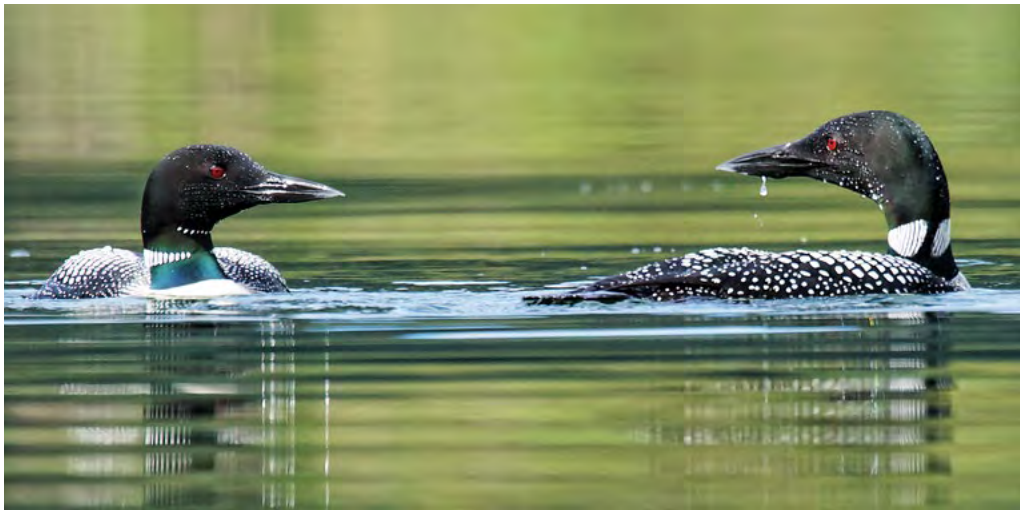
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGION

WILDLIFE, THREATENED, ENDANGERED & SENSITIVE SPECIES



2021 ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT

USDA Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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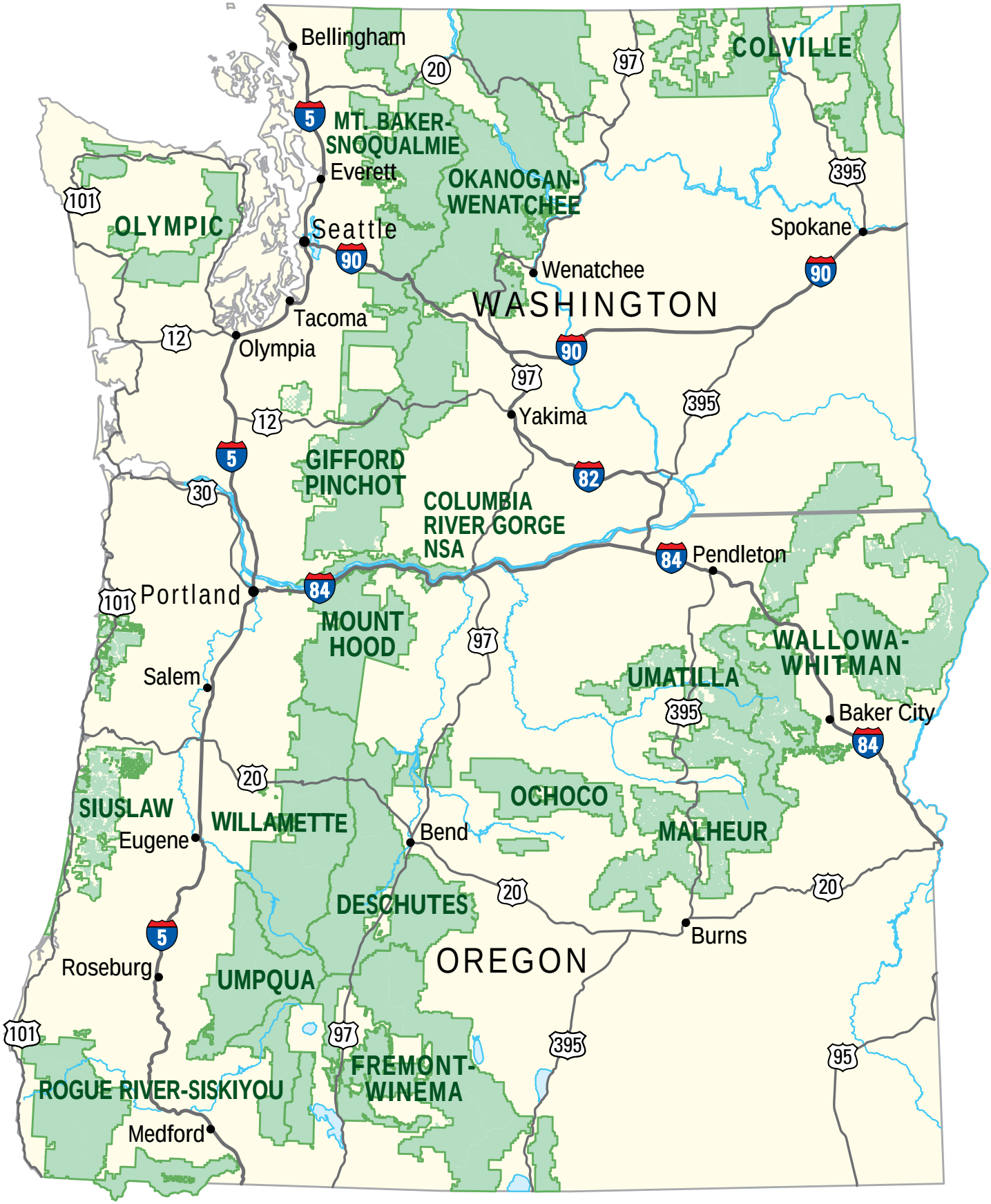
Bellingham
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COLVILLE
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MT. BAKER-
SNOQUALMIE
Everett
OKANOGAN-
WENATCHEE
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OLYMPIC
Seattle
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Spokane
Wenatchee
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Tacoma
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Olympia
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Yakima
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GIFFORD
PINCHOT
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COLUMBIA
RIVER GORGE
NSA
84
Pendleton
101
Portland
84
MOUNT
HOOD
97
WALLOWA-
WHITMAN
Salem
UMATILLA
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Baker City
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OCHOCO
SIUSLAW
WILLAMETTE
Eugene
Bend
MALHEUR
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FREMONT-
WINEMA
ROGUE RIVER-SISKIYOU
Medford

PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGIONAL

WILDLIFE PROGRAM

working to improve terrestrial habitat conditions

The Pacific Northwest Region of the Forest Service consists of 16 National Forests, one National Grassland, and one National Scenic Area, covering over 24 million acres. There are approximately 100 biologists and biological science technicians working on these units to improve terrestrial habitat conditions, develop partnerships to support habitat restoration and conservation education work, and monitor wildlife species habitats and populations across Oregon and Washington. This report provides a summary of some of their key accomplishments in 2021.

2021 was another challenging year due to the continuation of mostly remote work conditions due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, recovering from a historic wildfire season in 2020 followed by another large fire season in 2021. Despite these challenges, our biologists and national forests in the Pacific Northwest Region increased acres of terrestrial habitat enhancement and partner funds leveraged from 2020 levels.

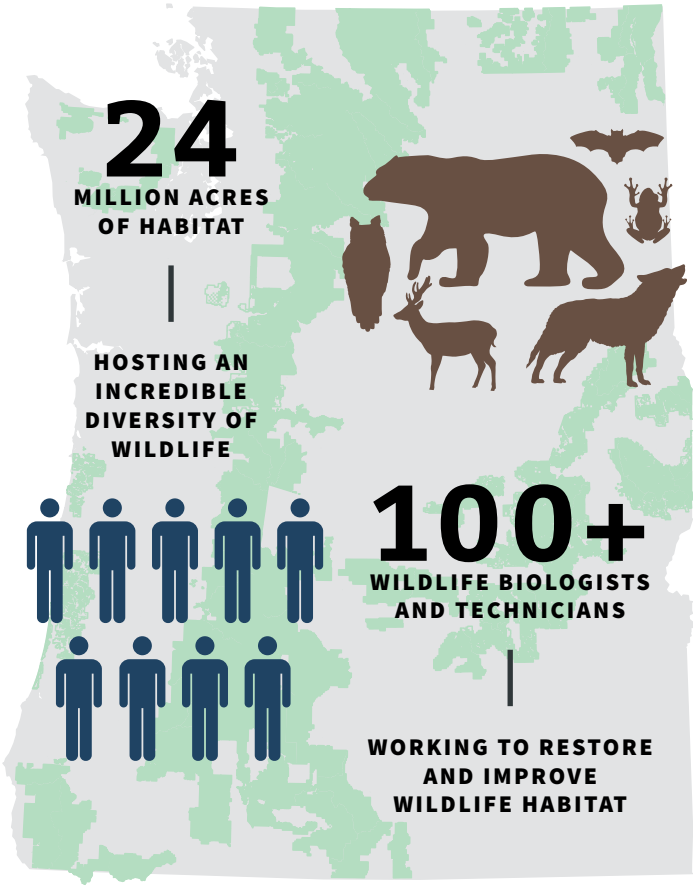
Several of our major wildlife partners continued to work through realignment of capacity with reduced funding levels, but organizations like the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Oregon Hunters Association rebounded well in 2021 as key partners for several forests in the region.

In fiscal year 2021, biologists and national forests accomplished **343,448 acres** of terrestrial habitat enhancement with an additional 247,097 acres of habitat enhancement from low to moderate severity wildfire, for a grand total of **590,551 acres**. We leveraged **$1,717,365** in partner funds and in-kind contributions from **34** different partners. The partner funded projects alone resulted in **24,434 acres** of terrestrial habitat enhancement.

These targets include almost **20,000 acres of commercial forest thinning work generating forest products, and nearly 47,000 acres of fuels reduction treatments.** We also continued our work of partnering with the states of Washington and Oregon under the spirit of shared stewardship to implement ongoing Good Neighbor Authority agreements, including working with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to bring on a shared stewardship coordinator position to work with the Forest Service to increase the use of Good Neighbor Authority on forests in Washington State.

This report highlights select accomplishments from national forests across the Pacific Northwest Region and some of our regional Centers of Excellence (forest or district level biologists who serve as regional leads for a variety of different species or topics). Please feel free to share this report with partners, other federal or state agencies, tribal nations, and any interested publics, it will be available to download online at: fs.usda.gov/main/r6/plants-animals/wildlife.

2021 RESTORATION & PARTNERSHIPSBY THE NUMBERS



$1.7

MILLION IN PARTNER DOLLARS

COMING FROM

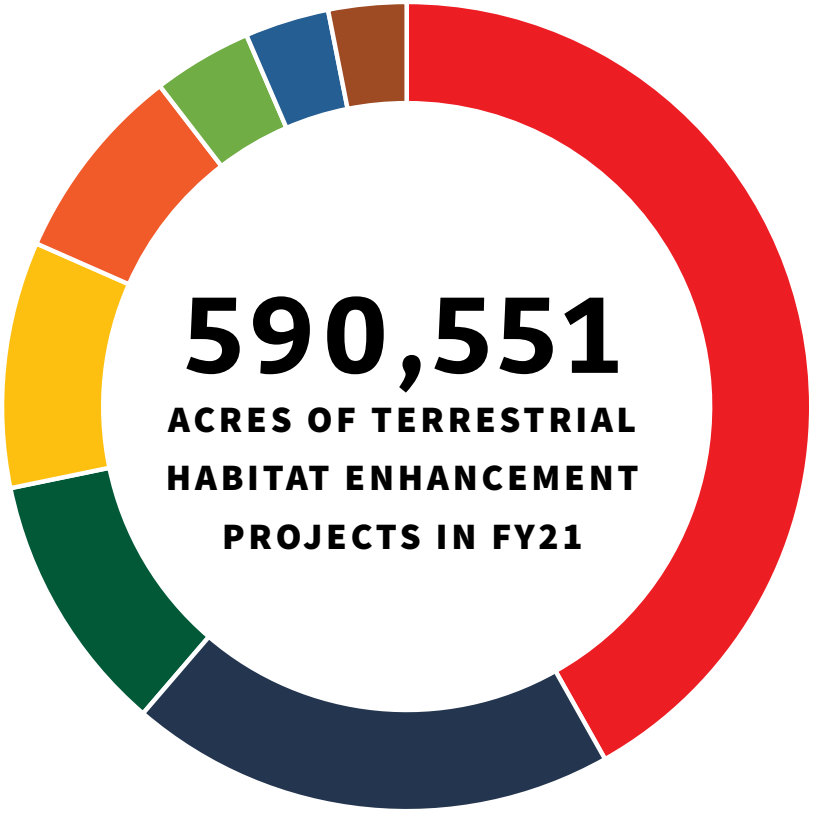
34

PARTNERS

FUNDED

24,434

ACRES OF HABITAT ENHANCEMENT



- Wildfire, natural
  247,097 acres
- Area closures for wildlife
  114,885 acres
- Vegetation management
  61,837 acres
- Road decommissioning/closure
  58,086 acres
- Fuels reduction treatments
  46,975 acres
- Riparian and Aquatic
  23,404 acres
- Commercial thinning
  19,874 acres
- Wildlife habitat
  18,394 acres

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES PROGRAM

Top: Fisher detected on a game camera near the Oregon border.
Bottom: Humboldt marten detected on a game camera near the Oregon border.
Photo credit: Institute for Natural Resources, Oregon State University.

species conservation through partnerships and focused regional investments

The Threatened and Endangered Species Program and the Interagency Special Status and Sensitive Species Program (ISSSSP) continue to work on species conservation through partnerships and focused regional investments. Collaboration with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on joint priority species position us to use Good Neighbor and other authorities to work across jurisdictional boundaries to increase conservation.

We updated the Columbia spotted frog conservation assessment and are developing assessments for Foothill Yellow Legged Frog and bumble bees in Washington with ODFW, WDFW, FWS, and the Xerces Society. Assessments will show species distribution, threats, and better focus priority actions to protect these species.

Carnivore monitoring and habitat conservation continue to be priorities in Oregon and Washington. We funded Oregon State University to conduct surveys targeted at improving our understanding on why Pacific fisher have not recolonized portions of their historic range and to determine the influence predators have on their recolonization in Oregon. Results will inform the potential for augmenting fisher through introduction efforts in the southern Oregon Cascades. Woodland Park Zoo was funded to continue assessing Pacific marten on the Olympic National Forest by evaluating connectivity among sub-populations and survey techniques.

Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species staff participated on the interagency barred owl working group to develop a long-term removal strategy to protect Northern Spotted Owls, worked closely with FWS to better define and evaluate post-fire foraging habitat to inform post fire recovery planning, and evaluated the status of grazing consultations across the region to develop a strategy to address dated or missing consultations.

Left: A biological technician measures a northwestern pond turtle. Right: Pond turtle monitoring trap.

NORTH-WESTERN POND TURTLE RESEARCH

The northwestern pond turtle is a U.S. Forest Service Sensitive Species in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) and is potentially being considered for federal listing. The largest population of northwestern pond turtles on the Oregon side of the Columbia River Gorge is found southeast of Mosier, Oregon, in a cluster of about 20 ponds, mostly on private land, but two are on National Forest System lands.

In 2021, CRGNSA partnered with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) The Dalles District Office to learn more about this population to better conserve it. Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area provided funding to help purchase VHF transmitters, that when affixed to a turtle, help determine what habitat it uses throughout the year. Additionally, Forest Service biological staff provided a day of assistance in turtle trapping with an ODFW biologist. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife estimates that the Mosier northwestern pond turtle population is approximately 150 turtles. From over a four-year period of trapping, the population has been static in the ponds that were sampled.

In 2021, telemetry work included placing transmitters on nine pond turtles at four different ponds. Pond turtles left the ponds as early as mid-summer as the ponds began to dry up. In the fall most turtles leave the ponds and bury themselves under approximately two inches of soil anywhere from a few meters to 300 meters away from the ponds. The Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area plans to continue partnering with ODFW with an objective to gain a better understanding of this population's movements, and conservation of this species.

Top: One of two loon chicks being measured and banded. Bottom: Jim Beckwith finishing the installation of a Great Gray Owl nest platform.

AVIAN CONSERVATION PROJECTS

LOON MONITORING

For 27 seasons, volunteer project leaders Ginger and Dan Poleschook have coordinated with the Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI), the Colville National Forest, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) for loon monitoring. Banding loons is the most vital component of loon conservation in Washington in that banding provides positive identification of individual loons enabling demographic, contaminant, morphometric, longevity, behavior, migration, DNA, mortality, and other determinations, which are used to inform local loon conservation efforts.

This year, two territorial adults and six chicks were banded during a slightly shortened banding schedule due to smoke from nearby wildfires and other logistical complications. Three loon chicks were weighed but not banded because of being too small. Twenty-one people helped with the banding effort. Tim Welch, biologist from BRI, did an amazing job with capturing and processing the loons. The Poleschook's also coordinate a group of long-term Loon Rangers (volunteers) who have provided survey information to understand the loon seasonal use.

GREAT GRAY OWL PLATFORMS

The Tonasket Ranger District, in partnership with the Curlew Job Corp's Forestry instructor Jim Beckwith, installed eleven great gray owl platforms in the Bonaparte Mountain area. Jim will retire in 2021, and his skills will be missed but he has set up an amazing forestry program that will help young adults build skills for their future. Artificial nest structures have been successfully used by great gray owls throughout the Pacific Northwest Region.

Left: Excavator clearing vegetation encroaching on the open water at one of the Dilman Ponds. Right: Open water after clearning vegetation.

DILMAN MEADOW RESTORATION

Dilman Meadow, a 12-acre wetland, is the site of one of the only known translocations of Oregon spotted frogs. In partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this release site is being monitored to help determine whether translocation is a feasible recovery action for this species.

In 2000-2001, six ponds were created at Dilman Meadow as mitigation for the loss of Oregon spotted frog habitat associated with the renovation of the Wickiup Reservoir dam. Three additional ponds were added in 2004. The original ponds were created by explosives and require periodic maintenance to maintain suitable conditions for Oregon spotted frog breeding.

Egg mass and mark-recapture studies have shown a decrease in reproductive success when the ponds become encroached with vegetation and a subsequent increase in reproductive success when pond maintenance activities remove the aquatic vegetation.

In the winter of 2021, pond maintenance was implemented. A small-tracked excavator worked to remove encroaching vegetation from around several existing ponds, increasing the area of open water and potential locations suitable for egg laying. In addition, Youth Conservation Corps staff assisted Forest Service wildlife crews to remove encroaching conifers from the meadow to maintain open meadow habitat for a variety of other wildlife species like elk, great gray owls, and pollinators.

RIMROCK SPRINGS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

The Rimrock Springs Wildlife Management Area (WMA) was established in 1981 in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and the Ochoco National Forest and the Crooked River National Grassland. The area was created to provide opportunities for cooperative wildlife habitat management in a unique wetland environment, wildlife viewing, outdoor recreation, and conservation education for the local communities in Central Oregon. The area is identified as a wildlife refuge managed by the ODFW through an MOU developed between the agencies.

Since that time, this area has successfully served these purposes. Both the ODFW and the Ochoco National Forest have cooperatively enhanced and restored sensitive habitat components within the management area for a myriad of wildlife species. These efforts over the years have been supported through partnerships, grants and agreements with various individuals and groups including local county governments and schools, national habitat enhancement and conservation groups, and regional environmental organizations and clubs, including many hours of volunteer services.

Over the last year, ODFW and Ochoco National Forest biologists came together to complete much needed habitat maintenance. As a result, the following work occurred across 450 acres; open water improvement through removal of cattails, western juniper encroachment removal around wetlands and riparian habitat, quail condominium construction (brush piles), fence improvement and construction to exclude livestock grazing.

Top: Juniper thinning at the Rimrock Springs Wildlife Management Area. Bottom: Cattail removal to increase open water.

Volunteers attending the 2021 northweast Oregon Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Rendezvous on the Malheur National Forest.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION RENDEZVOUS

Once again, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's (RMEF) Regional Rendezvous occurred at Lake Creek Youth Camp on the Malheur National Forest. As part of the event, RMEF volunteers from across Oregon and the greater Northwest gather and partner with the Malheur National Forest for a two-day habitat restoration work event to celebrate the RMEF's continued conservation successes in Oregon.

This year's projects focused on aspen restoration on the Blue Mountain and Prairie City Ranger Districts. With the help of RMEF volunteers, two buck and pole aspen exclosure fences were constructed and another was partially rebuilt after being damaged by fire. Volunteers also removed small diameter conifers within the fenced aspen stands and helped to remove invasive weeds near the project sites.

Overall, the Rendezvous resulted in 360 volunteer hours and contributed to the new construction of about a half-mile of buck and pole fencing protecting approximately four acres of aspen, a quarter mile of aspen exclosure fence maintained, and about two acres of conifer and invasive weed removal.

Top: A wildlife technician participates in the Mt. Ashland bumble bee blitz. Bottom: Wildlife technician with a Mardon skipper on his finger.

POLLINATOR MONITORING AND HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

WESTERN BUMBLE BEE MONITORING

The High Cascades, Siskiyou Mountains, and Wild Rivers Ranger Distrcits participated in the annual Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas as well as the Region 6 eDNA sampling effort with United States Geological Survey for Western bumble bee. Western bumble bee detections were confirmed on the High Cascades Ranger District. The forest also participated in the annual Bumble Bee Blitz at Mt. Ashland to survey for the endangered species act listed endangered Franklin's bumble bee with partners and volunteers from the public.

MARDON SKIPPER

Sites of the butterfly species Mardon skipper were monitored on the Gold Beach Ranger District at Windy Valley Meadow and removal of noncommercial conifer encroachment was completed to improve habitat for pollinators. Monitoring was also completed on the High Cascades Ranger District with Medford Bureau of Land Management assistance. High numbers of skippers were detected at both locations.

HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

Early seral habitat improvement was completed in the Clarks Fork project area on the High Cascades Ranger District to improve habitat for big game, upland game birds, as well as pollinator species. This included noncommercial thinning and under burning treatments on approximately 200 acres. Meadow enhancement was completed on Wild Rivers Ranger District removing invasive plants and revegetation at Hogue and Dasher Meadows.

Left: Northwestern pond turtle crossing structure embedded within Forest Service Road 3400 to facilitate safe passage of turtles from nesting grounds to pond habitat.

NORTH-WESTERN POND TURTLE TUNNEL

The Diamond Lake Ranger District on the Umpqua National Forest has a local population of western pond turtles (a Forest Service sensitive species) that occupy an area of wetland habitat adjacent to hydropower infrastructure. The only verified nesting location for this small population is immediately alongside Forest Road 3400. Daily traffic (a mix of the public, Forest Service staff, and hydropower workers) has resulted in mortality of both adults and hatchling turtles. Additionally, previously installed large rocks meant to help to manage off-road parking and protect the nesting site were removed during a recent hydropower project.

The objective of the turtle tunnel project was to reduce road caused mortality of adult and juvenile pond turtles and to restore protection of existing nesting location. To reduce potential roadkill, two under road tunnels and barriers were installed to provide adults and hatchlings safe passage between the nesting area and backwater pond. In the future, turtle curbs may also be considered to help funnel turtle and other wildlife into the culverts rather than over the blacktop road surface along with the placement of additional fill soil along the rubber “curbs” to contour into surrounding landscape and to prevent potential damage. This project was supported by local Forest Service engineers and aquatic resources specialists and could not have occurred without their assistance.

Top: Male white-headed woodpecker utilizing a cavity in a pine tree. Bottom: Acoustic recording unit.

WHITE-HEADED WOODPECKER MONITORING

White-headed woodpecker surveys were conducted on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in 2021 as part of a pilot effort to establish a long-term population monitoring study design while also assessing the effectiveness of dry forest restoration to improve habitat. Surveys using acoustic recording units (ARUs) were compared to traditional call-back surveys to compare cost and effectiveness between the two methods. A total of six transects with 10 call-points along each were surveyed three times during breeding season (May-July) following a regionally established protocol (Mellen-McLean et al. 2015). During the same period, 25 acoustic recording units (ARUs) were deployed within the same three watersheds. These surveys covered a total of over 60,000 acres of Forest Service land. In total, 1.5 terabytes of data were collected, and a classifier was successfully created to distinguish white-headed woodpecker calls from all other noises including other avian species, insects, humans, and white noise. The white-headed woodpecker classifier was able to detect calls at all 25 locations. Preliminary results suggest that traditional walking transects can be replaced with ARUs for increased survey efficiency. In the future, ARUs can be deployed for extended periods while passively recording for other focal species (e.g., flammulated owls) that are hard to survey for due to time constraints (i.e., night-time surveys). This project is supported by the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon State University, and the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station.

BAT MONITORING AND HABITAT ENHANCEMENT

Left: A group of bats in a Forest Service building. Right: Middle Fork Ranger District installation of "rocket" bat houses by Youth Conservation Corps.

The Detroit Ranger District on the Willamette National Forest has been assisting with the implementation of the North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat) for six years with annual acoustic surveys at a select grid locations. The NABat program provides comprehensive monitoring for bat species shared among the United States, Canada, and Mexico, including information on population and distribution trends, spread of white-nose syndrome, and impacts of wind energy development and climate change.

The Middle Fork Ranger District discovered Townsend's big-eared bats and Yuma myotis in an abandoned seed cooler back in 2019. To give bats alternative roosting sites, they enlisted Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) crews to build and paint five rocket bat houses in 2020 and 2021. They have installed one in 2021 and will be installing the rest in 2022. Youth Conservation Corps crews also removed blackberries around other bat-occupied structures.

On the Sweet Home Ranger District bat monitoring has continued for over a decade. One site, Cascadia Warehouse, supports one of only a few confirmed sites for male Townsend's big-eared bats on the forest and a maternity colony for a myotis bat species. A second site, Walton Ranch barn, serves as a roost site for other bat species. Both sites need repairs causing the bats to be vulnerable to displacement. In 2019, a bat site management plan was developed for both locations. The plan is to construct a bat condominium on the Walton Ranch site in 2022 and install a new roof at the Cascadia Warehouse.

DECAID CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

New releases of regional vegetation data created the need to update the DecAID GIS data used to inform snag and log conditions on our landscapes. This involved reassigning wildlife habitat types and updating raster files to reflect the best representation of the data. Dead wood histograms by forest and watershed, accurate through the 2020 fire season, were delivered to wildlife biologists.

Anne Poopatanapong (detailed in as the Regional Wildlife Ecologist in 2021) and Barbara Webb developed short instructional videos navigating the DecAID website and incorporating the data into an analysis. These videos can be downloaded and viewed when needed.

Other team accomplishments include Rapid Assessment Team participation and review/guidance for projects. The January 2021 Eastside Screens Amendment provides an additional opportunity for the region to utilize the DecAID platform. New standard and guideline language articulates the provision of diverse snag composition, size, structure, and distribution for a diverse composition of wildlife species.

Top: Fallen tree providing wildlife habitat. Bottom: Cross section of a downed log.

Left: Rufous Hummingbird state of the science and conservation publication written by the Western Hummingbird Partnership. Right: Western Hummingbird Partnership members and Hummingbird Monitoring and Conservation workshop participants.

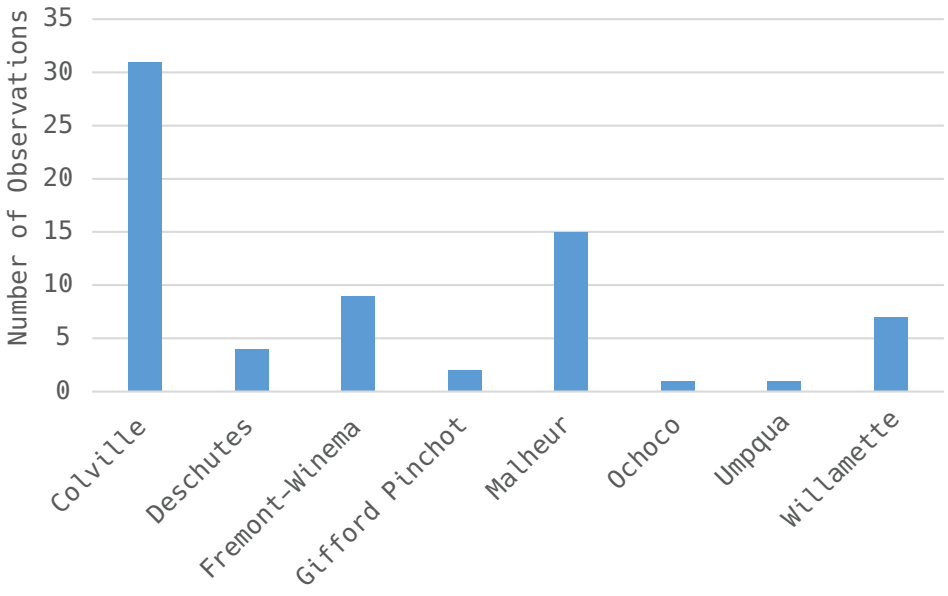
AVIAN CONSERVATION CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Jamie Ratliff, the Forest Wildlife Biologist on the Wallowa-Whitman, serves as the regional Avian Conservation Center of Excellence lead. Jamie represents the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region (Region 6) on the Partners in Flight Western Working Group and the Western Hummingbird Partnership. The Western Hummingbird Partnership works to protect Rufous Hummingbird and other western migratory hummingbirds by identifying gaps in knowledge and motivating actions for their protection. The Partnership's newest publication, "Rufous Hummingbird: State of the Science and Conservation," is a first compilation of research on the species, providing an overview of the factors that may contribute to its decline, gaps in our knowledge, and biological information.

Top: A heard of Elk on the Olympic National Forest. Bottom: Number of wildlife observations entered into the NRM Wildlife database by National Forests in the Pacific Northwest Region.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGER WILDLIFE DATABASE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Lisa Lyon, a wildlife biologist on the Fremont-Winema National Forest serves as our Natural Resource Manager Wildlife Database (NRM) Center of Excellence lead. The Natural Resource Manager Wildlife Database is the Forest Service's corporate database for wildlife species surveys, observations, and inventories. Lisa is the User Management Area Manager for user profiles and helps forests in the Pacific Northwest region by approving and updating user roles, responding to data entry questions, and representing the Region on the national wildlife user's working group. Seventy wildlife observations were entered into NRM by national forests in the Pacific Northwest Region in fiscal year 2021.



Conifer encroachment thinning meant to restore native aspen stands on the Malheur National Forest.

UPLAND GAMEBIRD CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Monty Gregg, the Forest Biologist on the Ochoco National Forest serves as the regional Upland Game Bird Center of Excellence lead. Monty is a member of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) Making Tracks Steering Committee and attends monthly meetings with other members, the national program manager, and other NWTF staff. The Superfund process has been reinitiated for State Chapter spending and project proposals were supported in Oregon and Washington. Two ongoing stewardship agreements were funded to support implementation: Starr Aspen on the Malheur National Forest, and Son Stewardship on the Ochoco National Forest. Starr Aspen was funded at the $7,200 dollar level and Son Stewardship was funded at the $3,000 dollar level. In addition, Monty is part of the Western Quail Working Group, and the Mountain Quail sub-committee, which meets quarterly to discuss habitat and habitat improvement opportunities.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

In 2021, despite the ongoing pandemic which impacted fundraising efforts, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) contributed $349,837 to benefit elk and their habitat across all lands in Washington and Oregon. The Forest Service received funding for six projects in Washington totaling $115,837 and four projects in Oregon totaling $58,600. Projects focused on restoring habitat for elk and other wildlife "with an objective of retaining elk on public lands and minimizing impacts to adjacent private lands. Habitat restoration efforts included: prescribed burning, treating noxious weeds, restoring meadow, aspen, and riparian areas to increase forage for elk. Additionally, RMEF funded $40,500 to Forest Service partners to spray weeds, and capture and collar elk on Forest Service lands. This elk movement data will help forests in the management planning process and allow us to better understand habitat use and migratory pathways.

Top: Volunteers constructed buck and pole meadow exclusion fencing on the Ochoco National Forest as part of a "All Hands All Brands" volunteer work party. Bottom: Native plant reveggation work on the Olympic National Forest

WILDLIFE PROGRAM CONTACTS

REGIONAL WILDLIFE PROGRAM
Josh Chapman
Wildlife Program Manager
joshua.l.chapman@usda.gov
503-808-2901

Barbara Garcia
Wildlife Ecologist
barbara.garcia2@usda.gov
503-808-2993

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES (TES) & INTERAGENCY SPECIAL STATUS AND SENSITIVE SPECIES PROGRAM (ISSSP)
John Chatel
john.chatel@usda.gov
503-808-2663

Anne Poopatanapong
anne.poopatanapong@usda.gov
503-808-2663

COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA
Brett Carre
brett.carre@usda.gov
541-308-1718

COLVILLE NATIONAL FOREST
Karen Honeycutt
karen.honeycutt@usda.gov
509-684-7224

DESCHUTES NATIONAL FOREST
Lauri Turner
lauri.turner@usda.gov
541-383-5640

FREMONT-WINEMA NATIONAL FOREST
Bill Baer
william.baer@usda.gov
715-492-3801

GIFFORD PINCHOT NATIONAL FOREST
J. Conner England
jamison.england@usda.gov
360-891-5108

MALHEUR NATIONAL FOREST
Dustin Hollowell
dustin.hollowell@usda.gov
541-575-3167

MT. BAKER-SNOQUALMIE NATIONAL FOREST
Jesse Plumage
jesse.plumage@usda.gov
425-783-6031

MT. HOOD NATIONAL FOREST
Tiffany Cummins
tiffany.cummins@usda.gov
503-668-1472

OCHOCO NATIONAL FOREST/ CROOKED RIVER NATIONAL GRASSLAND
Monty Gregg
monty.gregg@usda.gov
541-416-6508

OKANOGAN-WENATCHEE NATIONAL FOREST
Ana Cerro Timpone
ana.v.cerro-timpone@usda.gov
509-784-4630

OLYMPIC NATIONAL FOREST
Karen Holtrop
karen.holtrop@usda.gov
360-765-2206

Betsy Howell
betsy.howell@usda.gov
360-765-2230

ROGUE RIVER-SISKIYOU NATIONAL FOREST
Dave Clayton
dave.clayton@usda.gov
541-618-2054

SIUSLAW NATIONAL FOREST
Deanna Williams
deanna.williams@usda.gov
541-750-7013

UMATILLA NATIONAL FOREST
Elizabeth Berkley
elizabeth.berkley@usda.gov
541-278-3814

UMPQUA NATIONAL FOREST
Justin Hadwen
justin.hadwen@usda.gov
541-957-3260

WALLOWA-WHITMAN NATIONAL FOREST
Jamie Ratliff
jamie.ratliff@usda.gov
541-523-1338

WILLAMETTE NATIONAL FOREST
Joe Doerr
joseph.doerr@usda.gov
541-225-6433

DECAID CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
Barbara Webb, DecAID COE
barbara.webb@usda.gov

Barbara Garcia, DecAID Team Lead
barbara.garcia2@usda.gov

Upekala Wijayratne, Area Ecologist
upekala.wijayratne@usda.gov

Andrew Stratton, GIS Analyst
andrew.stratton@usda.gov

AVIAN CONSERVATION CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
Jamie Ratliff
jamie.ratliff@usda.gov

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGER WILDLIFE DATABASE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
Lisa Lyon
lisa.lyon@usda.gov

UPLAND GAMEBIRD CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
Monty Gregg
monty.gregg@usda.gov

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
Robbie Piehl
robbie.piehl@usda.gov

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