ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
January 17, 2020

EAST REGION
Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

Monitoring Avian Productivity Program
Friends of Ladd Marsh began operating a MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) station on Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area in 2018. The station is the only active MAPS station in northeast Oregon and covers about 20 acres in three habitats (grassland, riparian and wet meadow). As part of the program, songbirds are captured using mist nets according to a standard protocol on seven (7) days in June and July.

The Friends of Ladd Marsh team placed new bands on 453 (201 in 2018; 252 in 2019) birds of 30 species. The most abundant species captured was common yellowthroat. The team banded 103 common yellowthroats including over 80 adult males in 2018. The second most numerous birds captured were Lazuli bunting and song sparrow. We were pleased the efforts captured and banded grasshopper and Brewer's sparrows as well, both rare visitors to Ladd Marsh.

For each capture, the team records age, gender, breeding condition, and feather molt among other observations. This information will add significantly to our understanding of Ladd Marsh songbirds and contribute to a continent-wide effort to document presence, movements, survival and demographics of North American songbirds.

Opel Springs Fishway Completion
The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (department), Deschutes Valley Water District (DVWD), Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) and other stakeholders installed fish passage facilities on Opal Springs Dam this year. Opal Springs is located just upstream of the Crooked River's confluence with Lake Billy Chinook in central Oregon. It represented the second highest priority passage barrier in the state. After two years of construction, the ladder began operation on November 15, 2019. Video monitoring detected the first steelhead passing the dam within 72 hours.

Opal Springs Dam had been a barrier to migrating fish since its expansion in 1982 for hydroelectric production. At that time, DVWD was not required to provide passage because the Pelton-Round Butte Dam Complex (PRB) downstream blocked anadromous fish migration.

Relicensing of PRB in 2008 required Portland General Electric together with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs to work with the department and others to reintroduce mid-Columbia summer steelhead (Federal ESA-threatened), spring Chinook salmon and sockeye salmon into historic habitats in the upper Deschutes, including the Crooked River. This provided incentive for the department, DVWD, federal agencies, and NGOs to begin considering Opal Springs fish passage. Our conversations culminated in a 2011 Settlement Agreement under which DVWD acted proactively to provide passage.

Passage at Opal Springs provides access to 125 miles of mainstem and tributary habitat. Radio telemetry of returning adults over the past seven years indicate 50-70% of steelhead and Chinook that pass PRB are selecting the Crooked River over other upper basin streams. The new volitional passage facilities "opens the door" for these fish and is critical to the long-term success of the reintroduction effort.

This collaborative undertaking depended on many partnerships with stakeholders performing various roles. Construction of the ladder and bypass flow spillway cost $10.8M. The department contributed $1.2M through the Department of Transportation Mitigation Fund, while OWEB and DVWD provided $2M and $4M respectively

Warner Basin Aquatic Health Partnership
Last August we reported on Warner sucker and the strategic plan developed by the Warner Basin Aquatic Health Partnership (Partnership), a coalition of the Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council, Lakeview Soil and Water Conservation District, US Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the department. The Partnership came together from a desire to solve some common concerns including the protection and restoration of Warner Basin native fish including the Warner sucker (Federal ESA Threatened) and redband trout (Oregon Sensitive) populations.

The Partnership has made some real progress in improving conditions for these fish using funding provided by Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) and others. The recent award for nearly $6M under OWEB's Focused Investment Partnership will provide passage and screening at the last 10 major diversion structures in the basin over the next six years. The Partnership recently produced a video to promote their efforts and accomplishments. The video can be viewed at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8VUq-MIx8Q&feature=youtu.be.

Cold Springs Elk Damage
The department is cooperating with private landowners, hunting organizations, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service to address chronic and severe elk damage by elk raiding irrigated row crop farms adjacent to Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Our efforts included long general seasons, controlled hunts, emergency hunters; elk damage tags, and kill permits.

The 2018 Legislature provided an appropriation of $50,000 to help with the removal of elk from the damage area using kill permits. As part of this initiative, Wildlife Services removed animals in the problem area. Department field staff and landowners processed the carcasses and provided them to Community Action Program East Central Oregon (CAPECO), a local affiliate of the Oregon Food Bank.

The operation donated 107 elk to CAPCO making over 9,100 lbs. of protein available to families in need in Oregon. Hunters using the Columbia Basin Extended Elk Season, Oregon Landowner Damage Program Tags, and Emergency Hunts within the Cold Springs National Wildlife Refuge took another 67 elk.

Overall, we consider this program a big success in terms of both starting to solve a serious problem as well as supporting eastern Oregon families. The affected landowners recently submitted a funding request to the Oregon Legislature to continue the program for the coming year.

WEST REGION
Bernadette Graham- Hudson, Region Manager

Chinook Salmon Angling Closure, North Coast
North Coast fish staff investigated reports of substantial fall Chinook mortalities in the lower Wilson River. A survey found at least 200 dead Chinook, most pre-spawn mortalities. The Fish Health Lab identified the parasite Cryptobia as the cause.

Extended low water conditions led to fall Chinook concentrating in the lower river, creating conditions conducive to the spread of Cryptobia, a naturally occurring parasite. Managers closed the river to all salmon angling December 7 – 31.

Staff monitoring of other North Coast basins and additional public reports showed substantial pre-spawning fall Chinook salmon mortality also occurred in the Nestucca, Trask, and Kilchis rivers, prompting an entire North Coast salmon angling closure through December 31. The closure included all North Coast basins from the Nestucca River to the Necanicum River. Steelhead angling remained open.

The fish loss comes on the heels of an already below-average return that prompted fish managers to reduce bag limits on wild fall Chinook in North Coast river basins. The reduced bag limit is a conservation measure outlined in ODFW's Coastal Multi-Species Conservation and Management Plan.

Trask River Hatchery New Hatch House Replacement
First constructed in 1906, and remodeled in the 1970s, the single level 2,160 square foot Trask River Hatchery hatch house is being fully replaced. The new hatch house building is two levels and will total 10,000 square feet.

The lower level features 14 new starter tanks, picking troughs, 26 incubation stacks, overhead heating in the incubation area, chemical storage, mechanical/oxygen room, ADA restroom, laundry, ice maker/chest freezer, and crew mudroom for boots and rain gear.
The top level includes two office spaces, two living quarters for seasonal staff, two ADA bathrooms (one with a shower unit for the living quarters), kitchen area, and a conference/common area for meetings. The building also has a filter room that will house two-micron drum filtration units, two UV light units for water disinfection into the incubation stacks, starter tanks, and a chiller unit that can chill the water into the starter tanks and incubation stacks. This new technology added will ward off parasites and diseases before water ever reaches the eggs and fry in the rearing area.

This project could not have happened without the support of the local community and their donations of materials and dollars to match Restoration & Enhancement funds. Stimson Lumber Company donated crushed rock, Tillamook Anglers donated more than $450,000 in cash, while other local groups contributed smaller funding amounts.

This project will support not only the local community but also all Oregonians who visit and fish the Tillamook area. ODFW plans for the new facility to be around for the next 100 years and enjoyed by future Oregonians.

The original Trask River Hatchery hatch house built in 1906 and remodeled in the 1970's.

Exterior and interior of the new Trask hatch house under construction.

Proactive Rogue Canyon Black Bear Plan

In December, Central Point and Gold Beach wildlife staff met to discuss black bear issues in the Rogue Canyon with representatives from the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest (RRSN), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), USDA Wildlife Services (WS), and Oregon State Police (OSP). They reviewed the history of the issue and the engineering involved in helping people stay safe in the canyon.

The 2019 season was a high bear activity year, and outfitting guides had commented on the level of bear activity at a recent outfitters meeting. In July, I&E staff worked with biologists and the RRSN to craft a news release reminding visitors to be "bear aware" in the canyon with tips on keeping a clean camp.

In the December meeting, the group covered short and long-term goals and developed committees to help focus on and tackle some of these goals. A major take-away from the meeting is to ensure electric fences (for people to store their food in) are set up by May 10 to accommodate high water levels, early bear activity, and the start of the permit rafting season. ODFW has historically assisted USFS and BLM with installing the fences and taking them down and will continue doing so this upcoming season.

An education committee will look into education improvement for rafters and hikers, including a video currently in development. Another committee is working on revising the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to keep the agreement updated, and a final committee will provide comments on a draft gear storage order

that would be potentially phased in to guides and rafters as a long-term plan.

This spring, Oregon State Police will conduct a jet boat training to help with accessing parts of the river past Foster Bar where the water is more technical. Ultimately, this training will help with access next season, which was something that limited ODFW in 2019. The group will meet again in March to prepare for the 2020 season and check in on short-term goal progress.

In November, ODFW assisted in removing signs, fencing and pumpkins. Rafters decorate the canyon with pumpkins in a long-standing tradition that often attracts bears.

Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area Winter Elk Feeding Tours

Each year, Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area gives the public an opportunity to see the area's Roosevelt elk herds up close with its popular elk feeding tours. The tours run six days a week, December through February, and staff begins taking reservations each year at 8 a.m. on December 1.

This year, all weekends, and school holidays were filled by 9:10 a.m., and by 1:30 p.m., staff had signed up 1,107 individual, including 30 walk-ins. Remaining space available was filled over the next two days with 1,241 individuals signed up.

During the hour-long tours, the public can help staff with the supplemental feeding program. Those who signed up for the tour ride the feed wagon, which can accommodate up to 15 people.

Jewell Meadows Wildlife Area provides supplemental feed to Roosevelt elk each winter to enhance public viewing opportunities and reduce conflicts on adjacent private lands.

Necanicum Basin Winter Steelhead Surveys

Following adoption of the Coastal Multi-Species Conservation Plan in June 2014, North Coast Fish District staff began planning to address one of the issues identified in the plan – hatchery winter steelhead straying to natural spawning areas in the Necanicum River basin. Overall, the goal is to reduce the proportion of hatchery spawners while not negatively affecting the fishery.

To evaluate management changes, staff began marking hatchery fish differently in brood year 2016. In spring 2017, one adipose fin clipped group was released in a Necanicum tributary, and two groups marked with an adipose clip and a left or right maxillary clip were released directly into the Necanicum River at separate locations.

During the winter of 2017/18, temporary crews were hired to collect baseline data to determine the percentage of hatchery fish spawning in the Necanicum Basin and estimate angler harvest. Baseline data was collected by live capture surveys in 2017/18 to determine where hatchery fish returned and the proportion of hatchery fish on the spawning grounds. In coordination with the Oregon Adult Salmonid Inventory and Sampling

(OASIS) project, surveys were conducted over the same reaches by each program. The goal was to calibrate OASIS visual mark identification with the District crews' known mark rate from the live capture surveys.

Now that all age classes of the distinctly marked groups of hatchery winter steelhead are returning, the District will conduct two additional years of survey work to evaluate the change in smolt release strategy. OASIS and District fish staff will continue monitoring the distribution of hatchery fish and calibration of the visual mark identification.

This monitoring will help determine if the new release strategy has affected the distribution and/or proportion of hatchery fish on the spawning grounds. In addition, creel surveys over the next two seasons will help determine if there has been an impact to the harvest opportunity for hatchery winter steelhead.

District staff will also coordinate with OASIS to conduct some additional survey work in the Nestucca River to increase observations of live fish and/or live capture fish for mark verification. Staff may explore options for collecting some voluntary creel information in the upper Nestucca River as well.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Roger Fuhrman, Information and Education Administrator

25 Days of FishMas Returns

The third installment of #25DaysofFishMas debuted December 1st. The annual feature on Instagram and Twitter highlights Oregon fisheries. This year the segments focus on "newcomers" to Oregon. The American shad, an East Coast native, was transported by train and released in the Sacramento River in California in 1871. Before long, they were common across the West. Transplants like this were common in the past with agencies or members of the public (so-called "bucket biologists") introducing non-native species. Sometimes, they were trying to recreate fisheries from their home waters or provide new fishing opportunities. Bass, walleye, Brook, Brown and Lake trout, are just some of the non-native fish transplanted to Oregon.

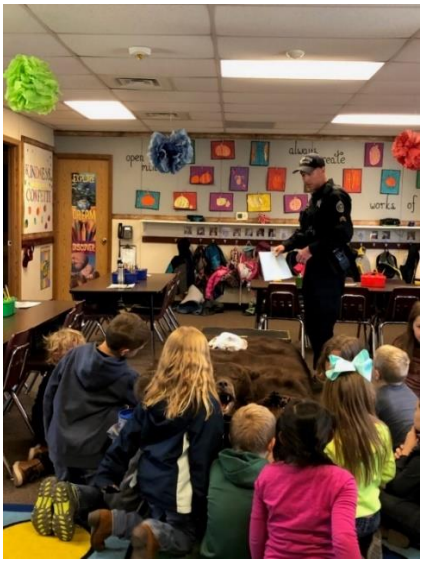
Not all "newcomers" are from out of state. Some, like the Tui chub, are native to Oregon. However, when they are introduced elsewhere, it can be bad news. Tui chub were first found in Diamond Lake in the 1940's. It is likely an angler dumped a bait bucket of leftover minnows into Diamond Lake before heading home. The chub population exploded. The limnology of the lake changed, a severe reduction in food availability occurred and the trout fishery collapsed. The department treated Diamond Lake with rotenone to eradicate chub several times since the 1040's. The most recent treatment, in 2006, has helped restore the popular trout fishery.

In cases where chemical treatment is not viable, biologists may introduce non-native fish. Tiger muskie, a sterile hybrid of Northern pike and muskellunge were introduced in Phillips Reservoir. The popular Eastern Oregon trout fishery was devastated when illegally introduced yellow perch got out of control. Treating the reservoir with rotenone was not an option, so 25,000 five-inch tiger muskie from a Wyoming hatchery were introduced in 2013 as an alternative. Although survival was low, some big tiger muskies remain. Judging from their size, they are feasting on perch in Phillips Reservoir.

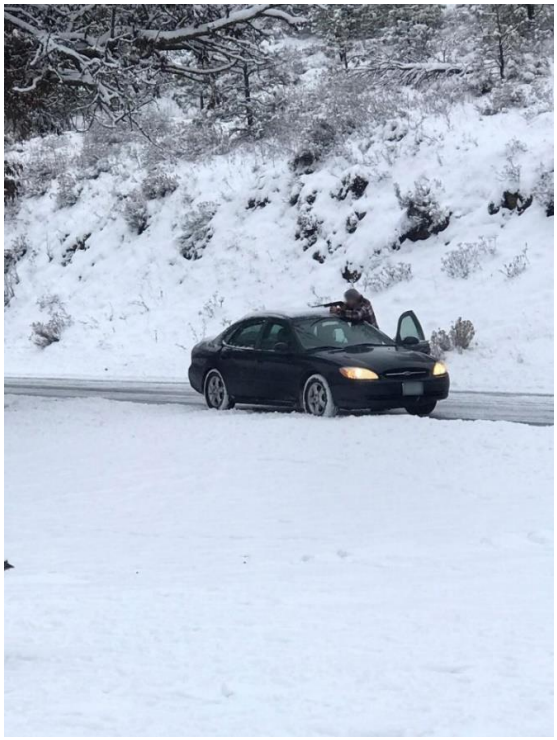
The series also features marine fish, like the Opah. This brightly colored, fast swimming, warm-blooded fish is common in warm waters. Occasionally, they are pushed north by the current. It is becoming more common to see them in Oregon waters, though, which is likely a sign of warming oceans. Public reports of these newcomers will help determine whether this is a fluke or a sign of bigger problem.

No doubt the Striped beakfish (Oplegnathus fasciatus) and Yellowtail jacks (Seriola lalandi) have the most interesting backstories. They were found in the hold of a derelict boat off the Oregon Coast. The boat broke loose during the 2011 tsunami that hit Japan. It drifted for years before showing up in Oregon waters. The fish were retrieved from the derelict vessel and are on display at the Oregon Coast Aquarium in Newport.

OREGON STATE POLICE
Captain Casey Thomas, Fish & Wildlife Division



A Fish and Wildlife Sergeant gave a presentation to the first grade class at Haines Elementary School. The Sergeant spoke about his job as a Fish and Wildlife Officer and about big game mammals and furbearers. The Sergeant also brought lots of hides and skulls for the students to view and ask questions about.



A Fish & Wildlife Trooper was notified by a landowner that someone was shooting at turkeys in their yard next to their house, close to their external propane tanks. The landowner photographed the suspect and said the suspect had shot approximately 20 rounds from the roadway. Troopers responded to the area and located the suspect at his residence, who stated he had fired 10 rounds from his .22 rifle in an attempt to kill several turkeys. When asked why he tried to shoot the turkeys, the suspect informed the troopers that he heard turkeys taste bad and wanted to give them a try. The subject was cited for *Hunting from the Roadway, Hunting Closed Season, and Hunting on the Enclosed Land of Another.* Additionally, potential charges of *Reckless Endangering* were referred to the district attorney's office.

Fish & Wildlife Troopers conducted a spike elk Wildlife Enforcement Decoy during the first rifle elk season in the Saddle Mountain Unit (which has a 3-point or better antler restriction as well as a being a controlled hunt). A vehicle stopped, and the driver immediately shot three times from the window of his truck. The driver and passenger were contacted and found to have a general Coastal Elk Tags; not Saddle Mountain tags. Additionally, the driver had a second season tag, and his girlfriend in the passenger seat had a first season tag. The girlfriend did not have a rifle, and admitted to letting the driver fill her tag. The driver was cited and released criminally for *Taking Spike Elk Closed Season, No Big Game Tag, and for Shooting from Vehicle.* The passenger was cited for *Lend Big Game Tag.*

A Fish & Wildlife Trooper responded to a report from a Curry County forest deputy that a subject had trespassed on private timberland property and had shot a bull elk. The Trooper responded to the area and the elk was salvaged. As the trooper was interviewing the suspect, he noticed a second bull elk that was deceased in a clear cut approximately 100 yards from the original elk. Investigation revealed the subject had shot both elk the evening prior. The second elk was also salvaged and minimal meat was lost. The suspect was issued citations for *Criminal Trespass II and for Unlawful Take/Possession of Bull Elk.*

CONSERVATION PROGRAM
Andrea Hanson, Oregon Conservation Strategy Coordinator

Feral Swine Discovered in Jackson County
A small population of reproducing feral swine on private property in the heart of black-tailed deer winter range was reported in Jackson County. In the past two years, the landowner had killed a few feral swine, but when he killed three found

together, he realized the swine were breeding and contacted ODFW. This is the first confirmation of an established reproducing pig population in the Rogue Unit.

The issue was an immediate priority for Rogue wildlife district staff who worked with Ashland and Salem invasive species program staff to develop a Feral Swine Removal Plan with the local landowner and set up traps in November.

On December 14, 11 feral swine were euthanized by agents of the private landowner. Staff will continue to coordinate and determine if more capture work is needed.

Feral swine populations have been drastically reduced in Central Oregon from an estimated 2,000-5,000 to less than 200 over a 10 year period of intensive trapping, aerial gunning, and hunting in partnerships with US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wasco County Soil and Water Conservation District, and landowners. In north Central Oregon, USDA APHIS still works to find and remove the few remaining feral swine in the area.

Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program Acquisitions

Acquisitions and a newly finalized conservation easement continue to contribute to Oregon Conservation Strategy fish and wildlife populations and their habitats in the Willamette Valley.

Creswell Oaks is a 1,610-acre working lands conservation easement near Creswell that protects the highly imperiled Oregon vesper sparrow and large swaths of grasslands and oak woodlands. Creswell Oaks is the largest long-term conservation commitment in the South Willamette Valley to date in the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program (WWMP) and provides a rare opportunity to help the largest known population of Oregon vesper sparrow in the valley. The property also includes Douglas-fir forest and riparian habitats and protects 12 Oregon Conservation Strategy Species.

In the North Willamette Valley, a 179-acre fee title acquisition of oak-covered hillsides, upland prairie, and savannah in Polk County was acquired with Polk Soil and Water Conservation District as the owner. If the Smithfield Oaks property, was not acquired by the WWMP, it would have been converted to vineyard development and associated practices. The property lies within the Willamette Valley Synthesis Conservation Opportunity Areas adjacent to Basket Slough National Wildlife Refuge. It has a growing population of Fender's blue butterfly and is a critical nectar and pollination source. The property has excellent potential for further restoration and enhanced connectivity; the property permanently protects the Fender's blue butterfly population and associated habitat types. Smithfield Oaks also directly supports the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2010 recovery plan for the species.

Also in Polk County, the 61-acre fee title acquisition Ahsney Conservation Area was purchased with Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde as the owner. This property has intact white oak and Kincaid's lupine, and is expected to eventually be a host site for Fender's blue butterfly and fits into a future butterfly connectivity corridor plan with Smithfield Oaks.

Western Pond Turtle MOU

ODFW recently signed the Western Pond Turtle Range-wide Conservation Coalition Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the Western Pond Turtle Range-wide Management Strategy. Other MOU parties include the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of Defense, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Nevada Department of Wildlife, and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

Western pond turtles were petitioned to be federally listed in 2012, and in 2015, the USFWS found the petition had sufficient information to demonstrate that listing may be warranted. The USFWS will initiate a formal status review to inform the listing decision which is expected in 2021.

In response to the finding, a group of Western pond turtle experts formed the Western Pond Turtle Range-wide Conservation Coalition (RCC) in 2015 to collectively manage, conserve, research, and support Western pond turtles in perpetuity. The signed MOU formalizes the RCC's existing efforts and identifies future objectives and actions for conserving the Western pond turtle, an Oregon Conservation Strategy Species.

The MOU's objectives are to implement conservation actions identified in the Western Pond Turtle Range-wide Management Strategy (Strategy); monitor, evaluation actions, and share data and information to support an adaptive management approach to Strategy implementation; and develop cooperative partnerships with others.

With a goal of ensuring long-term viability in the wild of Western pond turtles, the Strategy will identify and promote shared conservation strategies across partner agencies. If the Strategy is implemented in a timely manner, conservation efforts could preclude the need to list Western pond turtles under the Endangered Species Act.

Wallowa/Minam Core Area Bull Trout Hybridization Assessment

The Wallowa Fish District and Native Fish Program staff attended the annual U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Bull Trout Working Groups. They established recovery actions for the next year to address primary threats to federally threatened bull trout in the Wallowa/Minam Bull Trout Core Area of the Grande Ronde basin.

END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR January 17, 2020