



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
August 7, 2015

EAST REGION

Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

Lower Deschutes Water Temperatures

Low tributary streamflow, combined with earlier than normal periods of warm weather, have caused considerable concern about stream temperatures in the lower Deschutes River. By the end of June, maximum daily temperatures at the mouth of the Deschutes were routinely exceeding 70 degrees F. Numerous concerns were voiced on the effects of the high temperature on Deschutes River fish especially those entering from the Columbia River, and fishing in the Lower Deschutes River.

Much of the concern has been focused on the effect of water releases from Portland General Electric's (PGE) Pelton Round Butte hydroelectric project thought to be causing elevated water temperatures. Deschutes Watershed staff has been working with Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ), Warm Springs Tribe, and PGE to closely monitor the situation, and it appears that current releases are meeting water quality standards prescribed by ODEQ.



Data suggests that much of the heating occurs naturally. After water is released from the dam, it eventually comes to equilibrium with air temperatures in the lower 100 miles of river. Cooling weather, shorter days, and increased releases of cooler water from the Selective Water Withdrawal (SWW) structure at Round Butte

Dam, should begin cooling temperatures in the lower portion of the river.

On July 6th, stressed and dying fish were observed in the lower Deschutes River. Staff surveyed the lower 4 miles of the River on July 7th, and found approximately 40 sockeye salmon either severely stressed, or dead. Staff also surveyed the Columbia River and discovered sockeye in similar conditions. Subsequent reports have identified stressed sockeye at both Bonneville and The Dalles dams. Water temperatures in the Columbia are well above average, and this marks one of the earliest dates on record when the river has reached 70 degrees F (June 27).

Analysis by ODFW pathology determined likely cause of death for the sockeye to be from the bacterial infection *columnaris*. It is believed that the sockeye are getting infected with disease while in the Columbia, then entering the lower Deschutes seeking a cool water refuge. Nearly all of the diseased fish in the Deschutes River have been observed near the mouth.

Corner Creek Fire

The Corner Creek Fire is burning on the Ochoco National Forest and Prineville BLM Lands situated in the South Fork of the John Day watershed and adjacent to ODFW's Phillip W. Schneider Wildlife Area. Despite considerable fire activity in the area, no fire starts were reported within the Wildlife Area boundary during the last couple of weeks. The Corner Creek fire burned approximately 30,000 acres and was 90 percent contained as of July 20. Recent cool and wet weather delivered over ½ inch of rain on the fire Sunday July 12th. This aided suppression efforts and eased fire activity.

While most fire crews continue to work on improving containment lines and mopping up hotspots, others have started repair activities on equipment and hand lines that were created during the suppression effort. With the decreased activity, particularly along the east edge of the fire, the

Incident Team has reported that they are looking to lift the public access closure along County Road 42 and South Fork of the John Day River. Lifting this closure would permit public access to the Murderers Creek Basin via the main access road.



Cascade Lakes Airstocking

Staff from six fish districts and five hatcheries successfully stocked 316 high Cascade Mountains lakes with 360,000 fingerling trout during the week of June 6th. Five ODFW staff, along with Columbia Helicopter employees, led the effort and coordinated district and hatchery staff at each of the loading zones which included Mt. Hood Meadows ski area, Hoodoo ski area, Fall River Hatchery, and Klamath Hatchery. Seventeen separate flights were conducted which required two ODFW staff to accompany the pilot in the helicopter.



Due to warmer than average weather, crews began loading fish into hatchery trucks at 4:00 AM with the first flights beginning at 6:00 AM. Lightning and rain showers starting building in the afternoon each day making it even more necessary to start early.

WEST REGION

Steve Marx, Region Manager

Record Temperatures and Low Streamflows -

The Natural Resources Conservation Service reported that State-wide, Oregon's snowpack this winter was the lowest measured in the last 35 years and has translated to record low streamflows in many areas as well. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, June 2015 was the warmest on record for the month since 1895.

These conditions resulted in streamflows and temperatures more characteristic of mid-August than June with water temperatures over 80 degrees observed in the Umpqua, Rogue, and lower Willamette rivers. Survey crews documented spring Chinook salmon pre-spawning mortalities in the Clackamas River and mainstem Willamette River and tributaries. Anecdotal reports of pre-spawning mortalities in the lower Rogue River were also received. As temperatures peaked in early July, mortality events continued including observation of approximately 300 dead spring Chinook salmon (approximately 90% hatchery origin) in the lower Clackamas River the week of July 10th. We are fortunate that a large portion of the runs in these basins had migrated early and most fish were in upstream areas with better water quality.

Conditions have also resulted in adjustments to hatchery rearing and stocking schedules in response to reduced intake flows and warm water temperatures in receiving lakes and streams. Many fish have been release early in the season or early/late in the day to avoid peak temperatures. We are also implementing water conservation measures at all West Region offices and facilities.

The weekend of July 11th brought some welcome relief from record temperatures with cooler weather and rain showers in many areas. However, conditions remain characteristic of August with several weeks of summer ahead.

High Tech Elk Capture – North Willamette Wildlife staff was able to successfully capture and GPS collar two cow elk in late June on summer range habitat on Mt. Hood. The capture occurred using a cell phone-based system that includes a motion sensing camera that sends photos via text message when animals enter the trap, and allows staff to trigger the trap door remotely within seconds via text message back to the trap. The ability to control trap closure remotely from many miles away provides staff the ability to be very selective in which animals are trapped, and allows for deferral of trap closure if environmental conditions are not optimal or adequate staffing isn't available to safely process the animals. The system was built by North Willamette Watershed District staff by adapting technology being used in other parts of the nation to trap feral swine. Staff is documenting the design and operation of this new system and intends to develop a slideshow for use at a future Wildlife Bio meeting as the system has great potential for a variety of wildlife management uses in other locations.

Objectives of the collaring project are to gain information on the migration patterns, calving areas and summer habitat use over a two year period. The information will also inform staff on distribution and use near ski areas on the Mt. Hood National Forest where year round use continues to expand by adding or promoting new activities such as mountain bike trails, amusement park-style attractions, and other activities to draw more people to the location. The elk are known to forage in the open “ski lane” areas during summer months but there is little information on effects of these activities on the population.



INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Rick Hargrave, Administrator

Customer Relations Management Software

The Information and Education Division will soon have the ability to enhance their recruitment and retention efforts and connect with customers in a whole new way. A contract has been finalized with Vertiba, the company that will install the customer relations management software called, Salesforce. The Salesforce Customer Success Platform will provide ODFW sales, service, marketing, community, and analytics applications to use to connect with customers. Implementation should begin in August followed by staff training on how to use the platform. The software should be up and running by Dec 2015.

Kit Fox Video

Rare footage of Kit Fox pups playing in the Eastern Oregon desert recently was captured on video. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists have been studying the foxes since 2012. Social media coverage was extensive. Statistics as of July 13, 2015:

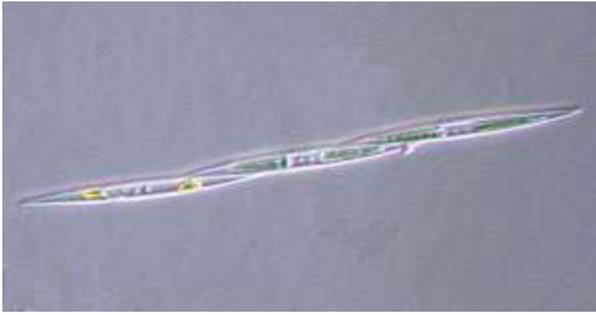
- 15,364 Facebook views
- 35,776 people reached on Facebook
- 5,584 YouTube views

MARINE RESOURCES PROGRAM

Caren Braby, Marine Resources Program Manager

Harmful Algal Blooms

This year is proving to be unusual in a multitude of ways for fish and wildlife populations, including out on the ocean. The marine ecosystem has been unseasonably calm, unseasonably warm, and has sustained a massive harmful algal bloom for months, on a magnitude we have not seen in decades. Razor clams – one of the most popular sport shellfish fisheries, has been closed coast wide due to high levels of domoic acid, which is produced by an oceanic diatom (single-celled algae). Shellfish species that consume diatom can accumulate high levels of the toxins from their food, without themselves suffering from a toxic effect. Once in the meat, it can take weeks for the toxin to dissipate down to safe levels. Each species accumulates the toxins to different degrees, so it is necessary to measure the toxins in multiple species to screen for human consumption safety.



It's not just off of Oregon – both California and Washington has closed major fisheries, as well, as this massive bloom shifts along the west coast. While this is disappointing to sport fishermen for this year, the silver lining is that ODFW and our sister agency the Oregon Department of Agriculture are monitoring for the effects of these toxins and will open for harvest as soon as toxin levels are below those safe for human consumption. In the meantime, the north coast has recently opened to mussel harvest and bay clams and crabs (Dungeness and rock crabs) are open coast wide. For up to date information on harmful algal bloom closures and shellfish harvest impacts, call the Shellfish Hotline at 800-448-2474.

New Blue – introducing the Deacon Rockfish

For many years now, fishermen and managers have been noticing two types of blue rockfish off Oregon's coast – a blue-blotched variant and a blue-sided variant. Over the past two years, ODFW has collaborated with Oregon State University and has separated these variants into two distinct species, based on visual and genetic traits. The new rockfish species has just been officially introduced to science through the Fishery Bulletin, NOAA's peer-reviewed scientific journal.

OREGON STATE POLICE

Captain Jeff Samuels, Fish & Wildlife Division

In June of 2015, the Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division (OSPFWD) initiated the aptly named Marine Fisheries Team to better align fisheries and habitat enforcement throughout the Oregon Coast. The team, consisting of eight members, is primarily responsible for the enforcement of both commercial and recreational fisheries regulations as well as general wildlife, environmental, criminal and traffic related regulations.

The Marine Fisheries Team reports to Fisheries Section Lieutenant Tim Schwartz, and also works closely with the NOAA-Office of Law

Enforcement, the United States Coast Guard, the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife - Marine Resources and other state and federal partners to ensure the equitable utilization of Oregon's food fish and wildlife.

Immediately supervised by Sgt. Todd Thompson, based out of Newport, the team comprises seven Fish and Wildlife troopers working from offices located in Astoria, Tillamook, Newport, Florence and Coos Bay. With the assistance of federal funding, the team will conduct fisheries specific action plans and/or saturations based upon Cooperative Enforcement Planning and will maintain the freedom to investigate offenses extending beyond local area assignments.



OSP Patrol Vessel Guardian

Not only responsible for the operation of the division's patrol vessel, Guardian, the team will additionally work closely with the division's Special Investigation's Unit to address enforcement concerns associated with illegal and unreported food fish and wildlife destined for black market. Although the Marine Fisheries Team has been functioning for little more than a month, they have already proven the program a success in their aggressive and coordinated protection of Oregon's coastal resources.

Beyond the initiation of the Marine Fisheries Team, Oregon State Police Fish & Wildlife Division personnel remain busy dealing with various unlawful angling activities throughout the state, including a multitude of snagging and gear or method of take offenses. Additionally, Troopers

investigated several hunting and commercial fisheries related offenses these past few months as summarized in the below listed enforcement details:

Sgt. Thompson contacted a commercial clam harvester leaving the digging area on Yaquina Bay. Upon inspection, the subject had not dyed his clams and was delinquent on his logbook. Further investigation revealed the Wholesale Fish Dealer he claimed to be selling to have failed to complete fish tickets on seven clam landings the subject had made. The Commercial harvester was issued citations for **Fail to Dye Clams Prior to Leaving the Digging Area** and **Fail to Maintain Shellfish Logbook**. The Wholesale Fish Dealer was issued a citation for **Fail to Complete Fish Tickets**.

Senior Troopers Gunderson and Rector were checking sturgeon anglers on the Columbia River in the Government Island vicinity. They checked five anglers all of which claimed to have not retained any fish, admitting to only catching "shakers". No fish were validated on any tags at that time. A short time later, Gunderson and Rector located five sturgeons on a stringer down the bank, one of which was undersized. Ultimately, citations were issued for **Fail to Validate Harvest Card** and **Unlawful Possession of Undersized Sturgeon**. Two juveniles were additionally warned for tagging violations before the sturgeon were revived and released.

Trooper Mathews received information regarding the possible shooting of several deer near the town of Vida. During his investigation he located three dead Black-tailed deer consisting of a doe and two yearlings that had not been salvaged. Through investigation, Trooper Mathews was able to link the three deer to a nearby residence. During the interview, the property owner confessed to killing all three deer and leaving them to waste. Trooper Mathews cited the man for six counts of **Unlawful Take of Blacktail Deer to wit - Closed Season** and **Unlawful Waste of Game Animal**.

Trooper Borchers and Senior Trooper Schoenborn contacted two subjects who were observed diving with homemade spear guns on the Molalla River. Investigation revealed that both subjects were attempting to harvest game fish and Senior Trooper Schoenborn observed one of

the subjects spear a Chinook salmon earlier, which was later seized as evidence. Both subjects were cited, one for **Attempt to Take Salmon Prohibited Method** and the other for **Take Prohibited Method: Spear/Salmon**.

CONSERVATION PROGRAM REPORT

Coordination with USFWS

Staff provided assistance to the USFWS in the development of Oregon species and habitat lists for their Surrogate Species Program; a nationwide effort currently under development. This federal program uses surrogate species to help conserve landscapes and the ecological processes that shape and define them. Regional Surrogate Species Program Plan development relies heavily on available strategic conservation planning efforts, such as the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

Preventing illegal sale of wildlife

Efforts are ongoing to monitor Craigslist for illegal sale of prohibited and native species. Sale of red-eared slider turtles is common, and a Madras resident was recently contacted for illegally offering native alligator lizards for sale. For the most part law enforcement is not required to bring individuals into compliance and prohibited species are often relinquished into ODFW custody voluntarily.

Golden Eagle monitoring

The Conservation Program continues to work with the Oregon Eagle Foundation, USFWS, BLM, USFS, and a large number of volunteers to monitor golden eagle nests and reproductive success. At the conclusion of this season we will have enough data to determine the first data driven comprehensive statewide status of the species. However, an additional five years of monitoring will be required before we can determine population trends. We also assisted the USFWS with collection of blood samples from golden eagle chicks in eastern Oregon. The samples are being used to monitor blood lead levels in an attempt to determine exposure and risk to avian scavengers. Lead is known to cause behavioral and physiological impairment and direct mortality at environmentally-relevant exposures.

Improving wildlife passage

Staff is working with ODOT to assess 24 I-5 bridges for current wildlife passage use and consider actions, such as the addition of fencing or vegetation manipulation, to improve wildlife use. The bridges, between Medford and Sutherlin, are located at or close to known road kill hotspots. The cost of bridge replacement simply to improve wildlife passage is prohibitive; however, the goal of this collaboration is to determine if road kill can be reduced via relatively minor adjustments to the structures or surrounding habitat.

**END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR
August 7, 2015**