



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
November 13, 2020

EAST REGION

Mike Harrington, Acting Region Manager

Cold Springs Elk Damage

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is cooperating with private landowners, hunting organizations, and the Fish and Wildlife Service to address chronic and severe damage by elk raiding irrigated row crop farms adjacent to Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Efforts include reducing elk in the damage area with the use of long general seasons, controlled hunts, emergency hunters, Oregon Landowner Damage Program tags, and kill permits.



Large herd of elk on the Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuge

When we started this effort there were about 450 elk causing problems in the Cold Springs area. During the first two years of operation, we removed 195 elk using state and tribal hunters as well as kill permits. We donated elk taken with kill permits to the Oregon Food Bank affiliate, Community Action Program East Central Oregon (CAPECO).

The current Cold Springs elk population is near to 300 animals. This year's effort has already begun using hunters and CAPECO.

Snake River Steelhead Encounter Rate Study

Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) and University of Idaho (U of I) have completed the first year of a

study investigating the rate that anglers encounter steelhead in the Snake River Basin, including the Grande Ronde and Imnaha Rivers of Oregon. Understanding encounter rates is important for assessing fishery impacts on wild steelhead. Idaho, Oregon, and Washington fisheries are managed under the assumption that anglers encounter hatchery and wild steelhead at the same rate. Recent radio tagging studies in the Clearwater River indicate that anglers fish the distribution of wild steelhead less than that of hatchery steelhead and as a result have a lower encounter rate. Understanding actual encounter rates will allow agencies to more accurately estimate impacts to wild fish.



T-bar anchor tag near the dorsal fin of a steelhead in the Snake River basin

As part of this study, we tag both hatchery and wild adult steelhead with T-bar anchor and Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags at Lower Granite Dam. Anglers are encouraged to report when and where they catch tagged fish to estimate hatchery and wild encounter rates. We will estimate hooking mortality using the rate at which caught and released fish return to upper river sampling stations and hatcheries.

Initial results suggest that anglers encounter wild steelhead at significantly lower rate than they encounter hatchery steelhead. Additionally, it appears that the encounter rate of wild steelhead

may be lower for the Grande Ronde and Imnaha Rivers than for the rest of the Snake River Basin. Early results suggest hooking mortality rates are within the range allowed in our federal fishery permits.

Lostine Coho

The Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) and Department released 500,000 hatchery raised juvenile Coho salmon to the Lostine River in 2017 to evaluate the potential for reintroducing this extirpated run. Releases will continue through 2023 as part of this effort.



Grande Ronde Assistant District Fish Biologist holding a Lostine Coho

The first two releases yielded meager returns with only 43 fish trapped at the Lostine River weir operated by the NPT. This fall's return is expected to be strong, with as many as 3,000 hatchery Coho expected to pass the Snake River's Lower Granite Dam, bound for the Lostine River.

This abundant return allowed us to open Coho recreational harvest on the Grande Ronde River starting October 1. This pilot fishery is limited to an area where we monitor steelhead harvest so the role of a tributary Coho fishery can be factored into our overall reintroduction evaluation.

We expect to see noticeable natural spawning of hatchery Coho in the Lostine River this year. It is unclear exactly how successful the natural spawning was that we documented in the first two years. However, we documented our first naturally produced coho jack on October 15. We are interested to see how Coho spawners distribute through the Lostine and how successfully they are able to reproduce in future years.

WEST REGION

Bernadette Graham- Hudson, Region Manager

Willamette Falls Fishway repairs ensure safe passage for threatened fish

The fishway system (including fish ladders) at Willamette Falls was recently repaired. The fishway was closed from August 28 through October 5 to allow for the repairs. When the fishway was reopened on October 6, more than 3,700 coho and nearly 1,300 fall Chinook salmon passed the Falls.

Several areas of the fishway had ongoing issues with stability: one of the concrete aprons at fishway leg 2 became dislodged, a structural joint on the transport channel needed to be reworked to allow for movement, and a tensioning system was added at fishway leg 1. These were repaired to protect the structure from future scour at fishway leg 2 and to stop separation of the structure at leg 1, which could have led to failure of the fishway in the near future if left unfixed. Staff's biggest concern was catastrophic failure of the fish ladder that would keep any fish from using it, particularly the federally threatened and already fragile upper Willamette winter steelhead and spring Chinook.

This work was funded through a grant from the Fish Restoration and Enhancement Board, which is funded by recreational and commercial fishing license fees.





Willamette Falls fishway repairs were completed in early October

Project work required the shutdown of all the fish ladders in the fishway system. Fish using the system were delayed in their migration until it was reopened October 6. In this section of the Willamette River the in-water work period is July 1-October 31. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) chose September to do the work to have a minimal impact on the upper Willamette winter steelhead and spring Chinook populations.

Multi-lingual signs installed at St. Louis Ponds

St. Louis Ponds contains 54 acres of public fishing ponds with seven miles of shoreline among seven shallow ponds. It is a very popular, high-use warmwater fishing location in the mid-Willamette Valley. Anglers fish for largemouth bass, bluegill, sunfish, channel catfish, and bullhead catfish.

The Willamette Valley is rich in cultural diversity and languages. With that diversity in mind, ODFW staff used the ponds as a pilot location to install multi-lingual signage in Spanish, Russian, and English. The signs all contain the same maps, description of the location, species that can be found in the ponds, site rules, and angling regulations.

Staff worked to create this standard design for use in future kiosks or replacement kiosks for consistency across our fishing areas. The signs can be customized in size to have more or fewer panels. Funding for this project came from Sport Fish Restoration dollars.



New multi-lingual signs at St. Louis Ponds



Russian language sign



Spanish language sign

Staff have also begun installation of a new automated gate at the ponds. The Dalles Screen Shop staff set posts in concrete in mid-October and hung the gate in late-October. The Screen Shop fabricated an extremely high quality and strong gate for a cost lower than external bids. Once the project is completed there will be an ability to keep the site open year-round, even when hosts are not present, because the gate can be operated remotely. This will allow ADA access

when previously access had been walk-in only at certain times of the year.



The Dalles Screen Shop fabricated this automatic gate for St. Louis Ponds

Denman Youth Pheasant Hunt

The annual Denman Youth Pheasant Hunt was held at Denman Wildlife Area on the weekend of October 10-11 this year. The hunt, traditionally held in mid-September, was delayed due to unsafe air quality from local area fires.

This year was also unique with many social distancing precautions in place. For the first time in 27 years, the traditional early morning socializing and hot breakfast cooked by United Hunters and Sportsmen was replaced with an optional sack breakfast with pre-packaged food. Participants remained in their cars to fill out the liability release forms and safety review cards, and receive instructions and a safety message from the wildlife area manager before departing for their hunt location.

Although participation was down from last year, there were still a fair number of youth who indicated this was their first year at the youth hunt. Over the weekend, 83 youth participants and as many accompanying adults braved the rain and pursued pheasants. A total of 600 pheasants were released on the wildlife area; youth participants logged in 190 hours of hunting, and took 432 shots. Participants averaged 1.51 birds each, with 125 birds harvested. Local dog handlers volunteered to assist the youth in finding their birds.

COVID-19 and the severe local fires experienced in the Rogue Valley have taken a toll on the morale of its citizens as of late. This year, people were particularly grateful to participate in the event since so many other public outreach events have been cancelled in recent months.



Denman Wildlife Area Manager Clayton Barber gives a socially distanced safety talk to youth pheasant hunt participants

Double-crested cormorant nesting areas scanned for PIT tags

Staff are coordinating with researchers to scan two major double-crested cormorant nesting areas on the Astoria-Megler Bridge for passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags this fall. The PIT tags originate from juvenile salmonids tagged upriver of Bonneville Dam and are used to determine survival rates as these fish out-migrate through the hydropower system during spring. Tens of thousands of fish are tagged annually by a variety of entities that manage dams along the Columbia River.

Double-crested cormorants consume many of these fish and eventually excrete the rice grain-sized tags onto their breeding colonies. Researchers scan nesting areas to determine

impacts birds are having on the tagged sample of fish and then infer predation rates on the entire run. This work is an ad hoc project funded by the Bonneville Power Administration to determine the fate of as many PIT-tagged federally listed salmonids as possible in response to the cancelling of trawl-based surveys for tagged fish earlier this year.

Recovered tags may also reveal clues about potential predation impacts of the large and growing double-crested cormorant colony on the Astoria-Megler Bridge. This colony exceeded 5,000 breeding pairs this year, a major increase from the 3,542 breeding pairs it supported in 2019. ODFW estimated the bridge colony is responsible for substantial mortality of salmonids, potentially exceeding predation impacts of the nearby former colony on East Sand Island where most of the birds now breeding on the bridge appear to have originated.



Double-crested cormorants

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Roger Fuhrman, Information and Education Administrator

Recreational harvesting of Oregon shellfish is getting national attention thanks to recent outreach efforts. The goal is to make the public aware of recreational opportunities and encourage the harvesting of sustainable, healthy food.

Top Chef, a TV reality show featuring cooking competitions recently reached out to ODFW and Travel Oregon to produce an episode based on digging and cooking clams. Jesse Kane of the ODFW Education Team, took the show's cast and crew out to Netarts Bay to gather tasty bivalves.

After harvesting the clams, contestants competed to prepare the best clam-based dish for the judges. With its 3.75-million viewers, *Top Chef* should bring well-deserved attention to clamming in Oregon.

Oregon shellfish were also recently featured in *Via* magazine, a publication of the American Automobile Association (AAA). The story was the result of ODFW participating in a media event last year as part of Feast Portland. Jesse took five writers/bloggers/travel and food reporters crabbing in Garibaldi and introduced them to the sport. He walked them through the same material as presented in the ODFW Crabbing and Clamming Workshop. All participants were impressed and wrote about their experiences at the time. One of the writers, Jennifer Burns Bright, circled back later to do the feature for the AAA magazine.

See the article at:

https://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/aaavia/viaoregon_20200910/index.php#/p/46

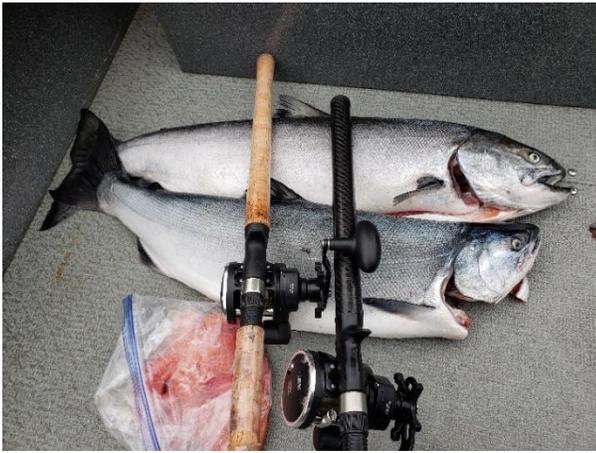
In addition to showing people how and where to dig clams, Jesse also talked to them about the biology, limits, regulations and licensing everyone needs to be aware of. The goal is to encourage readers and viewers to experience harvesting shellfish for themselves in a safe and ethical manner.



OREGON STATE POLICE

Captain Casey Thomas, Fish & Wildlife Division

Coos Bay Fish and Wildlife Troopers worked through the summer to check a boater on the Coquille River who was reportedly keeping illegal salmon and angling in the emergency closure area, which is above the Highway 101 Bridge. This fall, A Fish and Wildlife Sergeant launched a boat and located the subjects trolling about six miles upriver in the area closed for salmon. The boat was occupied by two anglers and two dogs. The subjects stated they were angling for Striped Bass although they were using gear commonly used for salmon angling. They denied catching any fish or having any on board. A search was conducted on the boat. In the front of the boat under a dog bed, a drop of water was observed on the handle of a compartment and the boat captain stated there was a fish in there. A Wild Chinook, Wild Coho, and a



Striped Bass were located in the compartment. Both subjects were cited for Unlawful Take/Possess of Wild Salmon. Both were warned for Angling Prohibited Area and Refusing to Allow Inspection of Catch. The salmon and the subject's rods and terminal gear were seized as evidence.

John Day Fish and Wildlife Division members investigated a report of a 4 point mule deer buck shot with a firearm and wasted in Dayville city limits. Investigation resulted in the identification of a potential suspect, who was contacted and eventually confessed to shooting the buck with a .22 magnum rifle. The rifle along with other evidence was seized at the suspect's residence. He was initially charged with multiple wildlife crimes to include: Unlawful Take Buck Deer Closed Season/Unlawful Take Buck Deer -Prohibited Weapon/Waste of Game Mammal. Other potential charges include Unlawful Take-Prohibited hours and Hunting Prohibited Area-City limits.



Portland Fish and Wildlife Troopers conducted an evening Wildlife Enforcement Decoy (WED) in

Clackamas County. Approximately 12 vehicles drove by and observed the WEDs. Of those twelve, one subject stopped and fired one shot from a rifle at the WED, striking it in the front shoulder. Troopers stopped the suspect as he tried to drive away. The suspect was issued a criminal citation for Unlawful Take of Buck Deer and Hunting from Inside a Vehicle. A .30-06 rifle was seized as evidence.

CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Andrea Hanson, Oregon Conservation Strategy Coordinator

Art Contest Winners for 2021 Announced

The winning artwork for ODFW's 2021 Habitat Conservation, Upland Game Bird and Waterfowl Stamp art contests was selected at headquarters and unfortunately was not open to the public due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Mr. Buck Spencer will receive a prize award of \$4,000 for winning two of the contests and Mr. Guy Crittenden will receive \$2,000.



The Habitat Conservation Stamp winner is Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep by Buck Spencer of Junction City, Oregon



The Upland Game Bird Stamp winner is Spruce Grouse by Buck Spencer.



The Waterfowl Stamp winner is Cinnamon Teal by Guy Crittenden of Milford, Delaware

AIS Prevention and Watercraft Inspection Update

For the 2021 season the watercraft inspection teams have inspected 22,115 watercraft and intercepted 233 with other types of aquatic bio-fouling and 11 watercrafts with quagga/zebra mussels. Currently, the only stage that are open are Ashland (Central Point), Ontario and Umatilla. Umatilla will be closing down on October 22 and the other two will be open the entire year.

Fisher Research Underway in Southwest Region



The Conservation Biologist and district staff completed weekly Oregon Conservation Strategy (OCS) site checks for fisher traps and reviewed camera data from research's Ashland Watershed fisher sites. A fisher visited one of the trap boxes on two separate dates during the week-long trapping period. Cameras documented other wildlife that visited the boxes but did not enter them, including many chipmunks, a few thrushes, flying squirrels, a hungry bear and a deer.

MARINE RESOURCES PROGRAM

Caren Braby, Marine Resources Program Manager

Marching forward on ocean change action

In September, the Oregon Coordinating Council on Ocean Acidification and Hypoxia (OAH Council) submitted their 2nd biennial report to the Oregon

Legislature. Created by the Legislature in 2017, the OAH Council is a 13-member body that makes recommendations to the state on how to address climate and ocean change through research, adaptation, and mitigation. Led by Oregon State University's Dr. Jack Barth and ODFW's Dr. Caren Braby, the Council membership is diverse, including agencies, industry, Tribes, conservation, and academia.

The OAH Council's Reports ([2018](#) and [2020](#)) and OAH Action Plan ([2019](#)) each address five thematic areas in which action is needed: science, reducing causes, resilience, awareness, and strengthening institutions' abilities to address the demands of a changing climate over time.

Two key messages in this year's report are that the OAH Council has made great progress since 2017, and that all Oregonians have a role to play in creating a resilient, successful future. Also of note, the OAH Council received honorable mention for the Climate Adaptation Leadership Award for Natural Resources by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, for providing exemplary leadership on climate change. To learn more about the OAH Council, or to subscribe to receive updates, visit the Council's website: <https://www.oregonocean.info/index.php/ocean-acidification>.

Reducing risk of whale entanglements – what's next?

After a landmark decision by the OFWC in September 2020 to adopt regulations reducing risk of whale entanglements in the commercial Dungeness crab fishery, staff met with the crab industry in October public meetings to further develop a comprehensive Conservation Plan for submission to NOAA later this winter. Recordings of the presentations made at the public meetings are posted on our commercial crab fishery [website](#), along with meeting materials.

Protected by both the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act, humpback whale entanglements are of particular concern and are central to Oregon's planning for a sustainable future for this fishery. The Department is collaborating with researchers at Oregon State University to document where and when humpback whales (and other whale species) are in Oregon waters throughout the year. This research is essential for us to design effective ways to keep commercial crab gear and whales separated in time and space, and will be a key part of the Conservation Plan's adaptive management approach. Adaptive management is essential since climate and ocean change are projected to cause continued interactions between whales and traditional fishing seasons and grounds.

The public is very interested in this topic and how we are moving forward to make this quintessential Oregon fishery “climate-ready” for future change. Radio, newspapers, and other social media are chatting about it and generating new ideas about how to develop solutions, including a [Jefferson Exchange](#) radio interview with Department staff, industry and researchers.

Although this issue will be central to management for years to come, finalization of the Conservation Plan this winter is the next step to a vibrant future for the ocean and the commercial Dungeness crab fishery.

**END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR
November 13, 2020**