on the web. For more information on the data sets that have been used in formulating this plan, visit *Oregon Marine Map* on the web.

Japan Tsunami Marine Debris Update

After the surprising June 2012 arrival of a 66 foot dock on Oregon's Agate Beach in Newport, the world's attention was drawn towards the wandering flotilla of marine debris from Japan's tragic 2011 tsunami event. MRP was instrumental in removing biological material from the Agate Beach dock, with the purpose of preventing establishment of invasive species. Since June, Oregon has experienced ongoing debris landfall, which has been cleaned-up primarily by volunteer groups organized through Surfrider and SOLV.

Fortunately, the debris has not arrived in the amounts that were feared. Throughout the Pacific, mariners have sighted many items from the size of a small refrigerator up to the size of the Agate Beach dock. A similar sized dock was sighted just offshore of Hawaii, but the dock has not been re-sighted and its current location is unknown. Just two weeks ago, a third section of dock landed on Washington's outer coast, reigniting fears of the impacts of debris landfall and establishment of invasive species. MRP staff has been consulting with Washington's response team to help them launch and implement a response to minimize impacts from the third dock's arrival. From initial reports, this dock has far less biological material than was present on the Agate Beach dock, which will

decrease the threat of any invasive species that are on it. Oregon has just finalized our Japan Tsunami Marine Debris (JTMD) response plan, which was formally signed by Governor Kitzhaber in December 2012. ODFW staff continues to monitor debris reports, conduct media relations and participate in inter-agency coordination on this issue.

OREGON STATE POLICE

Captain Jeff Samuels, Division Director

Wildlife

During the 2012 rifle bull elk season in the Desolation Unit, Senior Trooper Ritter, John Day, investigated a hunting camp for multiple wildlife crimes. As a result of the investigation, three hunters within the camp were charged with Taking Bull Elk without an Elk Tag and Borrowing a Bull Elk Tag. Three additional hunters within the camp were charged with Loaning of a Bull Elk Tag. Three bull elk were seized from the camp. All six hunters recently pled guilty to, and received the following judgments:

- Forfeiture of three bull elk: a 6x6, 3x5, and spike.
- Three year hunting license suspensions
- \$4,500 in total restitution to ODFW
- \$1,050 in cut and wrap fees
- \$1,500 to the Turn In Poacher program
- \$1,500 in court fines and fees
- 72 months probation
- 240 hours community service

Cooperative Enforcement Planning

Cooperative Enforcement Planning (CEP) meetings will be taking place over the next two months. The CEP was initiated to provide a process where local wildlife managers and enforcement personnel could share information, discuss law/rule changes, and set monthly enforcement priorities that address both management and enforcement concerns. Additionally, Troopers utilize input from managers to identify priorities in need of a written Action Plan. Action Plans provide a strategic operational plan directed towards a specific priority. Action Plan results are provided at each CEP meeting and can be used to monitor the effectiveness of enforcement on a particular issue over time.

**END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR
January 11, 2013**