



## ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission  
April 24, 2015

### EAST REGION

Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

#### Sage Grouse

Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Governor Kate Brown were in Bend March 27<sup>th</sup> to commemorate the signing of Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAAs) between seven county Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the conservation of sage-grouse. ODFW Commissioner Holly Akenson, Director Curt Melcher, Acting Deputy Director Brett Brownscombe, Conservation Policy Coordinator Holly Michael attended.



Private landowners with land in sage-grouse range can voluntarily enroll in the CCAA program. Under the program, they receive assistance from the USFWS and SWCDs to develop and implement site-specific plans to conserve sage-grouse. In return, participating landowners are afforded protections from further regulation should sage-grouse be listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. Parallel agreements are available for ranchers utilizing state and BLM grazing allotments. These agreements could protect up to 2.3 million acres of sage-grouse habitat in Baker, Crook, Deschutes, Grant, Harney, Lake, Malheur, and Union counties.

During the event, Secretary Jewell and Governor Brown expressed appreciation for the proactive approach of everyone involved to provide habitat for sage-grouse. They highlighted that conservation of rural lifestyles and economies are inextricably linked to conservation of sage-grouse and other wildlife dependent on sagebrush ecosystems.

Prior to the ceremony, the SageCon Policy Team met to update the Secretary and Governor on the status of Oregon's sage-grouse conservation planning. Team members described Oregon's unique collaborative approach to sage-grouse conservation. Dubbed "The Oregon Way" by many, all stakeholders have a place at the table to develop conservation solutions. Policy Team members also drew attention to Oregon's leadership in terms of the involvement of Rangeland Fire Protection Associations (RFPAs), utilization of unique programs such as the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) to enhance sage-grouse habitat, as well as key remaining sticking points like feral horse management.

During her remarks, Governor Brown noted her commitment to the 2015-2017 biennium budget requests for sage-grouse conservation (~\$4 million). This budget request includes funds to support RFPAs, invasive annual grass and juniper treatments on private lands, activities to enhance pre- and post-fire habitat resilience, and implementation of a sage-grouse mitigation and development-monitoring program.

Governor Brown and Secretary Jewell both praised the Governor's Natural Resource Office and the Department of Fish and Wildlife for their efforts in building the state's sage-grouse plan.

#### Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area Sandhill Cranes

Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area is home to up to 20 nesting pairs and 50 nonbreeding adult greater sandhill cranes. As many as 500 sandhill cranes pause at Ladd Marsh during their spring migration

to Canadian and Alaskan breeding grounds. Although major wintering areas and most major breeding areas in the western U.S. have been identified, we do not know where the cranes nesting on Ladd Marsh winter.



To help better understand the Ladd Marsh sandhill crane migration Friends of Ladd Marsh acquired \$13,000 in grants and donations to fund 3 satellite transmitters to be placed on Ladd Marsh cranes. With the help of Dr. Blake Grisham from Texas Tech University, staff and volunteers are working to deploy the transmitters this spring.

Data from these birds will help us understand where Ladd Marsh sandhill cranes overwinter as well as important migratory routes and resting sites. We will also add to our knowledge of nesting and roosting areas on Ladd Marsh and, possibly, areas utilized by non-breeding cranes. This work may become part of a collaborative study across several western states to better understand the relationship between wintering populations of sandhill cranes and the breeding sites for those birds.

## WEST REGION

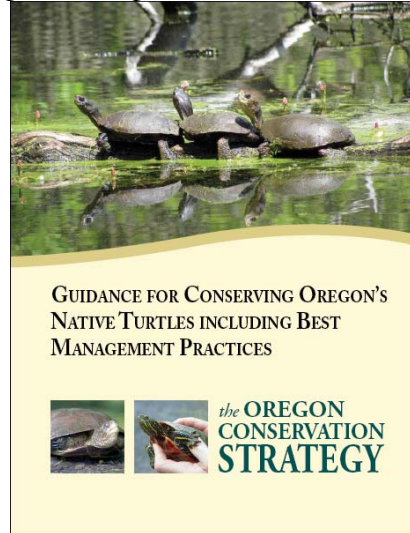
Steve Marx, Region Manager

### New Turtle BMPs Document Produced

A comprehensive guide focused on conserving Oregon's two native turtle species and their habitats was recently completed. *Guidance for Conserving Oregon's Native Turtles Including Best Management Practices* intended primarily for natural resource and land managers, land use planners, and project managers, but landowners and the public can also benefit from this resource. The document includes information on turtle ecology, turtle activity through the seasons, creating and enhancing habitat turtles, and how to determine if turtles are present on your project site. Planning

and designing projects with turtles in mind is emphasized as are methods to protect turtles during project construction and operational phases. Specific BMPs are offered by project type (e.g., road construction, culvert replacement, pond dredging, and vegetation management).

The guide was produced in partnership with Oregon's Native Turtle Working Group, with significant financial and design contributions from the Port of Portland. It is available for free download from ODFW's website though limited printed copies are available.



### ODFW Investigates Black-tailed Deer

The West Region Wildlife program has been examining Black-tailed deer in 4 wildlife management units (WMU) since 2011. Two major portions of the study include radio-collaring deer and developing a new population survey method. Thus far, 236 deer (163 females, 73 males) have been radio-collared: 80 in the Trask, 55 in the Alesa, 60 in the Indigo, and 41 in the Dixon. The deer have been radio-collared on 4 different landowner types: 93 on Federal, 16 on State, 32 on small Private (< 320 ac), and 95 on large Private (>320 ac).

Staff examined both habitat and home range data from 40 deer that provided more than 71,000 locations. Trask WMU deer (n=14) home ranges averaged 306 acres, 12 Alesa WMU deer averaged 173 acre home ranges, 5 home ranges in Indigo WMU averaged 237 acres, and 9 deer home ranges in Dixon WMU averaged 2161 acres. Dixon WMU deer had large seasonal movements that dramatically increased home range size compared to other WMUs with some deer moving more than

20 miles between summer and winter use areas. The National Land Cover Database (2011) was used to compare available habitat within a deer's home range to the deer's actual use based on location points. Evergreen Forest and Shrub/Scrub cover types dominated the available habitat in deer home ranges. Radio-collared does used Grassland/Herbaceous cover type significantly more than expected. We have documented 61 mortalities caused by 6 factors: predation (21), legal harvest (18), disease related (5), illegal harvest (3), vehicle collision (2), and unknown cause mortality (12). Currently 96 radio-collared deer are being monitored.

The second portion of the study uses a novel method for estimating deer populations in each WMU. Deer fecal samples are collected at selected sites across each WMU and then submitted to a genetics lab. There the DNA is extracted from the fecal samples and used to determine the number of individual deer that were sampled on the site. Since the size of the area sampled is known and the number of deer can be determined, biologists use the data to determine the deer density. Then by extrapolation, population numbers are estimated.

## **INFORMATION AND EDUCATION**

Rick Hargrave, Administrator

### **EE Wilson Archery Range**

The new archery range at EE Wilson Wildlife Area continues to be very popular with view hunters and target archers alike. To promote archery and awareness of the range, ODFW and the Oregon Bow Hunters are teaming up to provide free archery instruction on a drop in basis one weekend per month between March and November.

### **Trout Fishing101 Videos**

ODFW is partnering with Dick's Spring Goods and Day One Outdoors to produce a series of instructional trout fishing videos that are targeted at adult self-learners. The series will consist of 14 different 2 - 5 minute segments that teach the basics of entry level trout fishing. This model will be expanded to other fishing and hunting pursuits if it proves successful.

### **Distributed 65 Place to Fish in Lane County**

Travel Lane County partnered on the project and is a major distributor of the product. Interest in the product has been strong. Local media ran

stories of the publication, which drew a number of people to both Travel Lane County's adventure center and ODFW's Springfield office.

## **MARINE RESOURCES PROGRAM**

Caren Braby, Marine Resources Program Manager

### **Ocean Conditions and Rockfish Landings**

This year promises to be an unusual one on the ocean, in terms of weather, water temperature, species harvested and landings timing. The year started out with unusually calm weather, which has allowed significant fishing effort in the nearshore commercial and sport fisheries. This effort has resulted in higher than usual landings of commercially-caught black rockfish, and higher than usual encounters with sport-caught blue rockfish and other nearshore species. In addition, we have had multiple sardine landings much earlier in the year than usual and market squid, not seen off of Oregon in great numbers for years, are here at least on the central coast. Offshore, the North Pacific gyre is unusually warm, and a mild El Nino event has been declared for 2015. All of these signs suggest that this year will be unusual in many ways.

### **New Tsunami Debris**

Another vessel has arrived on Oregon's shore, presumably dating back to the March 2011 tsunami event that devastated Japan, and set loose a fleet of vessels into the Pacific. While the rate of tsunami debris landfall has drastically reduced over time, on April 9, 2015, a vessel was spotted by a number of individuals off the coast of Ona Beach, on Oregon's central coast (just south of Newport), over 4 years after the tsunami event. Through rapid coordination by researchers, state agencies, and federal partners, a recovery plan was developed for the vessel. First, the vessel was assessed for invasive species by Oregon State University researchers, staff from the Oregon Coast Aquarium, and the Marine Resources Program, and was deemed in stable enough condition to tow into Yaquina Bay for removal and salvage. This effort avoided the derelict vessel from landing on Oregon's sensitive seashore, and potentially avoided a more difficult salvage operation in a remote location. The vessel was likely a commercial troller, with multiple live fish holds sunk into the deck. At the time of interception, the vessel was home to two finfish species: a probable Japan variant of the yellowtail

jack (over 20 individuals) and a single knifejaw, a definitive Japanese species that has been found multiple times on our coast, associated with tsunami debris. The fish were transferred alive to the Oregon Coast Aquarium for quarantine and potential future display. Rapid removal of the vessel from the ocean will further reduce any transmission of invasive species from establishing populations in Oregon.



*The Enterprise (left) is the vessel that towed the derelict vessel (middle) in, and the Gracie Lynn (right) is the Aquarium's vessel. The aquarium captured the fish that were inside of the derelict vessel's fish holds.*

## OREGON STATE POLICE

Captain Jeff Samuels, Fish & Wildlife Division

In mid-March 2015, Fish and Wildlife Troopers from the Bend Area authored and implemented **Operation Shed N Tread** to address winter range mule deer protection and road closures violations, which are a high priority in their Cooperative Enforcement Plan objectives.

This was a three-day fish and wildlife patrol saturation of the winter range road closures east and south of Bend within the Paulina, Fort Rock and Silver Lake Wildlife Management Units. The operation focused on protecting mule deer inhabiting the area and to deter and detect criminal activities including wildlife harassment, road closure violations, unlawful cross country travel, criminal mischief and environmental resource protection. Large mature mule deer bucks are prevalent in this area and were currently shedding or had already shed their antlers. Shed antlers are a highly sought after for their value as a trophy item and can be worth money when sold. Although shed antlers can be lawfully collected and sold there is sometimes a temptation to break laws such as road closures to gain an advantage in locating sheds.

Numerous members of the Oregon Shed Hunters (a group that promotes ethical shed hunting) were present in the area for their annual camp out, reported being very pleased to see such a patrol presence by OSP. OSP were asked to make it an annual patrol tradition.

During the operation, Troopers made contact with 104 recreating persons, also located, and returned a lost shed hunter to their party.

Operational enforcement activities:

- 3 Citations – Operation of Motorized Vehicle in violation of Travel Management Area restrictions
- 1 Citation – No ATV Rider Safety Card
- 1 Citation – Switched Vehicle Plate

Warnings issued:

- Operation of Motorized Vehicle in violation of TMA restrictions
- Passenger in vehicle being transported in violation of TMA restrictions
- Operation of ATV without permit and decal.



Photo credit: Oregon Shed Hunters

## CONSERVATION PROGRAM REPORT

### 2015 Habitat Conservation Stamp and Art Contest

The art contest for the 2015 Habitat Conservation Stamp Program was held in November, 2014. A total of 27 entries were received, each depicting a species identified in the Oregon Conservation Strategy and Nearshore Strategy. A panel of five judges had the very difficult decision of selecting six finalists. The winning painting is by Don Meinders of Otto, North Carolina titled *Morning Mist*, featuring Tufted Puffins on Haystack Rock. After the judging, the doors to the Duck Pond Cellars showroom in Dundee, Oregon, were opened and the public was invited to view the art and cast their vote for the People's Choice Award. All of the artwork was very popular, and there were many favorites, but the winner of the People's Choice Award was Debra Otterstein's Northern Goshawk. The Tufted Puffins will be the face of the Habitat Conservation Stamp Program for 2015, and will be featured on an annual collector stamp, limited edition art print, and other merchandise. Revenue from the program will be used for the restoration of native habitats to benefit Oregon's fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need.



### Wildlife Viewing at ODFW's Wildlife Areas

Conservation Program staff visited many wildlife areas around the state over the last few months to investigate options for increasing use of these areas by wildlife watchers. Funds from the first year of the Wildlife Area Parking Permit program were dedicated to this purpose. Many wildlife areas had outdated maps and lacked proper signage to facilitate use by non-hunters and hunters alike. New maps are being developed with updated trails and viewpoints. Interpretive signs are also under development and will highlight species and habitats from the Oregon Conservation Strategy, as well as management techniques for game species. Regulatory signage will also be improved to clearly provide information on the parking permit program, hunting seasons, and wildlife area access for all users.

There are also new efforts underway to begin wildlife inventories at several wildlife areas. The Conservation Program was able to purchase acoustic bat monitoring receivers and data analysis software with funds from the Western Governors Association. Two receivers were set up by an Oregon State University intern at the E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area in January, and hoary bats have already been identified at the site using this

equipment. The hoary bat is an Oregon Conservation Strategy Species. Another bat receiver was installed at the Tami Wagner Wildlife Area in April, along with cover boards to survey for reptiles and amphibians. These techniques are being tested this year with the hope that a long term monitoring program can be developed to help fill data gaps for Strategy Species.

### **Western Snowy Plover – coastal population: Moving towards Recovery**

The western snowy plover is listed as a threatened species under both the federal and Oregon Endangered Species Acts. When monitoring began in 1990 only 36 nests were known on the Oregon Coast.

In 2014 ODFW in partnership with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Oregon Biodiversity Information Center, BLM and Forest Service completed our 25<sup>th</sup> year of monitoring the distribution, abundance and productivity of the species at nine locations along the Oregon coast. An estimated 338 adult Snowy Plovers were observed; 346 nests were monitored and a minimum of 280 individuals were known to have nested. A minimum of 272 fledglings were documented. The adult plover population was the highest estimate recorded since monitoring began in 1990.

Conservation actions taken over the years are bringing this once imperiled species towards species recovery in the Oregon/Washington recovery unit. In 2014, the Oregon coastal plover population was above the recovery goal set for the state by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2007.

In April 2015 snowy plovers were found nesting at Nehalem Spit State Park for the first time in many years. OPRD and partners are monitoring and managing this site as required by the Coastal Habitat Conservation Plan approved by USFWS with the State of Oregon in 2010.

### **Aquatic Invasive Species Program**

The Ashland and Ontario watercraft inspection stations are open 5-7 days per week and approximately 420 boats have been inspected so far. The AIS Coordinator performed a watercraft inspection and decontamination for a boat contaminated with quagga mussels on March 30<sup>th</sup>.

Interviews for seasonal aquatic invasive species technicians began in April and the program should be fully staffed with all watercraft inspection stations open by the end of May. A new station will be located in Basque this year, and other stations are located at Brookings, Klamath Falls and Lakeview.

Outside of the inspection stations, 2015 has been a busy year already for the Aquatic Invasive Species Program. Program staff has provided presentations at the Siuslaw, Reedsport, and Mapleton elementary schools, as well as at the Western Aquatic Plant Seminar. Staff also participated in the Pacific Northwest and Central Oregon sportsman's shows and the American Boat and Yacht Council Aquatic Invasive Species Summit.

### **END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR April 24, 2015**