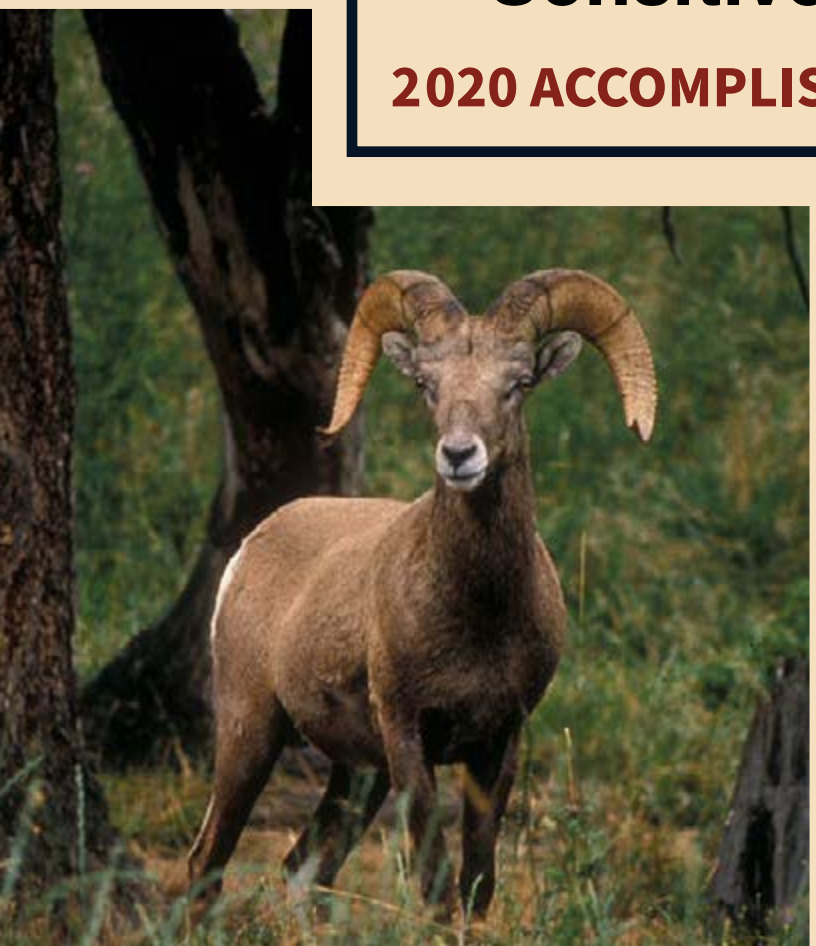
Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

U. S. FOREST SERVICE, PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGION

# Wildlife, Threatened, Endangered & Sensitive Species

## 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT



# Regional Wildlife Accomplishments

The Pacific Northwest Region of the Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 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 forests 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, and this report provides a summary of some of their key accomplishments in Fiscal Year 2020.

2020 was a challenging year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, racial and social justice incidents and protests, a historic wildfire season in Western Oregon among other issues. These challenges resulted in limited field time, a pause on prescribed fire implementation for part of the year, severe economic impacts to many of our key partners like the National Wild Turkey Federation and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, a switch to telework for most employees, and many fire assignments. Despite these and other issues our resilient biologist workforce still managed to achieve **over 284,000 acres of terrestrial habitat enhancement work that leveraged ~$1,334,630 in partner dollars and in-kind contributions from 39 different partners.**

These targets include **over 41,000 acres of commercial forest thinning work, and over 38,000 acres of fuels reduction projects**. We also continued our work of partnering with the states of Washington and Oregon under the spirit of shared stewardship, and worked on implementing 12 Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) projects with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and one GNA project with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

In past years we have produced an accomplishment report highlighting accomplishments from each regional office program, Forest, and center of excellence. Due to the many challenges we faced in 2020 we have chosen to streamline our accomplishment reporting to highlight a few key program and Forest accomplishments. Please feel free and share this report with partners, other federal agencies and any interested publics, it will be available to download online: www.fs.usda.gov/main/r6/plants-animals/wildlife.

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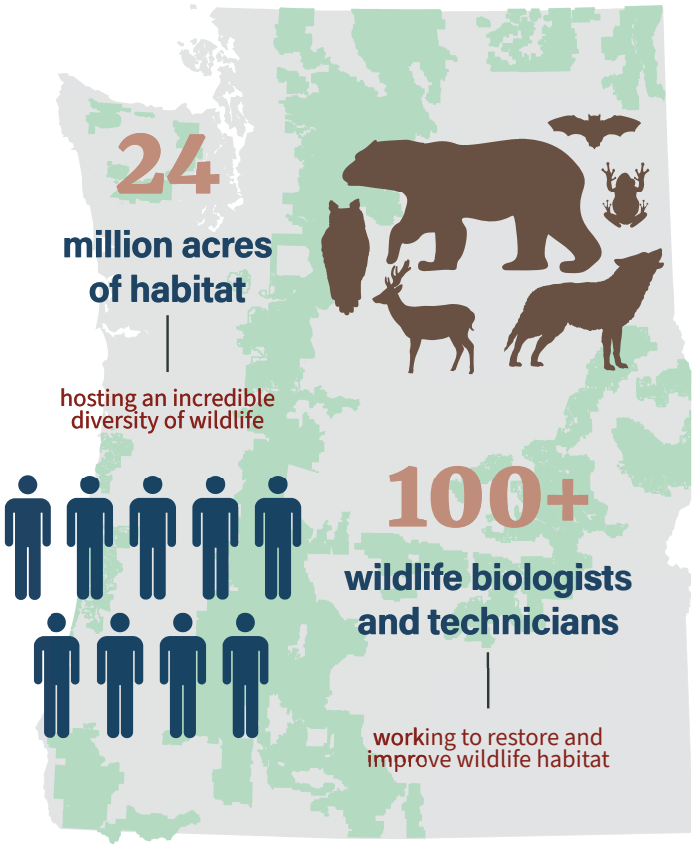
## RESTORATION & PARTNERSHIPSBY THE NUMBERS - 2020




leveraged

**$1.3 MILLION**

in partner dollars

coming from

**39**

partners


- VEGETATION MANAGEMENT
  70,574 acres
- ROAD DECOMMISSIONING/CLOSURE
  48,512 acres
- COMMERCIAL THINNING
  41,562 acres
- FUELS REDUCTION
  38,141 acres
- BARRED OWL REMOVAL
  33,498 acres
- WILDFIRE
  28,135 acres
- WILDLIFE
  20,447 acres
- AQUATIC RESTORATION
  6,464 acres

# Regional Wildlife and Threatened and Endangered Species Program

## WORKING FOR WILDLIFE ACROSS THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

In FY20 the Regional Threatened and Endangered (T&E) and Interagency Species Status and Sensitive Species Program (ISSSSP) programs focused on species conservation and the recovery of Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed and Regional Forester Sensitive Species through focused investments. In 2020, ISSSSP personnel met with their Oregon and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service counterparts to identify priority species, key information gaps, and conservation actions. By developing joint priority spe cies and actions we are positioned to use our Good Neighbor and other authorities to work across jurisdictional boundaries and leverage state and federal resources to increase the pace and scale of restora tion for these imperiled species. ISSSSP also identified high priority sensitive species and developed species-specific Conservation Action Plans that focus our restoration efforts over the next several years. It is hoped that focused internal in vestments on priority actions, leveraged with partnerships, will result in substan tial conservation gains across Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service administered lands.

The ISSSSP program also provided tools to the field for efficient and effective pro ject analyses and species management continued (development of species fact sheets foothill yellow-legged frog habitat model), inventories to fill information gaps progressed (eBLIMP, rare lichens/ bryophytes, vascular plant monitoring in Washington), and services for specimen identification were provided in a timely manner and vouchers prepared for curation and delivered to Oregon State University herbarium (OSC) and Universi ty of Washington herbarium (WTU).

The Regional Threatened and Endange red Species Program continues to focus conservation efforts (over $1 million dollars and leveraging over $2 million on partnership dollars) on Oregon Spo tted frog, grizzly bear, Oregon Silverspot and Taylor's Checkerspot butterflies, Western Snowy Plover, bull trout, and anadromous fish across the region. Threatened and Endangered Program staff participated in the development of revised survey protocols for federa lly listed species, a nation-wide aerial fire retardant EIS review and trainings on creating greater efficiency in ESA consultation.

Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly on the Olympic National Forest. Photo credit: Karen Holtrop.

**The Colville National Forest has 1.5 million acres in north eastern Washington and includes the Kettle River, Selkirk mountain ranges, and the upper reaches of the Columbia River.**


# Restoring Wildlife Forage: Northeast Washington Forest Vision 2020 Project

Colville
National Forest

Pumpkin orange ponderosa pines on the hillsides are starting to reappear as 24,000 acres of fuels and vegetation treatments reverse the effects of fire suppression. Once hidden behind the ingrowth of fire intolerant lodgepole pine, grand fir, and douglas fir, these future giants can be seen again along the Sherman Pass Sce nic Byway. Recent Collaborative Forest Landscape Program monitoring highligh ted the need to treat vegetation and fuels every 15-20 years to reduce the intensity of wildfire and improve ungulate forage. Previously suppressed by shade from the ingrowth, shrubs, grasses, and forbs will rebound and cover the hillsides and provide nutritious and abundant food for deer and elk.

Project Contact:
Karen Honeycutt
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Post thinning ponderosa pine on the Colville National Forest. Photo credit: Karen Honeycutt.


**Deschutes National Forest runs along Central Oregon's Cascades, encompassing nearly 1.6 million acres**

# Upper Little Deschutes River Restoration Project

Deschutes National Forest

The Upper Little Deschutes River is a popular area for recreation, hunting, and the threatened Oregon spotted frog and was in need of restoration. Lodgepole pine had encroached into the riparian area, dispersed camping sites were grow ing in size as well as unauthorized roads and trails, and there were illegal bridges and ditches resulting in moving water away from important Oregon spotted frog breeding and overwintering habitat. Accomplishments in 2020 include:

- 78 aces of lodgepole pine thinning of which some used as instream structures
- 4 miles of system roads and 10.5 miles of unauthorized routes were decommissioned
- 4 recreation sites were reduced and rehabilitated, 2 sites were closed, and 2 illegal dump sites rehabilitated
- 1/2 mile of an illegal ditch was closed, 28 instream structures and 6 beaver dam analogues were placed to raise the water table to provide Oregon spotted frog breeding and overwintering habitat
- Bank stabilization along 2 miles of the river
- 1 illegal bridge removed

Partners: Mule Deer Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Pacific Northwest Regional Challenge Cost Share funds.

Project Contact: Lauri Turner (lturner@usda.gov)

Beaver Dam Analogue constructed as part of the Upper Little Deschutes Restoration Project. Photo Credit: Carina Rosterolla.

# User Created Trail Removal and Rehabilitation

User created trails management takes limited resources away from programs that maintain, enhance, and develop our local trail system – impacting all users and wildlife that use the areas. This summer, with increased public use of our national forest, the Bend Ft. Rock Ranger District wildlife staff and Youth Conservation Corps crews removed and rehabilitated 3.5 miles of a heavily used user created trail that traversed through nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat for the northern spotted owl. This area was also being used by a variety of other wildlife like Cooper's hawks, black bear, and cougar. This project took 41.5 per son days with an estimated labor cost of $11,900 demonstrating the significant resources needed to address user-creat ed impacts.

Partners: Youth Conservation Corps

Project Contact: Brock McCormick (brock.mccormick@usda.gov)

Wildlife crews and youth conservation corps crews rehabilitating illegal user created trails. Photo credit: Brock McCormick


**Located near the geographic center of Oregon, the Ochoco National Forest consists of 845,498 acres of land divided into three ranger districts.**

Buck and pole aspen exclosure fence construction. Photo credit: Monty Gregg.

# North Grizzly Wildlife Habitat Enhancement

## Ochoco National Forest

The Lookout Mountain Ranger District on the Ochoco National Forest implement ed a multi-faceted project to enhance wildlife habitat conditions within the northern part of the Grizzly Wildlife Management Unit. Through a holistic approach to landscape restoration this project enhanced approximately 1,350 acres of habitat for big game, including elk, and a myriad of other wildlife spe cies. Treatments included in this effort consisted of meadow restoration, 5 acres of aspen enhancement and protection via construction of a buck and pole exclosure, improving big game security through installing effective barriers on closed roads (20 miles), and reconnection of the floodplain through stream resto ration and riparian improvements. These treatments aligned in a cohesive strategy to improve habitat conditions for a multi tude of wildlife species, including priority species, with the goal of encouraging elk redistribution from private land to public lands, and addressing current challenges within local and regional priority habitats.

Partners: Blue Mountain Elk Initiative, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, National Forest Foundation and AmeriCorps.

Project Contact: Monty Gregg (monty.gregg@usda.gov)

**The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest is a large and diverse landscape, encompassing over 4 million acres along the east slopes of the Cascade Range in Washington.**


# Mt. Hull Bighorn Sheep Restoration Project

## Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest developed and implemented the Mt. Hull Bighorn Sheep Restoration Project to encourage sheep to use their historic range, which was previously grown in with dense trees and unusable for sheep foraging and lambing. Forested stands were selected for thinning based upon their proximity to both cliff habitat as well as nearby lambing habitats near water sources. The Forest thinned 5 units totaling over 700 acres of habitat to treat dense forested stands of conifers less than 10" diameter at breast height (dbh), pile and burn the slash, and broadcast burn the units and adjacent lands in a 1,000-3,500-acre area.

Partners: Washington Department of Natural Resources ($400k), Washington State Wild Sheep Foundation ($50k), Colville Confederated Tribes and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Project Contact: Matt Marsh (matt.marsh@usda.gov)

Bighorn sheep.
U.S. Forest Service photo


**The Olympic National Forest is located on the Olympic Peninsula in the northwest corner of Washington State. Landscape settings range from temperate rain forest to rain shadow, saltwater beaches to snow capped mountains, and large lowland lakes to mountain tarns.**

# Pollinator Habitat Improvement and Monitoring

Olympic National Forest

The Forest accomplished several activities to benefit pollinators and their habitats. These included habitat improvement projects, butterfly population monitoring, and bumblebee surveys. The work was done by Forest Service wildlife, botany and silviculture personnel, a volunteer, and a Washington Conservation Corps crew.

Population monitoring of known Taylor's checkerspot butterfly sites: Adults were observed flying in habitat en hancement areas. One site had the high est count on record since site monitoring began in 2012. Larvae searches were accomplished using a scent-detection dog team. This was an innovative new technique to look for checkerspot butter fly presence. The dog team found Taylor's checkerspot larvae in a prior habitat area and along overgrown roads.

Participated in the regional Bumblebee At las Survey effort to determine bumblebee species distribution and habitats in the Pacific Northwest. These surveys included documenting the plant species used by bumblebees for nectar and pollen.

Pollinator habitat improvements on the Forest included cutting woody vegetation to create or enhance openings in young forest stands, piling the slash, and applying genetically local native plant seed. These actions benefit not only insect pollinators, but big game, bird, small mammal, reptile, and amphibian habitats.

Partners: Pacific Northwest Regional Cha-llenge Cost Share funds, Pacific Northwest Regional Threatened & Endangered Species funds, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Grant, Washington Conservation Corps, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Project Contact: Karen Holtrop (karen.holtrop@usda.gov)

Trained scent dog searching for Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly larvae. Photo credit: Karen Holtrop

Technician sampling high elevation lake on the Olympic National Forest for eDNA. Western Toad on the Olympic National Forest. Photo credits: Betsy Howell

# eDNA Sampling at High-Elevation Lakes

The Olympic National Forest completed eDNA sampling at 20 high-elevation lakes ranging in elevation from 1,745-5,976 feet (average of 4,250 feet). The objective of the project was to complete an aquatic species inventory for each lake using using eDNA techniques, with a focus on native and non-native fish and amphi bian species. This collaboration has in cluded supplies and training for sampling provided by Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife; methodology and guidance based on a pilot year of surveys in 2019 from Olympic National Park and United States Geological Survey (USGS); and the collection of field samples by Fo rest staff. A little more than half (11) of the 20 lakes surveyed are in wilderness; most of the lakes have a management history of repeated fish stocking. All eDNA sam ples that we collected are currently with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Genetics Laboratory in Olympia and results are expected later this winter or early spring 2021.

Species of interest in these high-elevation lakes on the forest include the Cascades frog (*Rana cascadae*), a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Species of Concern and the rough-skinned newt (*Taricha granulosa*), a species highly susceptible to the sala mander chytrid fungus, Bsal; brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*); coastal cutthroat trout (*Oncorynchus clarkii clarkii*); and rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*).

We will be getting presence information on these species, as well as other local native amphibians and aquatic invertebrates. This information will be used by the Forest and Park to develop a management plan for invasive species, recreation, and the conservation of sensitive species and their habitats. Our surveys will also provide ba seline information about these ecosystems for future comparisons under changing climatic conditions.

Partners: Olympic National Park, U.S. Geological Survey, and the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, Pacific Northwest Regional Challenge Cost Share funds.

Project Contact: Betsy Howell (betsy.howell@usda.gov)

# Centers of Excellence

Regional Centers of Excellence, are comprised of District or Forest level biologists who serve as Regional resources for specific wildlife species or groups of species.

## DECAID CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

The DecAID Advisor is a planning tool intended to help provide the best avail able data and information to managers as they conserve and manage snags, partially dead trees, and down wood for biodiversity in Oregon and Washington (https://apps.fs.usda.gov/r6_decaid/views/index.html). Barbara Webb, a Dis trict Biologist on the Deschutes National Forest, Steve Acker a Forest Service ecologist (now retired), Pek Wijayratne a Forest Service Ecologist, and Andrew Stratton the Forest Service Geodatabase Coordinator work together as the DecAID center of excellence. They worked on up dating the vegetation data for snag and downed wood analysis with the updated GNN vegetation dataset and worked to provide project level snag and downed wood analysis support for several Forests across the region.

Contact: Barbara Webb (barbara.webb@usda.gov) or Pek Wijaratne (upekala.wijayratne@usda.gov)

## UPLAND GAME BIRD CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Monty Gregg, the Forest Biologist on the Ochoco National Forest serves as the regional upland game bird center of excellence. Monty attended the Na tional Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) Convention and participates as a member of the Making Tracks Steering Committee meetings, and also participates in NWTF state chapter meetings. Unfortunately, due to financial hardships related to COVID-19 NWTF saw its staffing capacity reduced nationally, and there is no longer NWTF staff in the Pacific Northwest. However, NWTF has been working hard to finish up ongoing restoration projects in the Region.

Grouse wing bee at the Roseburg District Offices of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Photo credit: Monty Gregg

Monty also assisted with the organization of the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Western Quail Working Group annual meeting that was hosted by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and took place at the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest. He provided input to the Mountain Quail break out group on habitat management and translocation efforts in the state and highlighted various partner ship opportunities with the Forest Service.

Contact: Monty Gregg (monty.gregg@usda.gov)

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Robbie Piehl, a District wildlife biologist on the Ochoco National Forest serves as the regional Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation center of excellence. Robbie represented the Forest Service at Project Advisory Com mittee (PAC) meetings for both the Oregon and Washington PAC's. In 2020 the Forests in the Pacific Northwest Region had 6 proj ects selected in Washington State resulting in $134,364 of RMEF funding, and 8 proj ects were selected in Oregon resulting in $170,000 of RMEF funding going to support habitat restoration work that benefits elk and other wildlife species.

Robbie also worked with Lizzy Berkley and Josh Chapman to develop and deliver a webinar on what makes a good RMEF PAC project, along with tips and tricks to streamline the application process for Forest Service biologists in the region. The presentation was well received, and its success was demonstrated by the much improved RMEF PAC project applications that were reviewed in 2020.

Contact: Robby Piehl (robbie.piehl@usda.gov)

Jackson Wildlife Enhancement project prescribed fire application, an RMEF funded project on the Ochoco National Forest. Photo credit: Robbie Piehl

## BLUE MOUNTAIN ELK INITIATIVE

Lizzy Berkley, the Forest Wildlife Biologist on the Umatilla National Forest serves as the Blue Mountain Elk Initiative (BMEI) Coordinator. In 2020 the Blue Mountain Elk Initiative contributed $129,325 to on the ground restoration that benefit elk and other wildlife, research, and a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) youth education event (which was postponed till 2021 due to COVID). These funds leveraged an additional $125,000 of RMEF partner funding for these projects. Activities funded included: prescribed fire, thinning, meadow restoration, invasive species treatments, road closures (including gates and signs), collars for elk, and informational brochures. Informational signs developed by the BMEI Operations Committee were installed across the Blue Mountains on National Forests, BLM lands, and state wildlife areas to help the public understand the primary reason behind the closures and compliance will help encourage elk to stay on public lands.

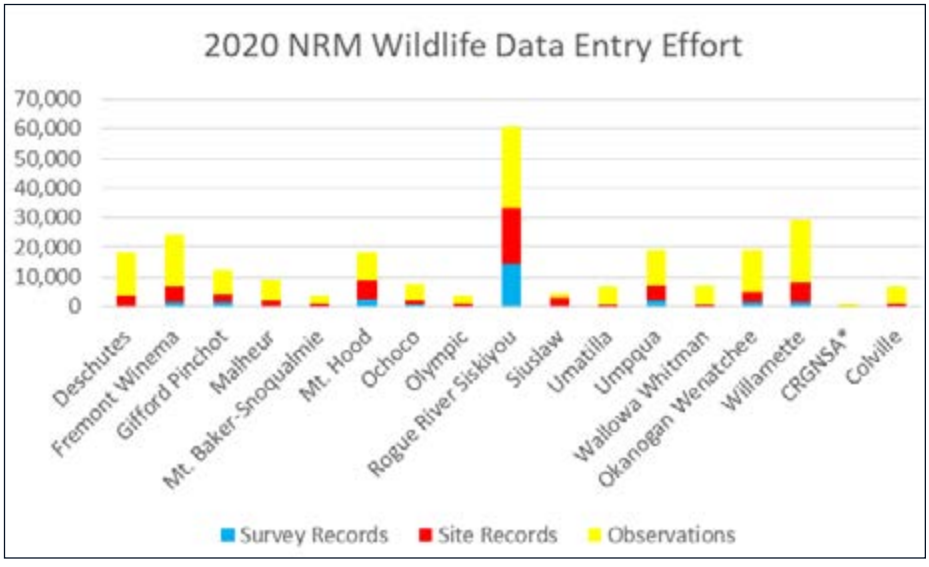
Contact: Lizzy Berkley (elizabeth.berkley@usda.gov)


Installing road closure educational sign designed and funded by the Blue Mountain Elk Initiative. Photo by Lizzy Berkley

## NRM WILDLIFE

Lisa Lyons, a wildlife biologist on the Fremont-Winema National Forest serves as our NRM Wildlife center of excellence. NRM Wildlife is the Forest Service's corporate database for wildlife species surveys, observations, and inventories. Lisa helps out Forests in the Pacific Northwest with database permissions, data entry questions, and represents the Region on the national NRM wildlife user's work group. In Fiscal Year 2020 the Forests in the Pacific Northwest Region entered the following number of records into the database (Figure right)

Contact: Lisa Lyon (lisa.lyon@usda.gov)




## AVIAN CONSERVATION CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

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## CARNIVORE CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

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