EAST REGION
Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

Ladd Marsh Bird Festival
The 14th annual Ladd Marsh Bird Festival occurred May 17 through 19. The festival celebrates World Migratory Bird Day as well as the diversity of birds found at Ladd Marsh. It is a three-day family-friendly event with activities for all levels of birding experience from novice to expert.

The festival started Friday night with a presentation by Rob Taylor about Midway Atoll’s transformation from a military base to a wildlife refuge. On Saturday, kids built birdhouses, complete the Junior Birder Program to earn a patch and a field guide, and work on crafts including a necklace or bracelet with a real bird band. Saturday also offers volunteer staffed stations on the Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area where participants can get help finding and identifying birds.

The Festival offers a variety of field trips and workshops. Included are opportunities to bird on and off Ladd Marsh and workshops to learn how to improve your bird photography and drawing skills. The most popular field trips take participants to the Spring Creek, on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, which is famous for its density of nesting great grey owls. The Bird Festival attracts about 350 registered participants each year. Participants come from all over the Pacific Northwest and as far away as Alaska. Favorite sightings at the Festival include Sandhill crane colts (less than two weeks old), American avocet, black-necked stilt, American bittern, a variety of warblers, Bullock’s oriole, great grey owl and many more.

Chesnimnus Elk
The population and distribution of Chesnimnus Wildlife Management Unit (Unit) elk has changed quite a bit over the last 40 years. During the 1980’s and 1990’s roughly 300-500 elk would utilize the Zumwalt Prairie portion of the Unit during summer and fall. In late fall and winter these elk would traditionally move to lower elevation canyons on the adjacent National Forest. From 2003 to 2015, the elk population increased to nearly 4,000 elk observed on the Zumwalt Prairie (Prairie) during annual spring surveys. The majority of these elk now spend the entire year on or in close proximity to the Prairie and not on the adjacent National Forest.

As elk populations grew so did landowner concern about the loss of forage for their cattle. In response, the Department tried a number of things to reduce elk caused damage to private
range. Most of what we tried, however, was unsuccessful and, in 2010, the Department met private landowners to discuss the problem. This led to the development of a new antlerless elk hunting strategy meant to encourage elk to leave areas where they were not welcome. The strategy that included landowners allowing by-permission hunting access and the Department increasing the number of individual hunts for antlerless tags. As part of the new initiative, we authorized 770 tags during seven antlerless elk hunts for the Zumwalt Prairie portion of the Chesnimnus Unit.

Monitoring suggests that the hunt strategy implemented in 2010 has reduced the elk population and shifted elk distribution more to the National Forest. While it is too early to declare success, we appear to be making headway. What has made this effort successful is that the majority of landowners in the area shared the same objectives related to elk on their property and were willing to provide significant hunting access on their land.

Summer Lake Cleanup
Over 20 Summer Lake Ducks Unlimited (DU) Chapter volunteers conducted a trash pick-up day on Summer Lake Wildlife Area (SLWA) collecting over 500 lbs. of litter and filling several pick-up truck beds.

Summer Lake DU is a small group of dedicated individuals from Bend. They hold an annual fund-raising banquet on opening day of waterfowl season at SLWA generating tens of thousands of dollars for wetland habitat restoration. The Department has collaborated with DU on a number of wetland enhancement projects. We really appreciate their project planning and implementation expertise and funding support.

Many thanks to Chapter Chairpersons Glen and Shelly Hill for organizing the trash pick-up. Volunteers from central Oregon, Cottage Grove and Eugene DU Chapters participated in the cleanup as well.

WEST REGION
Bernadette Graham- Hudson, Region Manager

Fishing vessel wreckage in Western snowy plover nesting area
On May 2, the fishing vessel Ann Kathleen from Charleston caught fire and went aground near New River in Coos County, a very remote part of the Oregon coast. The vessel almost completely burned, leaving behind part of the hull and fuel tanks filled with just over 1,100 gallons of fuel.

The wreck sits in the middle of an important nesting area for Western snowy plovers and an area with significant cultural resources. Western snowy plovers are an Oregon Conservation Strategy Species and listed as threatened federally (Pacific Coast population) and in Oregon.

By May 5, all fuel was removed from the vessel although debris from the boat, including the tanks and ashes from the fire, littered about a mile of the beach. Some diesel had leaked onto the beach but damage is not apparent, and it appears efforts from the response resulted in no injuries to snowy
plovers or damage to cultural resources. This is a commendable accomplishment.

Significant portions of the hull, mast, and mechanical components are on the beach and already accumulating sand, requiring excavation before the wreck can be cut up and airlifted out. The keel is likely not be removed from the beach because it is too heavy to airlift and becoming buried with sand. Crews are digging a trench next to the keel before the tide comes up to encourage the keel to work its way into the sand. The ship’s insurer is funding this work.

Responders created an incident command lead by the United States Coast Guard with participation from Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, US Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Biological Information Center, The Coquille Indian Tribe and ODFW Charleston field staff, as well as others.

**Willamette Falls Spring Chinook Passage**
Spring Chinook passage at Willamette Falls increased in early May with reduced flows and warming temperatures. As of May 7, 7,831 adult spring chinook passed upstream, representing about 83 percent of the 10-year average of 9,412 for this date. In addition, 3,073 winter steelhead passed upstream, which is about 64 percent of the recent 10-year average. All indications are the sea lion removal project has been very successful in reducing winter steelhead predation near Willamette Falls.

**ODFW’s Mid Coast District is working on a Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) project with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians (Tribe) involving a new trout stocking location within walking distance of the town of Siletz.**

The Tribe is supportive of stocking the pond for the public with a focus on youth angling. There will be two test releases of trout over the next month to assess use and identify issues with the location. This site would also be the new location for the Tribe’s Culture Camp. The District appreciates the efforts of the Alsea Hatchery staff to provide surplus trout for the project.

**Greater Clatsop Plains Elk Issues**
The North Coast Wildlife District secured assistance from Oregon Solutions to work with north coast communities to solve a complex urban elk issue. Oregon Solutions works to develop solutions to community-based problems that support economic, environmental and community objectives built through collaborative efforts.

**R3 Project in Partnership with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians**
An increasing population of elk in the north coast area is causing serious safety concerns for people, pets, and property. These elk have become highly habituated due to people feeding them and interacting with them at close range. Some elk now become aggressive when faced with a lack of food from humans or during the rut, along with cow elk protecting their calves resting in backyards. Elk are also causing major agricultural and residential property damage and crossing Highway 101, posing a high risk to drivers.

The North Coast Wildlife District has worked hard over the last few years conducting community meetings, outreach, and education on appropriate behavior around elk; however, the problems continue and elk numbers are growing. With such a complex set of issues, district wildlife biologist Herman Biederbeck and watershed manager Chris Knutsen wrote a proposal to develop an elk management plan for the Greater Clatsop Plains Area that was accepted by Oregon Solutions. The plan’s ultimate goal is to reduce elk populations in the area to a manageable level and eliminate human behavior that habituates the elk. No single entity has the authority or capacity to develop and implement such a plan, so a collaborative approach by all stakeholders is necessary.

Oregon Solutions conducted initial scoping in late winter, and invited stakeholders to the first meeting May 28. Stakeholders include Oregon State Parks, the National Park Service, Oregon Military Department, Oregon Department of Transportation, private landowners, leaders of several cities, interest groups (e.g. OHA), and members of the public.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION
Roger Fuhrman, Information and Education Administrator

ELS Communications and Outreach
Since December 2018 when the new electronic licensing system (ELS) launched, I&E has been executing communications and outreach plans to help move our hunters and anglers from the old system to the new. Communications tactics have included multiple press releases, social media posts, web articles and videos, customer emails, postcards and radio and newspaper advertising.

Outreach activities have included presentations at sports group meetings and customer assistance at regional sports shows throughout the state. The outreach and communications effort had several goals: to assist customers in establishing their accounts in the new system, boost mandatory hunt reporting and encourage hunters to submit controlled hunt applications earlier than in previous years. So far, the results have been positive. We saw an increase of 32,000 hunter reports over last year. From late April to early May. Our sales of controlled hunt applications were measurably above last year, meaning that we have been successful in pushing thousands of customers to apply sooner.

How to change your controlled hunt choices

Step 1: Log in to your ODFW account at www.MyODFW.com and select Controlled Hunts from the Recreational Portfolio

Caption: I&E produced several how-to videos and Web features about the new ELS

Education Events Abound this summer
It has been a busy spring for education staff and it promises to be an even busier summer. Two fly-fishing events were conducted in early May at Wizard Falls Fish Hatchery, including a Learn to Fly-fish class for adults and a Project Healing Waters event for veterans.

In late May, staff assisted with the Legislative Sportsmen’s Caucus fishing event at the Capitol. That event gave many children the opportunity to catch their first fish.

Staff will be supporting Free Fishing Weekend events throughout the state as well as Youth Outdoor Day at E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area near Corvallis. Staff will also be participating in the
Governor’s Campout later in June and gearing up for the Statewide Hunter Education Conference in July. Preparation is underway for a number of Hunter Ed field days, shotgun clinics, and archery events through the rest of spring and summer.

MyODFW Employs “Listicles” to Engage the Public
Listicles are articles based mostly or entirely on a list of some kind. I&E has noted the increasing popularity of listicles and is embarking on an effort to use more of them on MyODFW.com. Topics could range from “Five fish to target this weekend” to “10 things you did not know about mule deer”.

A recent feature entitled “12 tips for better wildlife photos” was a hit with hundreds of readers. Positive comments came in via social media and email. People value the information and find the listicle format easy to digest. Go to MyODFW.com and search for wildlife photography to see the tips. So far this year, six listicles have been read by more than 2,500 people on the website.

End Caps Ease Beginners into Trout Fishing
ODFW is collaborating with Fisherman’s Marine outdoor stores to facilitate people’s entry into the world of fishing—starting with trout. Oregon has millions of trout in dozens of easily accessible locations but for people new to the sport, the first trip to the sporting goods store can be intimidating.

To help sort through the forest of rods and lures, I&E partnered with Fisherman’s Marine to develop trout fishing end caps for their stores. Each display features the basic gear, information, and bait to ensure a successful outing the first time out. Newbies can find everything they need in one convenient location.

The end caps also include maps of easy-access trout fishing spots within 50 miles of the store. Whenever a first-timer is ready to branch out, they can find a lot more information, including the stocking schedule, at MyODFW.com.
A Fish and Wildlife Trooper assisted ODFW staff and members of the Alsea Sportsman’s Association during the Alsea River clean up. The event was sponsored by SOLVE and Dahl Disposal Service. Over thirty participants cleaned up trash downstream from Campbell boat ramp in Benton County to Alsea Bay using motorized/non-motorized watercraft and on the shore. In total, participants filled a large dump trailer with assorted trash. The Alsea Sportsman’s Association hosted an afternoon BBQ for the hungry participants.

A Fish & Wildlife Trooper was driving down Willamina Creek Road when he observed a tuft of elk hair lying in a pull out along the road. Stopping to investigate, he found a freshly cut roadblock log with ATV tracks and drag marks leading into a privately owned clear-cut. The tracks led to three separate elk gut piles, and the evidence indicated all three elk had been killed and pulled out to the road via ATV by multiple subjects. Estimating where the elk were likely shot from, the Trooper walked to that location on the other side of the creek and found two separate high powered rifle shell casings, indicating at least two shooters. Two Troopers returned to the kill site to look for additional evidence. On the way, one of the Troopers received a message from a farmer out of Carlton stating that he had found three elk hides dumped on his property a day or two prior. The Troopers went to the dump site later in the day and the evidence found clearly linked the hides at the dump site to the three elk at the kill site on Willamina Creek. The kill site was located outside the boundary for the Beavercreek controlled antlerless elk hunt. Three suspects were identified and Troopers met them at a residence out of Yamhill. The subjects were cooperative and stated that they did not realize the location they killed the elk was outside the unit boundaries of their tags and was private property. All three subjects were cited criminally for Take/Possession of Antlerless Elk and one subject was cited for Offensive Littering. The three cow elk were seized and donated to The Meatin Place, and the three rifles used were seized as evidence.

Fish & Wildlife Troopers responded to an RV Park in Heppner on a sturgeon complaint. The suspect, who is well known to Fish & Wildlife Troopers, had caught and kept a sturgeon in the Columbia River at the mouth of the Umatilla River (closed season) and transported it to Heppner; where he tied it up to a tree in swollen Willow Creek. The suspect’s sons were showing it off the next day by lifting it out of the water by the rope through the fish’s gills. A local citizen saw this, took some pictures, and called a Trooper. The subject was observed a short time later with fillets from the fish. He was cited criminally for Unlawful Possession of Sturgeon and the meat was seized.

A Fish & Wildlife Trooper out of The Dalles completed an investigation of a Washington subject who was issued a Game Fish Tournament Permit by ODFW to hold a sturgeon fishing derby with prize money. The permit specified that the event was to take place in the Columbia River Bonneville Pool only. The event was unlawfully held in both the Bonneville Pool as well as The Dalles Pool of the Columbia River. The permittee was required to submit a Game Fish Tournament Report Form with harvest numbers to ODFW within the required time frame which he failed to do. The subject was cited for Violation of Game Fish Tournament Permit.
Some concerned citizens reported seeing a Bald Eagle that appeared to be injured in the Sunny Valley area in Josephine County. Three Troopers responded and were able to capture the injured eagle and transport it to Wildlife Images, where the eagle was treated for a wound and high levels of lead.

A Coos Bay area Fish & Wildlife Trooper was provided a tip that a subject had unlawfully shot a bull elk while he was turkey hunting. Several acquaintances of the suspected poacher were contacted and found to be in possession of fresh elk meat which was subsequently seized. Troopers contacted the poaching suspect who admitted to shooting a 3x4 bull elk while he was turkey hunting. The suspect consented to a search which revealed 61 pounds of elk meat and a rifle. The elk meat and rifle were seized. The subject was issued criminal citations for Hunting Closed Season, No Big Game Tag, and Take/Possession of Bull Elk.

CONSERVATION PROGRAM
Andrea Hanson, Oregon Conservation Strategy Coordinator

Greater Sage-grouse Lek Surveys
Eastern Oregon’s late winter snowpack created access issues to leks and extended the survey season into early May to allow for return visits to “trend leks”, which are used to represent the current breeding sage-grouse population in the state. Many leks were inundated with snowmelt and muddy routes to reach them, causing some surveyors to delay counts, risk getting stuck, or even wait until night freezes to drive out.

This year’s count might lead to an artificially lower estimate of breeding populations due to inaccessibility of the leks and the delayed breeding season due wet and snow-covered nesting habitat. OSU researchers in the Warner Unit report a delay in first nest incubation by marked hens of nine days from the previous year. Lek survey results are being analyzed. The snowmelt, however, provides excellent nesting and foraging habitat this spring and summer, which is good for nesting hens and broods considering the last six-plus years of drought in southeastern Oregon.

Staff and volunteers with the Adopt-a-Lek program surveyed from March 15 to early May this year. Surveys typically end April 30.

Removing Bullfrogs to Monitor Oregon Spotted Frog Response
Since 2014, Conservation Program biologist Simon Wray has collaborated with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to survey Oregon spotted frogs during the April breeding season in the Wood River Valley of the Klamath Basin. A private land survey site known to contain bullfrogs showed a noticeable increase of these invasive frogs in 2018 with surviving Oregon spotted frogs abandoning the manmade ponds for refuge at nearby irrigation ditches.

With the ranch owner’s concern for our native frogs, the partnership continued and a grant was awarded to remove bullfrogs and monitor the response and recovery of Oregon spotted frogs. These frogs are federal listed as threatened and are an Oregon Conservation Strategy Species. Once ranging from British Columbia to northern California, Oregon spotted frogs are now believed...
to be extirpated in California and only known at a handful of sites in B.C. with the Upper Deschutes basin containing the strongest remaining populations. Federally listed as threatened in 2014, the Oregon spotted frog is also an Oregon Conservation Strategy Species.

Bullfrog removal is strategic and takes advantage of the complexity of their life history and interactions between different size and age classes. The effort in 2019 focuses on removing bullfrog eggs, tadpoles, and newly metamorphosed juveniles. In 2020, removal shifts adults and any younger frogs and tadpoles initially missed. Other bullfrog eradication techniques include water level and habitat manipulation that exploits their life history weaknesses.

By learning how the two species interact in each of the ponds, we can help the landowner tweak bullfrog removal to tip the scale in favor of our native frog. If successful, we hope to develop tools and techniques that can be applied to other sites experiencing conflicts between bullfrogs and native amphibians.

Social Media Helps Find Native Turtle a New Home
Communications staff posted to our Conservation Facebook page information on a pet turtle entangled in twine found by an individual in Woodburn who brought it to Portland Audubon’s Wildlife Care Center. The Western painted turtle, an Oregon Conservation Strategy Species, had a screw inserted in its shell for tethering purposes. The care center removed the screw and treated the turtle’s neck abrasions.

With its unknown origin and the screw injury being so old, this turtle was held captive for quite some time was not eligible to be released back into the wild. The Oregon High Desert museum saw the post and sent a message offering to rehome the turtle at the museum to be used for public education and display. Conservation Program staff issued the museum a Letter of Authorization to possess the live turtle.

OCEAN SALMON AND COLUMBIA RIVER PROGRAM
Tucker Jones, Ocean Salmon and Columbia River Program Manager

Estimating smolt abundance at Bonneville Dam.

The Comparative Survival Study (CSS) began over two decades ago with the purpose of providing technical information and analyses to managers and scientists throughout the region. Since its beginning, staff from the Ocean Salmon and Columbia River Program (OSCRP) have contributed expertise, particularly related to salmon populations in Oregon. In keeping with this, in 2018 current members of the CSS from OSCRIP began to explore an approach to estimate smolt passage at Bonneville Dam. An absolute estimate of smolt passage at Bonneville Dam will provide a direct measure of fish making it through the hydrosystem, help enhance understanding of population dynamics, and ultimately could shed light on factors that might limit survival; for instance density dependence in the lower Columbia River and Estuary or in the early ocean phase.
We focused initially on spring migrant yearling Chinook and our work was broken into four primary steps:

1. Estimate detection probability at Bonneville Dam;
2. Develop a model to explore relationships between detection probability and other variables;
3. Assess the ability of our model to predict detection probability when it could not otherwise be estimated directly;
4. Combine direct estimates of detection probability and model predictions to estimate total passage at Bonneville Dam.

Across the period we considered in our analysis (2000–2017), estimates of detection probability at Bonneville Dam varied both within and among years and our approach seemed sensitive to factors we would expect to affect detection probability. Our approach to modeling identified five important variables: spill proportion, the number of screens in place in powerhouse units, the ratio of powerhouse 1 to powerhouse 2 flow, whether the Bonneville corner collector (a surface oriented passage structure) was in operation, and seasonality (as expressed by day of year).

Our model performed well when we applied it to predict detection probability with direct estimates generally corresponding closely with model predictions. Like detection probability, estimates of abundance for spring migrant yearling Chinook varied among years. Review of output from our approach seems to indicate relatively stable annual estimates.

We see this work as a promising start on which to expand. Future work will seek to refine the approach and better characterize uncertainty. Details can be found in Chapter 9 of the 2018 CSS Annual Report (http://www.fpc.org/documents/memos/8-19.pdf).

END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR June 7, 2019