



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
April 17, 2009

NORTHEAST REGION

Craig Ely, Regional Manager

Sage-Grouse

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been conducting trapping efforts to radio sage-grouse throughout Baker County this spring. The original intent was to spread the radios out equally between at least 4 to 5 lek sites; however, several of the lek sites had only 1 to 2 displaying males so USFWS concentrated trapping efforts on just two leks. Currently, 16 radioed birds, seven females and nine males, are on the air and being monitored by the USFWS staff.

Retired ODFW biologist Dick Humphries has contracted with the Department to conduct 15 hours of helicopter flights over lek sites in Keating, Lookout and Catherine Creek Units. With the cold wet weather, helicopter flights were delayed until the first weekend of April.

All this effort to collect sage-grouse inventories is aimed at determining home range distribution. In Baker County a 500kv power transmission line is in the planning stages and may cross near sage-grouse lek sites. In addition, a 450 wind turbine farm is in the planning stages on BLM lands within Baker County.

Oregon Wolf Activity

Reports of wolf activity throughout the state continue to generate interest with the public and livestock owners. In March 14 wolf reports were investigated, 10 in eastern Oregon and four in western Oregon. When a wolf report is picked up by the media, it generally generates additional reports of wolf sightings or the public observing tracks.

Aerial monitoring continues for missing radioed wolves from Idaho. Last summer ODFW staff was monitoring B-300, a collared female, in the Imnaha Unit. Several attempts to locate the female this winter have been unsuccessful. One flight was conducted in the central and south-central Oregon Cascades for wolves with no radio collared wolves detected.

In late March, ODFW received word that the new wolf delisting rule by the USFWS was scheduled to be published on April 2, and would go into effect on May 4, 2009. This delisting will remove the Northern Rocky District Population Segment of gray wolves from the federal list of threatened and endangered species and will affect the eastern one-third of Oregon. The Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan adopted in December 2005 would then guide wolf management decisions.

ODFW continues to monitor two wolf-related bills; SB391 and HB3383 in the 2009 Oregon Legislature. Both of these bills, if passed, would cause a rewrite of Oregon's Wolf Plan. The Plan stipulates a five year review which will come up sometime in 2010.

NORTHWEST REGION

Chris Wheaton, Region Manager

Raccoon Distemper

ODFW Wildlife biologists captured a sick raccoon in Beaverton in late March. All clinical signs point to Canine Distemper. The Portland Audubon wildlife care center has also received several raccoons with distemper from the Hillsboro area over the past month. Periodic distemper outbreaks are a frequent cause of raccoon mortality, particular in urban areas. When these outbreaks occur we generally get a large increase in calls from concerned members of the public. We will be coordinating with Audubon and ODFW's Information and Education staff on public information about the outbreak.

Wildlife Product Sales

Goodwill Industries requested that ODFW biologists from our Springfield office examine donated animal products to determine their origin and the legality of selling them. The Lane County and southwest coast area Goodwill stores have a new policy that all donated animal products will be routed to Eugene for processing. Our staff examined about 20 products, and had to seek advice from the USFWS on some items, including ivory carvings and caiman handbags.

Northern Elephant Seal

After the excitement of last month's sea otter sighting near Depoe Bay, a caller contacted ODFW to report that a sea otter was stranded on the beach at Neskowin. Investigation revealed the marine mammal to be a Northern elephant seal undergoing a molt. Once a year the animals come ashore and shed their fur and the first layer of skin in sheets, as new skin and fur replace old. Sea otters can weigh up to 100 pounds, making them the largest member of the weasel family, but considerably smaller than an elephant seal, which can top the scales at 1,700 pounds for females and 5,000 pounds for males.



Photo by Victor Scheffer, National Marine Mammal Laboratory

The Northern elephant seal is the only mammal known to make two long distance migrations in a year. They travel from their breeding colonies in Mexico and California to the north Pacific Ocean twice annually, returning once to molt and then again to breed. They may travel up to 21,000 miles in a year, the longest migration known for any mammal.

Noteworthy Retirement

Jerry Ronne has officially submitted his notice of retirement after 45 years of outstanding service to ODFW, effective June 30, 2009. Jerry has been waterfowl guru and the face of the agency to duck hunters on Sauvie Island since JFK was President.

HIGH DESERT REGION

Chip Dale, Region Manager

High Desert Big Game Inventory

High Desert Region staff recently completed spring inventory for deer, elk, and bighorn sheep. Across the region, mule deer fawn ratios are near maintenance levels ranging from 30 to 40 fawns per 100 does. Over-winter fawn survival ranged from 53 percent to 96 percent with the better survival in the western portions of the region. All of the herds started the winter with

relatively low fawn numbers, thus even in units exhibiting good survival fawn numbers are relatively low. Generally, all units have good to excellent buck ratios so tag recommendations will likely be similar to last season with a few exceptions.

Elk numbers throughout much of the High Desert Region appear to be stable with herds at or near management objectives. Of note the East Beulah elk herd appears to be increasing in recent years with nearly 600 elk observed this year, an increase of over 100 elk in the past year. Despite the increase, damage remains under control. Elk trend counts in the Malheur River, Silvies and Ochoco units showed strong increases, some of which may be explained by excellent inventory conditions.

Bighorn sheep populations throughout much of the region are relatively stable with lamb numbers around 29 to 42 lambs per 100 ewes. The lower Deschutes and west John Day sheep herds continue to be the stronghold for the Region. However, bighorn sheep in portions of Lake County continue to struggle. In most Lake County herds bighorn ram ratios have been below average for the past several years indicating that ram survival is reduced.

Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Restoration

Staff continues to implement the Lahontan cutthroat trout restoration effort in the McDermitt Creek Watershed. This is the third year in a three-year effort to remove non-native trout from the McDermitt Creek watershed. Staff from ODFW, the Nevada Department of Wildlife, the USFWS, and other agencies is scheduled to apply rotenone to over 21 miles of lower McDermitt Creek and tributaries in August 2009. After this treatment is completed, approximately 50 miles of habitat will be available for native Lahontan cutthroat trout. Native Lahontan cutthroat trout will be stocked in all treated reaches once treatments are deemed successful.

In conjunction with the Lahontan cutthroat trout restoration effort, ODFW is seeking to develop a Safe Harbor Agreement with the USFWS, followed by specific conservation agreements with landowners. The main purpose of these agreements is to encourage voluntary management for listed species on non-Federal property while assuring that no additional future regulatory restrictions will be imposed on participating landowners. A draft Safe Harbor Agreement has been developed and reviewed by ODFW, and is currently under review by the USFWS prior to going out for public comment.

Region-wide Water Supply

The Cascades, including the upper Deschutes watershed, received slightly above normal precipitation this winter. As such, each of the Cascade reservoirs which include Crane Prairie, Wickiup and Crescent reservoirs and Davis Lake are expected to fill this spring. This is the third consecutive favorable water year which should result in excellent angling opportunities in standing waterbodies throughout the upper Deschutes.

Forecasts are not quite as favorable in the Crooked River watershed. Snowpack in the Ochocos was slightly below average. However, good storage level post 2008 irrigation season in Prineville Reservoir will enable it to fill to full pool in 2009. Ochoco Reservoir is not expected to fill this year and will likely reach maximum elevation at 80 percent of capacity. This may result in reduced angler opportunity by the middle of August. Early season prospects are favorable in both Ochoco and Prineville reservoirs. A poor snowpack next winter would result in adverse water conditions and significantly reduced opportunity in both reservoirs.

Many of the large district irrigation reservoirs in the Malheur Watershed District will not fill this year. As a result, these reservoirs will be drained to minimum levels for three consecutive years. The runoff is so low in some areas that some reservoirs will go dry early in the summer.

Even though Beulah and Bully Creek reservoirs could fill this spring, Warm Springs Reservoir will not exceed 48% of capacity. Since all three reservoirs are operated together, they will all be drawn down to minimum levels. Drawing Beulah and Warm Springs reservoirs down to minimum levels will also affect the tailrace fishery from Riverside downstream to Juntura.

Table 1: The current storage levels, predicted inflows and predicted maximum storage and the percent of total storage at three reservoirs in Malheur County, Oregon.

Water Body	Current Storage	Predicted Inflow	Predicted Storage	% Full
Beulah Reservoir	27,686	44,000	71,680	120%
Warm Springs Res.	37,395	55,000	92,395	48%
Owyhee Reservoir	360,533	300,000	660,533	92%

Malheur and Pole Creek reservoirs in the Willow Creek drainage of the Malheur River will most likely be

drained in late summer, which will cause them to lose one of their popular trout fisheries.

Chickahominy Reservoir received no additional runoff this spring, and is currently at approximately 15 percent of capacity. There are multiple age classes of rainbow trout in the reservoir. However, given low water levels, the fishery will probably be lost this summer.

Even with low water throughout the district, many of the stock water ponds scattered around the district are full. Those that we have stocked over the past two years should have good carry-over trout populations.

Klamath Basin water supplies are currently 78 percent of average. Despite the below average water year the Bureau of Reclamation believes that they will be able to provide a full supply of water to both the irrigators, as well as for downstream fish needs. Irrigation season and subsequent delivery of water to irrigators was delayed for Project irrigators until April 10.

Clear Lake, located just south of the Oregon border, provides much of the irrigation water for Langell Valley irrigators. Irrigators in upper Langell Valley may be faced with shortages if additional precipitation doesn't materialize.

Lake County is experiencing below average precipitation. Many reservoirs normally stocked with trout will not be stocked in 2009 due to low water. Currently, Spaulding reservoir is dry. Paiute and Sunstone are extremely low and may go dry this year. The Silver Lake Irrigation District has notified local ODFW staff that they will bring Thompson Valley Reservoir to "dead storage" level this year. Stream flows in Lake County are expected to reach summertime low flow levels early in the season.

SOUTHWEST REGION

Russ Stauff, Acting Region Manager

Bob Mace Watchable Wildlife Programs

Bob Mace was a former career ODFW employee and Deputy Director for Field Operations when he retired in the early 1980's. Bob was born and raised in the Rogue Valley near lower Table Rock and moved back to his family farm when he retired. Bob is credited with coining the phrase "Watchable Wildlife" while he was the Wildlife Division Administrator, prior to becoming Deputy Director. Upon his retirement, Bob and his wife Phyllis bequeathed \$2.5 million for two separate watchable wildlife programs and established a trust fund to benefit wildlife and fisheries habitat and public opportunity. Bob Mace died in 2006; he was preceded in death by his wife Phyllis, who died in 2005.

The Maces provided a \$1.5 million endowment for the Mace Watchable Wildlife Chair and scholarship fund at Oregon State University. The Professorship associated with this endowment is currently held by Bruce Dugger, prior to Dugger it was held by Commissioner Edge for five years.

The Maces also provided \$1 million to the Jackson County Expo Park for the construction of a Watchable Wildlife education center. A ground-breaking ceremony was held last week at the Expo Park to begin construction; the building is scheduled for completion in time for the Jackson County Fair this summer.

The Maces created a trust fund associated with a 150 acre property near the Rogue River in an area known as High Banks, owned by Bob Mace's family. This property is an upland site situated between the Rogue River and Whetstone Creek, and is zoned for aggregate mining. The property has no riparian habitat associated with the development and offers very little habitat value. This site will be developed for aggregate mining over the next 20 years, with the royalty on the aggregate sold going into a trust fund, managed by the Oregon Community Foundation. Upon reclamation the property will move into state ownership to be managed as a public fishery resource. The reclamation plan to meet this goal has been developed by ODFW staff, Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI), and the operator.

During the approximately 20 years it will take to fully develop the property, royalties will be paid to the trust fund. Revenues from the trust fund will be used to provide for wildlife and fisheries habitat, and public use in the area of the Rogue River near High Banks, the Denman Wildlife Management Area, Table Rocks and Touvelle State Park.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Roger Fuhrman, Administrator

ODFW Website

Efforts to increase visibility and use of the ODFW website have been extremely successful. Between April 2008 and April 2009, visits to the ODFW website increased by 282 percent over the April 2007 to April 2008 time period. More than 35 percent of the 2.6 million visitors were new users of the ODFW website. Online use of the ODFW recreation report also increased significantly. Visitation to that portion of the site increased 325 percent over the previous year. ODFW staff took a number of steps to raise the visibility of the site, including developing bookmarks, business cards, and working with media and other partners to drive traffic to the ODFW website.

Economic Survey Outreach

Results of the ODFW-Travel Oregon economic survey will be presented at the Governor's Conference on Tourism on April 20 in Salem. Dean Runyan from Dean Runyan and Associates will present the information to members of the travel and tourism industry, government officials, and other participants in the annual meeting.

Several presentations on the results of the economic survey have been made over the past two months, including presentations to the Oregon Outdoor Recreation Council, Sports Group Leaders, Warm Water Working Group and regional and watershed managers. Once the final report is received, the information will be pushed out to ODFW staff, government agencies, and other interested parties.

ODFW is working with Dean Runyan and Associates and Travel Oregon on the development of an interactive, web-based presentation of the economic survey report. When completed, the web application will allow users to search the report for information on a specific county, region or activity. The web application will allow users to easily export charts, graphs, spreadsheets, and other search results for use in presentations, written reports and other uses.

Youth Hunting and Fishing Events Abound

Several successful fun hunting, fishing, youth and family events have been held during April and more are scheduled. Approximately 85 youth and their families attended the ODFW-Oregon Hunter's Association (OHA) Youth Turkey Clinic held at the White River Wildlife Area on April 4. The clinic included instruction on turkey calling, turkey hunting strategies and shotgun patterning. The ODFW Hunter Education Program provided each youth participant with a slate turkey call and hat. OSP Troopers, the ODFW Hunter Education Coordinator and the ODFW White River Wildlife Area Manager were also on hand to speak to the participants and answer questions. The event was largely coordinated by OHA and the education sessions were run by volunteers.

Youth Angling Enhancement events are in full swing across the state. On April 4, several events were held. More than 300 youth participated in a full day of fishing at McNary Channel Pond. In Canby, a youth fishing event at Canby Pond drew hundreds of kids and families. Canby Pond is a new youth and disabled-only fishing location. The event was a great success and was featured in Bill Monroe's column in the Sunday Oregonian.

An Angler Education after school program at Hallman Elementary in Salem culminated in a family fishing

event at Cascade Gateway. About 50 youth and adults participated and for many, this was their first fishing experience.

Planned events include a collaborative event with the Oregon Chapter of Project Healing Water and the Oregon Fishing Club. Project Healing Water is dedicated to the physical and emotional rehabilitation of disabled active duty military personnel and veterans through fly fishing and fly tying education and outings.

MARINE RESOURCES PROGRAM

Caren Braby, Program Manager

Sport Groundfish Open Houses

Background: Sport Groundfish staff is preparing to conduct open houses in Newport, Brookings and Garibaldi in May 2009.

Anglers need information about groundfish fishing to make the best use of bag limits, to minimize discard mortality, to report accurate information to creel samplers, and to understand the rationale behind management decisions, both preseason and in-season. The audience is saltwater anglers with various levels of experience.

Highlights:

1. The format will allow participants to interact with ODFW staff and to inspect information stations at their own pace.
2. There will be several stations, each addressing a separate topic using posters, slide shows, displays, video clips and staff:
 - Sport groundfish identification
 - Reducing unintended rockfish mortality
 - Research (yellowtail rockfish EFP)
 - Management of limited species
3. Many anglers rarely or never get a chance to interact with Marine Resources Program office staff.
4. Open houses will take place just prior to the busy angling season.

Concerns: This method of outreach by MRP is new and attendance may be low.

Next Steps: The dates and locations of open houses will be finalized, and open houses will be publicized.



A yelloweye rockfish. Anglers want to know how to identify it, why they cannot keep it, and how to release it safely.

OREGON STATE POLICE FISH AND WILDLIFE DIVISION

Captain Walt Markee, Division Director

Commercial Skipper Sentenced in Lincoln County on Charges Related to Crab Pot Thefts

As previously reported, in August 2008 a Newport Bayfront commercial skipper contacted Sr. Trooper Urbigkeith, Newport Patrol Office, to report some of his commercial crab pots that were missing were being offloaded from another vessel that was bringing in pots at the close of the ocean commercial Dungeness crab season. Further investigation led to the arrest of a 23-year-old Toledo suspect. During the investigation, troopers seized 175 crab pots from the suspect's vessel and residence and have returned about 110 to their identified owners. Troopers also recovered a \$2,500 line coiler reported stolen three months earlier from a Newport fishing vessel. They also discovered 610 pounds of wasted Dungeness crab on the suspect's vessel.

The suspect pled guilty in Lincoln County Circuit Court to charges of Aggravated Theft (commercial crab pots), Class B felony; Theft in the First Degree (commercial crab pots), Class C felony; Theft in the First Degree (line coiler), Class C felony; Theft in the Second Degree (commercial crab pots), Class A misdemeanor; and Waste of Food Fish—Dungeness crab, Class A misdemeanor. The court sentenced the suspect to two years probation for the felonies, along with no commercial fishing out of Yaquina Bay and no contact with the victims of the theft; 120 days in jail and five years probation for the Waste of Food Fish; \$3,500 in fines; \$15,800 in restitution, from which \$5,000 will go toward reimbursement to the Oregon Crabbers Protection Organization who offers a \$5,000 reward to individuals who turn in unlawful fishermen; \$2,549.80 in restitution for the waste of Dungeness crab. Many of the fishermen present at the sentencing were

given an opportunity to speak, and those who did made it clear that on top of their gear that was stolen, they will never receive the thousands of dollars worth of wrongfully taken crab. The suspect was taken into custody at the end of the hearing to begin serving his time. OSP still has approximately 65 crab pots stored at the Newport office and troopers continue to find their owners.

increased the fine amount to \$500 because the Judge felt that the harvester was dishonest with Sr. Trooper Guerra upon initial contact.

END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR April 17, 2009



Substantial Disposition for Violation

During March of 2009, Sr. Trooper Guerra, Tillamook Patrol Office, was observing clam harvesters at Netarts Bay. Sr. Trooper Guerra identified one group of clammers and a subsequent check of their bay clams in the parking lot revealed that all clams were contained in one container. Upon further investigation it was determined that one harvester was 10 clams over his limit. The harvester was dishonest with Sr. Trooper Guerra and came up with a different story to cover the over limit. Sr. Trooper Guerra subsequently issued the harvester a citation for Exceeding the Daily Limit of Bay Clams into Tillamook County Justice Court.

On April 2, 2009, the harvester appeared before Tillamook County Justice Court. After hearing testimony, Judge Lemery issued a verdict of guilty and