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ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
October 14, 2022

East Region

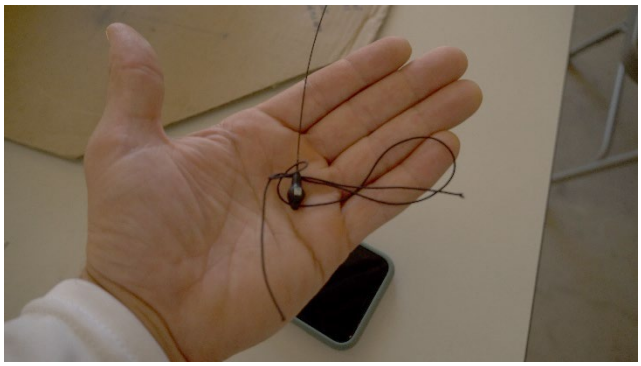
Nick Myatt, Region Manager

Motus tower installed at Ladd Marsh

In collaboration with MPG Ranch in Montana, the East Region Conservation Biologist and the Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area (WMA) Manager installed a Motus tower array and receiver at Ladd Marsh headquarters. The site is now online with information available at the Motus website: https://motus.org

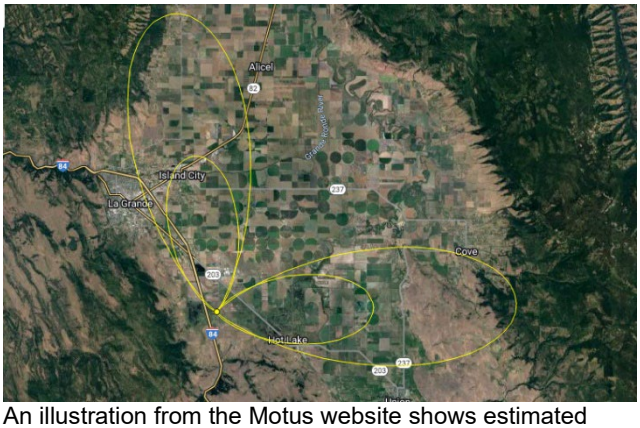
A Motus array is installed alongside the Ladd Marsh WMA headquarters, August 2022. ODFW photo.

The Motus Wildlife Tracking System is an international research network that uses automated radio telemetry to gather data on a variety of migratory animals. This is the first Motus tower to be installed in the Grande Ronde watershed. Data will be shared publicly as it becomes available.



A radio telemetry backpack that Motus towers can detect. August 2022. ODFW photo.

In order to install the Motus system, wildlife area staff prepared the site by adding an external electrical outlet to the main barn. Staff also worked with the MPG Ranch project leader in assembling and anchoring the tower.



An illustration from the Motus website shows estimated antenna ranges from the site at Ladd Marsh, September 2022.

Wenaha River Chinook surveys

Wallowa District fish staff and the Nez Perce Tribe's Research Division staff conducted annual Chinook spawning ground surveys on the Wenaha River in the Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness.

Wallowa District Fish Biologist Kyle Bratcher and Shane Vatland with the Nez Perce Tribe Research Division, extract a fin from a Chinook carcass. ODFW photo.

In addition to surveying for redds, staff collected data on Chinook carcasses and documented signs of beaver in many stretches of the river and tributaries such as the south and north forks of the Wenaha and Butte Creek to the Washington

border. The surveys help to determine the number of wild spring Chinook in the system and to understand the number of hatchery fish straying into the watershed.

A beaver dam along the Wenaha River in a side channel can be seen near the river trail on the right. ODFW photo.

This was the second year that the survey team used inflatable kayaks to navigate the river. The United States Forest Service, (USFS) Wenaha River Trail's condition is impassable in many sections and kayaking is the safest and best approach for surveying during the two-week time period.

A female spring Chinook as seen in the Wenaha River during spawning ground surveys, September 2022. ODFW photo.

The Wenaha River supports a wild spring Chinook population that has never been supplemented. Spawning fish swim about 600 miles from the Pacific Ocean to the Wild and Scenic section of the Wenaha River. Steelhead, bull trout, white fish, and other small fish such as sculpin can be found as well.

Watch a short video about the project here: https://youtu.be/SZN1N7Y9fC0

Natural Resource Conservation Service positions to assist private landowners in habitat projects

East Region recently filled two Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Strategy Liaison positions in Redmond and Klamath Falls. The positions will help private landowners who want to improve riparian habitat, using practices such as installing Beaver Dam Analogs, for example. There is also an existing position based out of The Dalles and two positions in West Region.

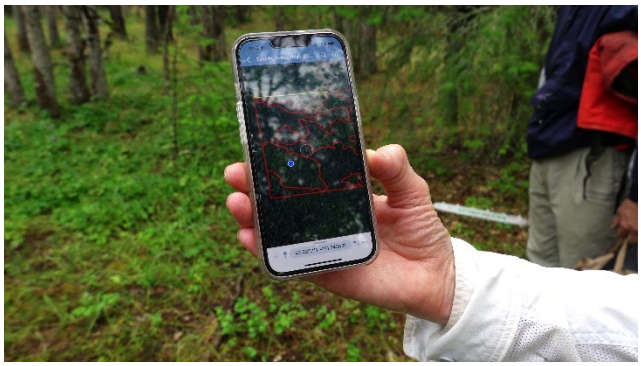
The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and NRCS has had cooperative positions in East Region for over a decade – including Baker City, Heppner, Ontario, and Lakeview but these are new positions at those two locations.

A landowner in the Rowena area near The Dalles who is participating in a NRCS/ODFW restoration project examines a stand of white oak on his property, July 2022. ODFW photo.

As positions become vacant, ODFW works with NRCS to shift the positions around to where they are most needed. Positions are ODFW employees stationed in NRCS field offices and primarily funded by federal funds through an agreement with NRCS. Staff in these positions assist private agricultural producers in implementing habitat and conservation projects on their private land.

ODFW and NRCS work to find joint priorities, many of which focus on priorities identified in the Conservation Strategy and Climate Change Policy. The liaisons assist NRCS with the implementation of a variety of Farm Bill Programs including the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, Conservation Reserve

Enhancement Program, Wetland Reserve Program, and Conservation Stewardship Program.



A digital map (Geospatial PDF) shown here was created by the Oregon Department of Forestry to assist landowners on forest treatments. ODFW photo.

Private landowners implement a wide variety of conservation practices through these programs, such as improving riparian and aquatic habitat, implementing forestry practices that target conservation strategy species, such as large snag creation and retention for woodpeckers and bats, and they work on invasive species control and planting of native grasses and forbs.

West Region

Chris Kern, Region Manager

Beaver habitat project with Willamette National Forest

The South Willamette Watershed District recently amended our Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) agreement with the Willamette National Forest to add a new project focused on beaver habitat. The project will inventory beaver habitat and assess restoration opportunities on federal land within the North Santiam drainage and the Lionshead Fire footprint.

Corvallis District wildlife staff did an initial field site visit with the wildlife biologist and the botanist from the Detroit Ranger District. Staff also conducted a training day with the Ranger District's wildlife crew and Bonneville Environmental Foundation, who is leading survey work for Mid-Willamette Beaver Partnership.

One large dam complex and a few river sections of potential beaver habitat were surveyed. Going forward, staff will work with the Detroit Ranger District to identify other areas to survey for current beaver activity and areas where restoration may encourage additional beaver occupancy. This activity supports the recommendations of the ODFW Beaver Management Work Group and the goals of the Forest Service, Partners of the North Santiam, and the Mid-Willamette Beaver Partnership to restore beaver in the North Santiam watershed.

Crews will use two different protocols for the surveys: the Beaver Restoration Assessment Tool (BRAT) protocol, and the American Beaver Activity Survey Protocol for the Pacific Northwest.

BRAT is a capacity model developed to assess the upper limits of riverscapes to support beaver dam-building activities, while the beaver activity protocol is designed to detect and interpret beaver activity, including cryptic sign of non-damming beaver that can be easily overlooked. Together, these protocols should provide a clearer picture of where beaver are present on the landscape and the potential for habitat restoration and beaver reestablishment in the surveyed areas.

Detroit Ranger District Wildlife Team and staff with Bonneville Environmental Foundation and ODFW cross the North Santiam River during a training on stream surveys to ground truth the BRAT and assess the model's ability to predict and assess beaver dam capacity.

Greg Reed (ODFW) measuring pond depth of a secondary dam within a beaver dam complex on a North Santiam River side channel.

Long-term habitat restoration project continues

The Douglas Wildlife District has been working with the Umpqua National Forest (UNF) since 2008, creating more forest openings to provide optimal habitat for prairie-dependent wildlife species and enhance big game forage. Since then, more than 1,000 acres of habitat have been improved or created.

In the cooperative agreement, the UNF provides seven months of funding for a Douglas Wildlife District Fish and Wildlife Technician and contributes to costs of fuel for ODFW trucks, tractors, machinery, and the cost of renting equipment. The Wildlife District provides additional staff and equipment for the projects.

The large system of PacifiCorp powerlines in the Diamond Lake Ranger District provides an opportunity to use existing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) coverage on maintaining these openings. This summer, staff began mastication of shrubs and young conifers along a section of the powerline right-of-way in the Thorn Prairie area. This prairie is overrun with conifers and mature white thorn bushes, neither of which provide habitat for prairie-dependent wildlife species.

Encroaching conifers (left) compared to the ODFW-treated area (right). Mowing occurred under the PacifiCorp powerline (middle).

This area of Thorn Prairie is being mowed to remove overgrown white thorn bushes that are past their prime in feeding big game.

Fish salvaged prior to top-priority fish barrier removal

North Willamette Watershed Fish District staff participated in a two-day fish salvage associated with the Balm Grove Dam removal on Gales Creek in the Tualatin River Basin. The site was one of the top priority fish passage barriers in the district and the removal project was many years in the making.

Staff were pleased to help relocate multiple Endangered Species Act-listed juvenile winter steelhead, along with coho, cutthroat trout, lampreys, and other native species. No non-native species were encountered.

Dam removal is expected to open approximately 29 miles of instream habitat for winter steelhead and 87 miles to coastal cutthroat trout!

Radio-tagging Coquille smallmouth bass

Leftover lamprey radio tags from a previous tagging project are being used to tag eight-inch or larger smallmouth bass in the South Fork Coquille River. Some bass may be tagged in other portions of the Coquille Basin.

Charleston fisheries staff are looking for opportunities to get as many of these non-native fish out of the Coquille system as possible. Location and timing of overwintering areas and spring movement upstream may help staff remove more bass during electroshocking or experiment with alternative removal methods such as trapping.

Radio tags are surgically implanted and can be tracked up to 18 months depending on battery life.

Radio telemetry equipment is used to track tagged fish.

Information and Education
Roger Fuhrman, Information and Education Administrator

Anti-Poaching campaign making strides

The anti-poaching effort remains strong. OSP Fish and Wildlife (F&W) Division named their Prosecutor of the Year award recipient at the annual Oregon District Attorney Association conference in Seaside last month. Clackamas County Assistant District Attorney Alexander Hayes received a framed print of an elk, provided by the Oregon Hunters Association. Hayes received the award based on his record in prosecuting crimes against fish and wildlife, and his dedication to preserving Oregon's natural resources.

Clackamas County Assistant District Attorney (ADA) Alexander Hayes received the OSP F&W Prosecutor of the Year Award. From left to right: Jay D. Hall, Captain Casey Thomas, Sergeant Scott McLeod, Trooper Brent Chose, ADA Hayes, Brian Wolfer, ODFW Big Game Program manager.

During the conference, Assistant Attorney General Jay D. Hall, who is the wildlife anti-poaching resources prosecutor with the Oregon Department of Justice, led a session on how to prosecute fish and wildlife crimes, and why it is important. Hall works with prosecutors across the state, in a role that Oregon legislators created within the anti-poaching effort.

OSP F&W Troopers unveiled the newly restored Trailer of Shame during the Oregon District Attorneys Association (ODAA) conference. The trailer exhibits mounts of fish and wildlife, and equipment seized from poachers. The display includes the story of each item displayed. It will

bring attention to poaching crimes and will be on display at sportsman's shows, fairs and other events across the state.

The education and awareness component of the anti-poaching effort has contracted with an opinion research firm to conduct a statewide survey about Oregonians' opinions, assumptions, and knowledge of poaching. The survey will inform the campaign in developing messaging and creating visual elements. The campaign is also procuring advertising services. Several companies have replied to a request for proposals and the evaluation process is underway.

The Stop Poaching campaign has purchased billboard advertising on Highway 26 near Seaside, telling the public how to report poaching. The campaign also created a storyboard about a recent sturgeon poaching case at Scappoose Bay for the State Fair. The illustrator, who is from Albany, created a stir with her bright colors, and many youngsters were drawn into the story.

Oregon State Police

Captain Casey Thomas, Fish & Wildlife Division

In spring of 2022, a Fish and Wildlife Trooper discovered information on social media of a subject harvesting big game, game birds, and wild steelhead without any licenses or tags in southern Curry County. Intelligence indicated that the subject had harvested a spring bear, spring turkey, and three wild steelhead in 2022 without purchasing any tags or license. Additionally, it was discovered the subject had likely falsely applied for a resident hunting license, angling license and deer tag in 2020. The subject was utilizing false addresses through the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and ODFW. In late August, local Troopers observed the suspect standing on the side of the roadway and made contact. The subject was criminally cited and released for Take/Possession of Bear, Take/Possession of Game Bird-Turkey, Take/Possession of Buck Deer, No Resident Hunting License, Take/Possession of Wild Steelhead, and No Resident Angling License. Additional charges are being referred to the District Attorney's Office. A Mathews compound bow, a shotgun and buck deer antlers were seized.

Items seized by Oregon State Police.

Poacher shoots deer with rifle during archery season

A Fish and Wildlife Trooper received a complaint from a subject who was watching a group of deer on a hill above La Grande when he heard a rifle shot. One of the deer fell and rolled down the hill. The Trooper arrived in the area and saw one subject on the hillside looking for the deer; a Fish and Wildlife Sergeant arrived, and a second subject was observed. The two subjects found the buck deer and began to process it while the Troopers observed. A rifle was clearly visible on the ground next to the deer, along with two bows. After processing the deer, the two subjects took photos and then removed an arrow from one of their bows and stuck it into the gut pile and rolled it in blood before returning it to the quiver. They drug the deer down the hill and were contacted. The shooter ultimately admitted to shooting the buck with his rifle in archery season. He was cited and released for Take/Possession of Buck Deer. The three-point buck, a rifle and the bloody arrow were seized as evidence. The second subject was cited for Aiding/Counseling in game violation.

Poacher shoots Wildlife Enforcement Decoy with 9mm pistol after legal hours

Fish and Wildlife Troopers ran a buck deer Wildlife Enforcement Decoy (WED) in rural Yamhill County after legal hours on the opening day of archery season. Approximately 45 minutes after legal light, a pickup occupied by two people pulled into the set, illuminating the

WED with the headlights. The driver fired one round with a 9mm handgun out of the window of the pickup, striking the WED in the shoulder. The subjects immediately fled the scene and were stopped by the Troopers. An interview of the subjects revealed the passenger had told the driver to shoot the deer and handed him his handgun. The passenger had both deer and elk archery tags, and the driver had an archery elk tag. The subjects were cited and released for multiple wildlife crimes and the handgun was seized as evidence.

Conservation Program

Emily VanWyk, Acting Oregon Conservation Strategy Coordinator

White-headed woodpecker project with USFS and wildlife interns

Throughout the 2022 field season the East Region Conservation Biologist in partnership with the USFS began a long-term White-headed woodpecker (WHWO) project in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. A goal of the project is to understand different forest management treatments and impacts on WHWO. A team of wildlife interns assisted in the field work and contributed to data collection.

A white-headed woodpecker is captured for a short period of time for biologists to affix a radio telemetry transmitter to its tail feathers. USFS photo.

A unique part of the project especially for the interns was in capturing and handling woodpeckers to attach radio telemetry backpacks. Other research included deploying audio recording units to capture call and drum audio signatures, cavity/nest site checks, and radio telemetry tracking.

ODFW Interns work with a USFS biologist to check a white-headed woodpecker cavity in a decaying ponderosa pine in the Wallowa-Whiteman National Forest. USFS Photo.

Watch a short video about the project here: https://youtu.be/vQu-2173pU8

Marine Resources Program

Caren Braby, Marine Resources Program Manager

Ocean reports now available

To aid the Oregon legislature in preparing for the upcoming long legislative session, three reports will be available this fall that address the marine environment

The first report is an analysis of the benefits and challenges of siting floating offshore wind development, off the Oregon coast. Per Oregon legislative House Bill 3375, the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) was charged with developing this report to consider the renewable energy benefits, infrastructure needed, technology readiness, and permitting process related specifically to the wind industry, as well as existing uses, ecosystem impacts, and other siting trade-offs for bringing on this new use in the ocean. While there are potential benefits for fish and wildlife (such as reducing CO2

emissions and reliance on non-renewable fossil fuels), there are significant potential challenges as well (including conflict with existing fisheries, impacts of development on habitat and protected species). The report is available to the public on ODOE's website:
FOSW Study webpage

Also just released, the Oregon Coordinating Council on Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia (OAH Council) has completed its third biennial report to the legislature. This report documents recent actions by the OAH Council and work planned for the upcoming two-year period, implementing the six-year OAH Action Plan. Covering major topics in climate and ocean change, the OAH Council's work touches on science, monitoring, mitigation, resilience and strengthening our governmental approach to managing ocean change issues. There are highlights on fisherman-scientist roundtables, potential for a fishermen's app to voluntarily get involved in reporting ocean conditions, as well as an ocean status update, and other useful information on ocean change. For more information, visit the OAH Council's website or download the report here:
2022 OAH Council Biennial Legislative Report.

In October, we will see the final reports for the legislature on the 2023 Evaluation of Oregon's Marine Reserves Program, which is housed in the marine program. Earlier this year, the Department's team finished their synthesis of work accomplished over the past 13 years of the program. Since that time, the synthesis has been peer-reviewed by a team of university experts, led by Oregon State University, who will release their findings and recommendations in October. The Department has learned a tremendous amount about the science and management of the five marine reserves areas, as well as adjacent areas that have also been under study. Next year will be a new era in the marine reserves program, having built excellent research reference sites, scientific collaborations, and partnerships with coastal communities. For more on the marine reserves program and the synthesis report, visit the marine reserves website:
Oregon Marine Reserves - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

End of field reports for October 14, 2022