Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
February 7, 2020

EAST REGION

Bruce Eddy, Region Manager

Mule Deer Research in South-Central Oregon

From 2005-2012, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (department) placed GPS collars on 452 adult female mule deer in south-central Oregon. The original objective of this effort was to identify hotspots of vehicle collisions with mule deer along migration corridors to aid managers in placing wildlife crossing structures (Coe et al. 2015). This collaring effort also allowed the department to assess distributions of mule deer during winter and hunting seasons (Cupples and Jackson 2014), effects of under burning on mule deer habitat use during migration (Eckrich et al. 2019), and survival and cause of mortality (Schuyler et al. 2019). Over the duration of the study, the department obtained over one million GPS locations on mule deer. This voluminous data set allowed the department to assess habitat use of mule deer during summer and winter, two periods of high nutritional stress for deer.

During summer, mule deer were more likely to use areas with moderate over-story canopy cover (~40%) and use areas closer to forest edge (i.e., the interface between forested and unforested areas). Mule deer were also more likely to use areas with flatter slopes and closer to riparian areas (Eckrich et al. *In Press*). During winter, the department identified two robust patterns of habitat use by mule deer under the control of land managers: increased use of areas with forest cover and decreased use of areas with roads open to motorized vehicle access. Mule deer were also more likely to use areas with decreased snow depth and on moderate slopes during winter (Coe et al. 2018).

The results suggest mule deer can benefit from land managers manipulating vegetation or minimizing human disturbance. We encourage managers to use the predictive models the department developed to identify potential beneficial or detrimental effects of land management actions on mule deer. During summer, we encourage forest management that creates over-story canopy cover of ~40% while creating forest edge. On mule deer winter range, we encourage land managers to implement seasonal or permanent road closures to minimize disturbance of mule deer. We also encourage managers to leave patches of forest cover, particularly on moderate slopes, to encourage use by mule deer.

Glass Hill Youth Controlled Elk Hunt

The highly coveted Glass Hill Youth Controlled Elk Hunt (252T) provides an opportunity for three lucky youth hunters to pursue elk from November 21 – December 31 in a sub-unit of the Starkey Wildlife Management Unit (WMU). For more than a decade, youth hunters have been presented with this special opportunity where competition with school, sports, other hunters, and the holidays has been limited due to the lengthy duration of the season ,maximizing hunter effort and enjoyment. Since its inception, hunter success and satisfaction have been extremely high, with opportunities for tag holders to harvest a trophy class bull elk. Historically, hunter success has averaged 100%, but more importantly, the Glass Hill Youth Hunt has continued to foster relationships between youth hunters, the department, and private landowners.

The hunt boundary associated with the Glass Hill Youth Elk Hunt is composed primarily of private lands and a small portion of department owned Ladd Marsh Wildlife Area lands. Collectively, these lands make up the Glass Hill Access Area. With the majority of the hunt area under private ownership, the department has worked diligently to establish relationships and secure access opportunities with private landowners. Employing the benefits of the Access & Habitat Program (A&H), department staff worked with private landowners to create a hunt area that is providing maximum opportunity for tag holders. Securing access to this block of land has substantially improved hunter access and success in an area that is highly desired by the hunting public. This partnership between private landowners and the A&H Program has been a role model of how the A&H Program and private landowners can collectively work together to successfully provide high quality projects.

The partnership between private landowners, constituents and the department continues to generate positive feedback and support for Glass Hill and the department. A common goal of providing opportunity, fostering relationships and recruiting youth into the outdoors is held amongst the partnership. The relationships created through this opportunity reach far wider than Glass Hill.

California Bighorn Sheep Capture
California bighorn sheep, a subspecies of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep were extirpated from Oregon in 1915. Reintroduction efforts began in 1954 at Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. Subsequent reintroduction efforts have expanded California bighorn sheep through eastern Oregon to roughly 3,700 bighorn sheep among 32 herds. This is one of Oregon's greatest conservation achievements, but it is not without intensive management and continued disease risks.

This year's California bighorn sheep capture involved relocating 34 sheep from the I-84 herd east of the John Day River. Of the 34 sheep, 25 were transplanted to the Stansbury Mountain in Utah, and 9 to Thirty-mile Creek, a tributary for the John Day River, near Condon, Oregon. Although ewe hunting is now a management tool to reduce herd numbers, translocating sheep is still the preferred option. Additionally, 15 sheep from the Aldrich and 3 sheep from McClellan herds were captured, tested for disease, collared with GPS collars, and released on site. Adverse weather prohibited capturing an additional 12 sheep from McClellan and 10 Riverside herds for disease testing.

Monitoring the health of bighorn sheep herds is critical for maintaining healthy sheep herds into the future. *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (M.ovi) is a disease of major concern for bighorn sheep herds across the west, and it is the primary limiting factor for population expansion. M.ovi is spread by contact with domestic sheep and goats. Once a population is infected with M.ovi, an all age class die off occurs with up to 70% of the population, followed by very low lamb recruitment. Results of this year's testing will be available at a later date.

Western Idaho Fly Fishing Expo
The Western Idaho Fly Fishing Expo is an event held annually at the Western Idaho Fairgrounds in

Boise, Idaho. The event began in 2011 and is sponsored by Boise Valley Fly Fishers. The event brings together fly fishing equipment vendors, guides and conservation groups and provides casting ponds, fly-tying tutorials, and speakers on fly-fishing topics and techniques.

Malheur Fish District staff attended the event held January 10-11, 2020 to provide a department presence and answer angler questions regarding the Owyhee River Brown Trout fishery. The Information and Education division provided the district with department displays and branding for the booth. District staff added a looped PowerPoint presentation about sampling efforts on the river. Poster-size versions of the river and spawning redd education signs were displayed as well. Common questions revolved around the state of the fishery and increasing angling pressure on the river. District staff answered questions and explained future fishery monitoring efforts.

District staff provided anglers with information about past rainbow trout stocking and the department's working hypothesis on how this has influenced the brown trout fishery. Staff also updated anglers on recent electro-fishing; redd surveys, and aquatic insect sampling. Fish district staff informed anglers about plans for a creel survey on the river this summer to assess current fishing pressure, catch rates, and retention of trout. Concerns about enforcement from anglers on the river were shared and will be passed on to Oregon State Police. There was some interest in new rules from Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) regarding Waterways Access Permit and boater education card information. Staff provided information about the new rules based on information found on the OSMB website.

WEST REGION
Bernadette Graham- Hudson, Region Manager

Roaring Rivers brood trout release
Each year, Roaring River Fish Hatchery releases approximately 3,000 brood trout that range from five to eight pounds each. Each fish provides 3,000-4,000 eggs to help meet the state's trout production goals. Roaring River Hatchery has an annual egg take goal of 8.5 million eggs.

After the fish are spawned and enough eggs are taken to meet allocations, the fish are released into 13 waterbodies – primarily small valley ponds – in the North and South Willamette Watersheds. Although trout can continue to produce eggs for many years, at age three they reach what hatchery managers consider the point of diminishing returns. These fish are then removed from the hatchery system and taken to local fishing holes to make room for the next generation of brood stock. This is a popular program for Willamette Valley anglers.

Dunes City deer feeding issue
Mid-Coast Wildlife District staff gave a presentation on the Urban Deer Population Control Pilot Program and the results of a recent spotlight survey in town to the Dunes City Council. There has been an ongoing feeding issue in town that has resulted in a high density of deer, complaints about aggressive deer, and a high number of road-struck deer.

The city passed an ordinance last year prohibiting the feeding of deer, but it continues to be an issue. The council also took public testimony at the meeting, and the majority of residents were not in favor of implementing the program. The council did not make a decision regarding pursuit of the program, so staff will continue to advise the city as needed.

Double-crested cormorant breeding abundance
The Army Corps of Engineers has released their estimate of double-crested cormorant breeding abundance on East Sand Island for 2019. Only 350 breeding pairs are estimated to have bred on the island, compared to an average of about 13,000 pairs prior to the beginning of management in 2015. Because of the recent increase in breeding abundance upstream of East Sand Island, mostly on the Astoria-Megler Bridge, it is unclear whether the decline on East Sand Island has ultimately resulted in estuary-wide survival benefits for ESA-listed salmonids.

Willamette Falls sea lions
North Willamette Watershed District staff toured the lower Willamette with staff from the Marine Mammal Program in early January. Eight Steller sea lions were observed from Willamette Falls to the St Johns Bridge (RM 5). The Stellers were well distributed and all except one were observed foraging.

No California Sea Lions (CSLs) were observed during the survey, which is a big change from previous years when as many as ten CSLs had been observed by the same timeframe (first week of January) foraging on winter steelhead near Willamette Falls. No CSL have been observed in the Willamette since the end of May 2019. Through January 2, 2020, 184 winter steelhead had migrated above the falls, which is above the five-year average of 172 for this date, but still below the ten-year average of 392.

Fish sampling at Gail Achterman Wildlife Area
The Gail Achterman Wildlife Area (GAWA) is a 290-acre site located on the Willamette River mainstem just outside of Salem. The property was purchased by the department in 2016 through the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program (WWMP). GAWA is one of the largest,intact riparian forests along the mainstem Willamette River. It consists entirely of priority habitats identified by the Oregon Conservation Strategy: riparian habitat; wetlands including deciduous swamps/shrublands and off-channel habitat; and freshwater aquatic habitats that include Willamette River shoreline, backwater sloughs, and overflow channels. The property provides habitat for ESA-listed Chinook salmon and winter steelhead, western pond turtle, northern red-legged frog and other amphibians, Oregon chub, Willamette floater mussel, and Pacific lamprey. Avian species include bald eagles, sharp-shinned, Cooper's hawks, great blue herons, red-eyed vireo, great horned owls, and red-tailed hawks. Many neotropical birds and waterfowl also use this site.

WWMP, South Willamette Fish District, and Native Fish Program staff completed fish sampling at GAWA in December. Staff sampled the side channel along the west side of the property in two areas using minnow traps and seines. They caught 13 fish species, not counting some bullfrog tadpoles and rough-skinned newts. Of the fish species 8 were native and 5 non-native. Among the native fish was a juvenile Chinook which appeared to have been there since the April flooding, quite a few peamouth, and the usual assortment of minnows, suckers, and sculpin. Among the non-native species, the most common were gambusia, largemouth bass, bluegill, and golden shiner. There was some disparity in the fish community between the upstream site and the downstream site with

native fish dominating the upstream site and non-native dominating the downstream site. Additional sampling will be conducted in the spring to see how the fish community may change after winter flooding.

Largemouth bass sampled at the Gail Achterman Wildlife Area.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Roger Fuhrman, Information and Education Administrator

College Duck Hunting Workshop, Shotgun Skills Course at EE Wilson

On January 11, the Information & Education (I&E) Education Team conducted a college duck hunting workshop for 15 OSU students taking part in a national R3 (recruitment, retention and reactivation of hunters) research project. In this full-day course at E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area, students got hands-on lessons in how to shoot clays, set up a duck blind and decoys, identify ducks, process and cook wild ducks and connect hunting with wetland conservation and policy. Everyone who registered attended even though the weather was extreme. Special thanks to volunteers John Stanfield, Kyle Smith and Kelly Warren from Ducks Unlimited who collaborated on the event and Professor Mark Needham from Oregon State University who handled student surveys. Kudos to new volunteer shotgun coach Sue Volz who helped on the clays range.

Despite heavy rain that soaked through raingear and wind that altered the flight of the clay targets, Education Team staff,Brandon Dyches, Andy Hamilton and Brandon Harper, taught an adult Shotgun Skills workshop. The staff and three newly minted volunteer shotgun coaches delivered a great class to 11 students who braved the elements to learn skills that will lead to greater success and enjoyment in the field.

ODFW, Oregon State Police, and Department of Justice - Moving Forward on Anti-Poaching Effort

ODFW, Oregon State Police (OSP), and the Oregon Department of Justice (DOJ) are collaborating on the anti-poaching effort that was recently authorized by the Legislature. All three agencies are filling new positions included in the legislation. ODFW hired public affairs specialist Yvonne Shaw to lead the public information campaign. Shaw has met with OSP and attended a Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus meeting to provide an update on the anti-poaching initiative. In the coming weeks, she will reach out to many groups that have shown interest in the effort to reduce the illegal take of Oregon's fish and wildlife and to get their thoughts on communicating about this important issue.

Angler Education Pilots New Versions of Clamming and Crabbing Workshops
The ODFW Angler Education team is debuting updated courses on clamming and crabbing this winter on the Oregon Coast. They will use participant feedback to fine-tune the new offerings.

The clamming course is a "how to" clinic that will teach all about harvesting littleneck clams and provide general knowledge about harvesting bay clams in Oregon. Participants will get hands-on (read muddy) experience harvesting, cleaning, and cooking their catch.

The crabbing workshop will focus on dock crabbing in Oregon and will provide all the information needed for participants to go crabbing on their own. The workshop will cover equipment, how to handle crab and cooking/cleaning the catch.

OREGON STATE POLICE
Captain Casey Thomas, Fish & Wildlife Division

In the photo above, The Dalles Fish & Wildlife Troopers checked on three young kids on a sand bar with their Dad, who were experiencing the great outdoors on his duck hunt. The kids were all bundled up for the cold weather and enjoying the crisp, fresh air. They were very excited to see the Troopers and asked to take a picture with them. They were also very proud of their Dad's duck.

A Fish and Wildlife Sergeant participated in a waterfowl saturation on the Snake River. The saturation involved multiple agencies to include: Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Canyon County Sheriff's Department (Idaho), Owyhee County Sheriff's Department (Idaho), Oregon State Police (Baker City), and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Burns, OR). In total, 16 officers from various agencies participated. The saturation resulted in over 200 contacts with hunters and boaters, and included multiple citations and warnings for *Unplugged Shotguns, Unlawful Taking*; as well as *Angling and Marine Board violations.*

A Fish and Wildlife Trooper obtained a photo of a bait station with two deer as bait. He confirmed with a trail camera that a trapper was working a trap line in the area. Surveillance was conducted and the trapper was observed as he checked the bait and traps. Contact was made and subsequent to an interview, the trapper was criminally cited for *Use of Game Mammal/Birds for Trap Bait, Use of Sight Bait for Carnivores within 15 Feet of a Trap and Unlawful Possession of Deer*. The Troopers obtained five more locations where the trapper was using unbranded traps with deer and ducks as sight bait, directly above or near the traps. In addition to his criminal citations, the trapper was also warned for multiple offenses. Six traps, a game camera, deer parts, a duck and a large buck deer skull were seized.

Fish and Wildlife Troopers, with the assistance of wildlife detection canine (K9) Buck and patrol Troopers, served search warrants at two Roseburg area residences. A subject was arrested and lodged at the Douglas County Jail for his alleged involvement in the *Unlawful Taking/Possession of Deer (6 counts), Felon in Possession of Firearm (2 counts), Unlawful Take/Possession of Bear (1 count), Waste of Game Mammal (1 count), and Unlawful Take/Possession of Turkey (1 count)* . One black bear, two white-

tailed buck deer skulls with attached antlers, four black-tailed buck skulls with attached antlers, 13 packages of deer meat, the remains of one wild turkey and two firearms were seized as evidence. Additional charges will include *Probation Violation, Hunting Closed Season (multiple counts), and Hunting Prohibited Method (.22 caliber rifle).*

CONSERVATION PROGRAM
Andrea Hanson, Oregon Conservation Strategy Coordinator

Top conservation stories of the past decade
The Statewide and Conservation communications officers developed a series of conservation success stories from the last decade. The stories were posted to the Conservation Facebook page @ODFWConservation and were well received by followers. Topics included the Aquatic Invasive Species Program, the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program, Marine Reserves, delisted fish species, Fish Passage Program, and wildlife underpasses. They also worked with the upper Rogue Fish District on an Instragram takeover highlighting fish passage projects and improvements over the past 10 years. These posts were favorites for many followers. Projects included removal of several dams and the notching of Savage Rapids Dam, culvert replacements, and other improvement projects that opened up many miles of habitat for native fish, some of which created wild steelhead sanctuaries.

Oregon Connectivity Assessment and Mapping Project (OCAMP)
ODFW Conservation Program staff have lead the Oregon Habitat Connectivity Consortium (OHCC) in designing and executing the Oregon Connectivity Assessment and Mapping Project (OCAMP), a multi-year, collaborative endeavor to map connectivity for Oregon's terrestrial wildlife. Formed in 2016, the OHCC is a group of state, federal, non-profit, academic, and non-governmental organizations with an interest in protecting and enhancing habitat connectivity throughout Oregon.

The group saw a critical need to develop connectivity maps for a broad array of Oregon's terrestrial wildlife species. Many species rely on the ability to move throughout the landscape to fulfill their daily and seasonal needs for access to food, shelter, and opportunities to reproduce. Human changes to the landscape often restrict the ability of wildlife to move by adding barriers, inducing changes in their behavior, affecting critical migration stopover sites, and increasing habitat fragmentation. Mapping and maintaining movement corridors helps maintain population connectivity and biodiversity and aids in the restoration of at-risk species. Providing and conserving habitat connectivity is also a key

management strategy to preserve species and ecosystem processes under a changing climate.

To date, efforts to map connected habitat corridors in Oregon have primarily been based on expert opinion that insufficiently supports decision-making regarding species' mobility and habitat connectivity needs. Recent improvements in spatial data availability, along with new and more robust statistical modeling techniques, have made fine resolution landscape-scale habitat connectivity modeling feasible. The methods for OCAMP represent current best practices in landscape-scale connectivity assessment and mapping for wildlife movement and migration corridors.

ODFW, along with other members of the OHCC, wrote and finalized an implementation plan for OCAMP in 2019. Now, ODFW, Portland State University, and Samara Group are working to execute the project and assess and map connectivity for up to 60 terrestrial wildlife species in Oregon. Species selection and model building and testing will begin this winter and spring with an anticipated project completion date of December 2022.

The resulting fine-resolution connectivity maps will aid in statewide planning and prioritization for strategic conservation investments, species protection measures, siting of land use changes and development, mitigation of barriers to animal movement, targeted habitat restoration efforts, and transportation improvement to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions among others.

This work is a massive undertaking with a large cost. Estimated costs to complete the corridor assessment are ~ $1 million. ODFW, in partnership with OHCC members, has secured funds from a variety of sources totaling $750,000 to be put toward mapping of birds and mammals. ODFW and the OHCC are looking for opportunities to close the $250,000 funding gap for this project for mapping of reptiles and amphibians to ensure these species are represented in the assessment.

OCRF fundraising kickoff

ODFW staff, the Oregon Wildlife Foundation (OWF), and the Oregon Outdoors Coalition hosted a kick-off fundraising event for the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRF), on January 10 in Bend. About 70 people attended the two-hour event and donated a few thousand dollars to jumpstart the million-dollar campaign.

Speakers in support of OCRF included Oregon's First Gentlemen Dan Little, Representatives Ken Helm and Cheri Helt, Commissioner Mark Labhart, Davia Palmeri (Conservation Policy Coordinator) and Tim Greseth, Executive Director of OWF. The event was hosted at the Embark building, a co-work space that houses multiple outdoor recreation businesses and conservation groups.

First Gentleman Dan Little speaks on the OCRF.

Supporters of the OCRF

Muddy Valley Habitat Reserve

Susan Barnes, West Region Conservation Biologist, conducted a site visit to the Muddy Valley Habitat Reserve with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Partners Program staff, and Yamhill County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to discuss riparian and wetland

habitat restoration opportunities. The 540-acre property, acquired through the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program is owned and managed by Yamhill County SWCD. The property supports the largest known reproducing population of western pond turtle in the northern Willamette Valley Ecoregion. USFWS staff will be developing a conceptual restoration project proposal for review.

END OF FIELD REPORTS FOR February 7, 2020