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Washington Department of Wildlife



Introduction

This report is the first Endangered Species Annual Report by the Nongame Program. These reports will be published once each year to briefly discuss the current status of each of our state's endangered and threatened species and the department's recovery efforts on their behalf during the year. The report also describes important developments and activities of the Endangered Species Program.

The Washington Department of Wildlife's Nongame Program was established in the 1970s to manage the state's nongame wildlife species, and to work to preserve them for present and future generations. The department is responsible for reviewing species for endangered or threatened status in Washington, monitoring their status, and recovering populations to safe levels. These activities are mostly funded through the sale of personalized license plates.

A species in the state endangered category is seriously threatened with extirpation throughout all or a significant portion of its range within Washington. A species in the state threatened category is not presently endangered but could become so in the foreseeable future. Species federally classified as threatened or endangered are also included in the state's lists and are protected by Washington law.

There are currently a total of 22 species classified as endangered and seven listed as threatened in Washington. Within the Nongame Program, the Endangered Species Program has responsibility for coordinating recovery efforts for these listed species. In 1989, a program manager was hired for this position and the Washington State Legislature approved a project position for the department to write recovery plans for the state listed species.

The goal of the the department is to restore listed species' populations to self-sustaining levels so that the species may be reclassified or removed from the special status classifications altogether. How long the process takes depends on the species involved and its circumstances. Recovery efforts often involve the assistance and cooperation of other agencies, tribes, landowners, organizations and private citizens.

During 1989, the Nongame Program began developing administrative rules for a process to be used when classifying wildlife as endangered, threatened or sensitive. The department is working with a committee consisting of 29 representatives of a broad range of interests and organizations to develop these rules.

For more information on threatened and endangered species the department has published a more detailed booklet, "Threatened and Endangered Wildlife in Washington," which is available upon request.

WASHINGTON STATE ENDANGERED SPECIES

Leatherback Sea Turtle — *Dermochelys coriacea*
American White Pelican — *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*
Brown Pelican — *Pelecanus occidentalis*
Aleutian Canada Goose — *Branta canadensis leucopareia*
Peregrine Falcon — *Falco peregrinus*
Sandhill Crane — *Grus canadensis*
Snowy Plover — *Charadrius alexandrinus*
Upland Sandpiper — *Bartramia longicauda*
Spotted Owl — *Strix occidentalis*
Sperm Whale — *Physeter catodon*
Gray Whale — *Eschrichtius gibbosus*
Finback Whale — *Balaenoptera physalus*
Sei Whale — *Balaenoptera borealis*
Blue Whale — *Balaenoptera musculus*
Hump-backed Whale — *Megaptera novaeangliae*
Right Whale — *Balaena glacialis*
Wolf — *Canis lupus*
Grizzly Bear — *Ursus arctos horribilis*
Sea Otter — *Enhydra lutris*
Columbian White-tailed Deer — *Odocoileus virginianus leucurus*
Mountain Caribou — *Rangifer tarandus caribou*

WASHINGTON STATE THREATENED SPECIES

Oregon Silverspot Butterfly — *Speyeria zerene hippolyta*
Western Pond Turtle — *Clemmys marmorata*
Green Sea Turtle — *Chelonia mydas*
Loggerhead Sea Turtle — *Caretta caretta*
Ferruginous Hawk — *Buteo regalis*
Bald Eagle — *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
Pygmy Rabbit — *Brachylagus idahoensis*

Extinction of a species is the complete elimination of the species from the face of the earth.

Extirpation is the elimination of a species from portions of its former range.

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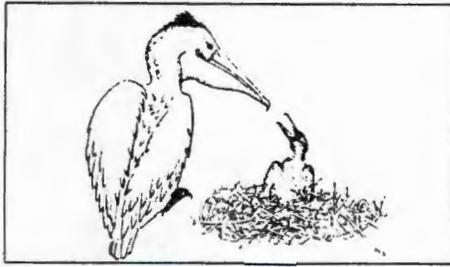
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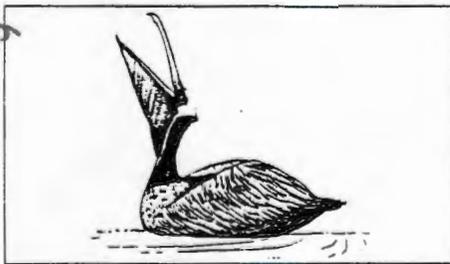
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American White Pelican— Hundreds of American white pelicans paid an unexpected visit to Washington this summer. A drought in their

usual nesting area in Nevada drove as many as 1,500 of the large, stately birds to the Columbia Basin to look for food. During most years, 150-300 fall migrants can be found on Potholes Reservoir from mid-August to mid-October; and flocks of 30-40 birds are commonly seen in the Columbia Basin in the summer. This year's summer influx of birds from further south was unprecedented. Hundreds were seen at the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge and many more occurred on the lakes behind McNary and John Day Dams and other large lakes throughout Eastern Washington.

The last documented records of pelicans nesting in Washington were in 1926. The major reason for the decline of white pelicans as breeders in this state was the loss of nesting habitat through land reclamation and irrigation projects. Recovery potential for this species in our state is good and recovery efforts will involve re-establishing nesting birds. Department biologists have been experimenting with luring birds to potential nesting sites using decoys, and have developed proposals to create artificial islands for nesting habitat. Plans are underway to initiate a banding effort in 1990 to mark some of the pelicans in the Columbia Basin to learn where they are coming from and where they nest.



Brown Pelican — The brown pelican is a federally listed endangered species because populations nationwide were drastically re-

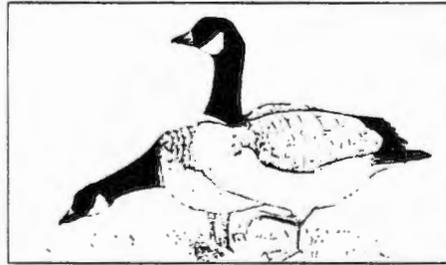
duced in the '70s due to chemical pollutants such as DDT and DDE in the environment. Although the use of these chemicals has been restricted in the United States, their use outside the U.S. still poses a threat to the brown pelican and other migratory species.

In recent years, we have been seeing more brown pelicans, in more places, and for longer periods of time in our state. Brown pelicans did not historically breed in Washington, but

they do migrate through and winter here. The highest numbers of brown pelicans are typically seen in Grays Harbor, Willapa Bay, and in the coastal areas of Washington during fall and winter. Only small numbers are usually seen in Washington during spring and summer because they return to California to nest.

This year, however, large numbers of brown pelicans were seen during the summer months in Grays Harbor. Department biologists counted over 100 pelicans at Sand Island and Damon Point during July and August. In the fall of 1989, more than 400 brown pelicans were counted during waterfowl surveys of the coast.

With protection and removal of chemical pollutants from the environment, brown pelican populations are slowly recovering. The contribution that Washington can make to the recovery of this species is in providing secure habitat for migrant and wintering populations.



Aleutian Canada Goose — Aleutian Canada geese use Washington habitats during migration periods and are found primarily in the Willapa

Bay and Lower Columbia River areas. During the winter of 1988-89, an Aleutian goose bearing a red leg band was seen at Vancouver Lake Bottoms west of Vancouver and an un-banded Aleutian was shot out of a mixed flock of Canada geese at Willapa Bay. In previous years, band returns in Washington have come from Benton, Jefferson, King, Pierce, and Pacific counties.

The Aleutian Canada goose population was nearly decimated as a result of predation by Arctic fox and rats which were introduced on the nesting islands in the Aleutian chain. Foxes have been removed from some of the islands and successful reintroductions have been made to re-establish the geese. The number of Aleutian Canada geese has increased from 1,600 in 1977 to more than 6,000 in the fall of 1989.

The geese bred on six islands in the Aleutians in 1989, but 90 percent of the population was on one island. Translocations will need to continue to increase the small populations on other islands to safe, self-sustaining levels.

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Peregrine Falcon — Peregrine falcons are slowly recovering in our state through a combination of natural recolonization in some areas and assistance through reintroductions in other areas. There were 12 active peregrine falcon nests in Washington during 1989 which produced 15 young. Seven of the sites were on the outer coast, four were in the San Juans, and one was in the Columbia River Gorge. Three of these were new nests this year. Peregrine numbers have been

slowly increasing in Washington since 1980 when there were only two known nesting pairs in the state.

Two of the nests on the outer coast failed. A dead female and one egg were found at one nest, and three eggs were found at the other abandoned nest. The eggs and female were recovered by Department of Wildlife (WDW) biologists with assistance from the U.-S. Coast Guard. The eggs are being examined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for contaminant analysis.

Peregrines are also being re-established in vacant historic habitat. A total of eight captively-reared peregrines were successfully released to the wild in 1989. The department worked with several cooperators, including the USFWS, U.S. Forest Service, Boise Cascade, Washington chapters of the Audubon Society, and the Peregrine Fund to release the peregrines at three sites. Four peregrines each were successfully released from Columbia River and Yakima sites; but a Snake River site failed as a result of probable predation. Captively-reared birds were not available in 1989 for an additional site in Spokane which had successfully released three young in 1988. This was a big disappointment to the state and the Washington Water Power, Spokane Audubon Society, and Washington Falconers Association cooperators. Releases at five sites are planned in 1990.

Extensive surveys were conducted by WDW biologists throughout Washington in 1989 to search new areas for peregrine nesting activity. No peregrines were found during these surveys. The department also provided nest site attendants at four of the wild nests to monitor the birds and prevent human disturbance.

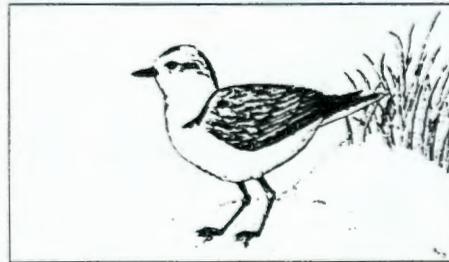
In 1989, the federal Peregrine Recovery Team was reorganized and will be amending the existing recovery plan for the next five years. As a result, recovery efforts for peregrines are expected to accelerate in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho during the next several years.



Sandhill Crane — Two of the six North American subspecies of sandhill crane occur in Washington: the lesser and greater sandhill cranes. Breeding sandhill cranes were essentially extirpated from Washington by 1941. Lesser sandhill cranes now occur as migrants in Washington in the spring and fall on both sides of the Cascades. The greatest numbers are seen at four major staging areas (traditional areas where large numbers gather), three in the Columbia

Basin and one at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Washington. Greater sandhill cranes also migrate through the state, but in smaller numbers.

One pair of greater sandhill cranes has nested on the Conboy National Wildlife Refuge in south-central Washington since 1975, although the success rate has been low. There is speculation that some birds may nest in the higher elevation meadows of the Yakima Indian Reservation, and, although this has not been confirmed, one adult was seen there during May of 1989.



Snowy Plover — The snowy plover population in Washington is at a critical low and continued to decline in 1989. The U. S. Fish & Wildlife

Service is currently reviewing the coastal population of snowy plovers in Washington, Oregon, and California for federal listing as an endangered species.

Snowy plovers are spring and summer coastal residents in Washington, and are rarely seen in Puget Sound or interior Washington. There are only two known breeding locations in the state — Damon Point and Leadbetter Point. In 1989, one nest was found at Damon Point and four at Leadbetter Point.

In Washington, they nest only on sandy or gravelly beaches and spits. Much of the snowy plover habitat in Washington was altered or severely impacted through development or beach stabilization projects. These losses were exacerbated in 1989 by the combination of a severe winter, a reduction in wintering habitat in California and Oregon, and the degra-

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dation of remaining habitat in Washington.

Snowy plovers are also vulnerable to disturbance such as people walking through the nesting area or vehicles driving on the beach. The birds are easily flushed from their nests, exposing the eggs to the elements and to predators such as gulls and crows. Vehicles may run over eggs, chicks and adults or flush adults from the nest, separating newly-hatched chicks from the adults.

An off-road vehicle (ORV) closure was implemented in 1987 to help protect the snowy plover population at Damon Point. This had a positive effect for the plovers initially, and then an additional negative effect. With the restriction of ORV use in the area, it became more attractive for recreational use such as fishing and camping. This has resulted in increased garbage which in turn attracts gulls and crows which prey on plover eggs. A plan was developed to manage the recreational use at the Damon Point area by the Department of Natural Resources, State Parks, Department of Wildlife, and the city of Ocean Shores in 1988, but has not yet been fully implemented. The plan will be re-evaluated for its effectiveness in future years.



Spotted Owl — There were pluses and minuses for spotted owls in 1989. On the positive side, reproduction in some areas was better during 1989 than it has been the last six years, some new owl sites were found, and interim protection was established for some owls. On the negative side, poor reproduction continued in other areas, some historic owl sites were found to no longer support owls, and at least 50 percent of the population is still at risk from continued log-

ging of habitat on state, private and national forest lands in Washington.

The spotted owl continued to be at the center of intense controversy in 1989. During this year, the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service wrote a revised finding on the status of the spotted owl and concluded that it was warranted for federal listing as a threatened species. Public comment was taken through December 1989 and a final decision on the proposal is expected in June 1990.

The U. S. Forest Service (USFS) spotted owl management guidelines for Oregon and Washington, known as the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS), were administratively appealed by eight different groups, including the Department of Wildlife (WDW). The department's appeal was based on an analysis by WDW that the plan would likely result in the eventual extirpation of the spotted owl in Washington. Under the plan, habitat of more than 50 percent of the known spotted owls in the Cascades would be available for harvest. The Secretary of Agriculture declined to review the appeals and then both the timber industry and environmental groups filed lawsuits against the plan. The lawsuit by the environmental groups resulted in an injunction against cutting spotted owl habitat until the case could be heard. The USFS asked that the case be delayed while they worked on a conservation plan.

In the meantime, so much controversy was created that it became a national issue in Congress, resulting in passage of the Hatfield-Adams amendment. The amendment mandated a harvest level on national forests in Washington and Oregon, and said that the FSEIS guidelines would be in use during 1990. As a result, spotted owl habitat in Washington will continue to be logged during 1990. Another provision of the amendment established a scientific committee to write a conservation plan for spotted owls. The Department of Wildlife has a participant on this committee, assisting in development of the plan.



Upland Sandpiper — The upland sandpiper is on the edge of its breeding range in Washington. At present, upland sandpipers nest in only one known location in Washington, in the east Spokane Valley. The Department of Wildlife funded a survey for upland sandpipers in 1989, and only three were seen at the northeastern Washington site.

Although the numbers of these birds in Washington have never been very large, they nested historically at other Eastern Washington sites, including Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, Indian Prairie and Touchet Creek. The decline of the upland sandpiper in Washington and much of the West has been attributed to loss of habitat through agricultural practices, overgrazing, and land development activities.

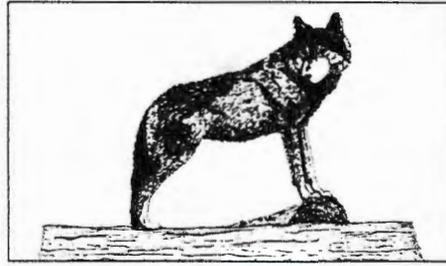
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Department biologists and managers participated in a discussion group composed of timber, environmental, and agency interests to resolve spotted owl and timber supply concerns on the Olympic National Forest. As a result of these meetings, some timber sales that would have adversely impacted spotted owls were dropped from the 1989 sales program.

The Department of Natural Resource (DNR) Old-Growth Commission completed recommendations to DNR for management of state lands on the northwest Olympic Peninsula. The recommendations included deferral of 15,000 acres of spotted owl habitat for 15 years. This will likely result in full protection for two pairs of owls, and partial protection for four pairs. Logging of lands outside of deferred areas will likely result in significant adverse impacts to 20 known pairs and single owls on that portion of the Olympic Peninsula.

The Department of Wildlife allocated tremendous resources to spotted owl work during 1989. With the assistance of public and private participants, work continued on the development of a spotted owl recovery plan for Washington. Department biologists worked with the Forest Service in reviewing timber sales and forest plans. The department's nongame data system staff compiled all of the known spotted owl locational information in the state into a database. Currently, there are a total of 326 known spotted owl pairs in Washington, and the majority of these (83 percent) are on national forest lands. The state's population is estimated to be approximately 600 pairs. Three department research reports were prepared on spotted owl studies in Washington.

A great deal of field work was also conducted on spotted owls during 1989. Surveys were conducted on all national forests and on state lands on the Olympic Peninsula and in the Columbia Gorge. Department biologists surveyed historic spotted owl areas to determine if owls were still present and cooperated with DNR in surveys of state land on the Olympic Peninsula for spotted owls. Timber industry biologists conducted spotted owl surveys and nest site inventories on the east side of the Cascades. The Forest Service conducted research on spotted owls on the Olympic and Wenatchee national forests and the department continued cooperative research with the Forest Service on spotted and barred owls on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.



Wolf — The wolf is listed as a federally endangered species, and was essentially extirpated from Washington by the early 1900s. In recent years, there

have been reports of wolf sightings in the Cascades and north-eastern Washington. In 1989, Department of Wildlife biologists confirmed a set of wolf tracks from the North Cascades. It is likely that individuals from Canada have been slowly coming down into Washington in recent years. Concentrations of wolf sighting reports are near Baker and Ross Lakes in the North Cascades, near Mt. Rainier, and in northeastern Washington.

A national traveling wolf exhibit was at the Pacific Science Center in Seattle for four months and attracted more than 200,000 visitors who were exposed to the legends and truths about wolves. The department participated in the lecture series in coordination with the exhibit.

The department also funded the Washington Wolf Project to evaluate sightings of wolves in the Cascades and to document the historic decline of wolves in Washington. A report was produced in May which summarized this information. The early trapping records from the Hudson's Bay Company showed that a total of 14,810 wolf pelts were traded at four forts in Washington between 1827-59. The last record of the trade of wolf pelts was in 1859.



Grizzly Bear — Grizzly bears are federally listed as a threatened species in the lower 48 states, and are limited to six distinct ecosystems, two of

which are located in Washington — the Selkirk Mountains and the North Cascades. Occasional observations of grizzlies are reported from these areas each year.

Grizzly bear tracks were confirmed for the first time in the North Cascades ecosystem during the fall of 1989. Tracks were found near Mt. Baker and near Cle Elum. The Department of Wildlife has been cooperating with other agencies in a five-year grizzly bear habitat evaluation of the North Cascades and this was the first time since the study began in

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1986 that grizzlies have been confirmed.

Once bears are located, the objective of the study is to fit a few bears with radio collars to learn about their home range and habitat use patterns. Another important facet of the study is a habitat mapping effort which is being done by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of Wildlife to determine how much grizzly bear habitat exists in the North Cascades.

The department is a member of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC), which is responsible for coordinating grizzly bear management in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho and Washington. During 1989, department representatives worked on subgroups of the IGBC, including the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Working Group, and the Northwest and Selkirk Ecosystem subcommittees to address research, management, education and policy issues regarding grizzly bears.

9 2 1 2 5 7 8 1 4 0 Significant cooperative efforts for grizzly bear conservation took place during 1989. The governor of Washington joined other western states governors in signing a proclamation supporting grizzly bear recovery; and British Columbia signed an agreement with the IGBC to promote a cooperative strategy for grizzly bear conservation in the four ecosystems bordering Canada.

Public meetings on grizzly bears were held in late 1988 and early 1989 in Winthrop and Seattle to give the public an opportunity to learn about the ongoing evaluation study and to ask questions about grizzlies in Washington. Additional meetings are planned for 1990 on both the east and west sides of the state.

The department and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) were besieged during 1989 by false rumors of bears being transplanted into the North Cascades. *There are no plans to introduce grizzly bears into the North Cascades*, but it proved difficult to correct this rumor once it got started.

Illegal killing of grizzlies continue to hamper recovery efforts in the Selkirks of northeastern Washington and northern Idaho. Five of 11 radio-collared bears have been illegally killed since 1983. Department enforcement personnel participated in a joint meeting with enforcement people from USFWS, USFS, and Idaho Fish & Game this year to develop strategies for protection of grizzlies in the Selkirks from poaching.

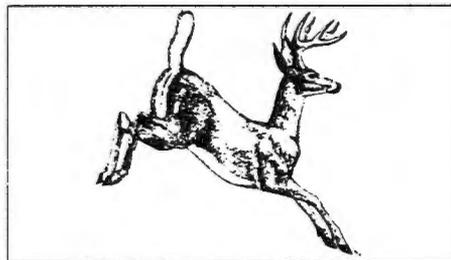


Sea Otter — Things were looking good for sea otters in Washington in 1989. The highest sea otter counts ever recorded since their re-establishment off the Washington coast — 212 — were made this summer during aerial and shore-based surveys conducted by Department of Wildlife and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) biologists.

Sea otters once ranged from the Columbia River north to Cape Flattery, but were extirpated from Washington by the early 1900's as a result of overharvesting for the fur trade. The last known sea otters in Washington were killed in 1910. In 1969, 29 otters were transplanted from Amchitka Island, Alaska, to Washington and in 1970 another 30 were brought down and released.

Department research conducted in 1986 and 1987 suggested that the Washington population was not growing at rates comparable to those observed in other successfully transplanted populations. So this summer's observations are cause for guarded optimism for the recovery of the species in Washington. Even though the numbers remain small, fewer than 250 animals, the population continues to increase.

Concern for the species arises from the extreme vulnerability of sea otters and their habitat to oil spills. As we know from the oil spill disaster in Prince William Sound, sea otters can die very quickly when their fur is oiled. Future potential threats arise from proposals for oil and gas lease exploration and development off the Washington coast. Salmon gillnet fisheries around Cape Flattery pose an additional threat because sea otters may be entangled and killed in nets as well.



Columbian White-Tailed Deer — The Columbian white-tailed deer was an endangered species success story in 1989. The recovery

goal to remove the species from the endangered species list is to maintain a minimum of 400 deer in at least three viable herds distributed in suitable, secure habitat. There are currently three populations of Columbian white-tailed deer — at the Columbian White-Tailed Deer National Wildlife

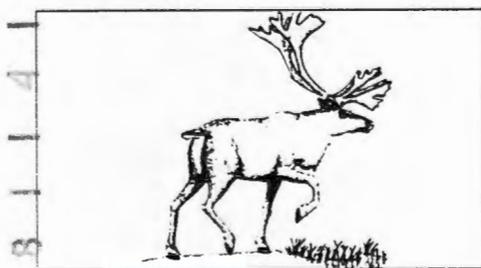
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Refuge in southwestern Washington, the Tenasillahe Island unit of the refuge, and on Puget Island, but only two of these are in secure habitat.

The U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been working during 1989 on down-listing the deer to a threatened status. Department biologists have been working throughout 1989 with the USFWS in these efforts.

The Puget Island deer population has been the subject of controversy in the last few years because of conflicts between agriculture and the deer. A group consisting of landowners, state and federal wildlife agencies, and congressional staff members met during 1989 to develop a management plan to deal with the deer/crop damage problems on the island. The department has assisted with moving some of the deer each year to Tenasillahe Island to help alleviate the problem.

1987 and 1988 in an effort to raise herd numbers to a self-sustaining level. School children have "adopted" the transplanted caribou and decorated their radio collars with names. They are learning about the animals and are following their movements. A third transplant of approximately 24 animals from British Columbia is planned this winter. After the third transplant, a monitoring program will be implemented to evaluate the success of the transplants and to determine future management plans.



Mountain Caribou —

There was good news and bad news for caribou during 1989. The good news was that the herd, which once num-

bered only 32 animals, is now estimated at 74-80 animals.

The bad news was that six caribou were killed in August and this offset the advances made by 1989 reproduction. Two of the mortalities were the result of unknown causes, one was a mountain lion kill and three were suspected bear kills.

On the positive side, the caribou began congregating in three major areas in September, apparently in response to the onset of the breeding season. A traditional staging pattern may be developing, which is a positive sign for the future of the caribou.

The mountain caribou disappeared from the continental United States except for a small remnant population in the Selkirk Mountains of northeastern Washington, northern Idaho, and southern British Columbia. The species was state listed as endangered in 1982 and federally listed as such in 1984. To ensure the survival of the herd, both the animals and their habitat must be protected and the herd augmented.

The Department of Wildlife works with Idaho, the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and British Columbia to recover the caribou. A cooperative research study has been conducted for several years to determine caribou home ranges, habitat needs, causes of deaths in calves and other information.

Caribou were transplanted from British Columbia in

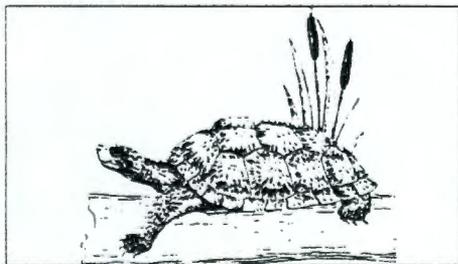
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Oregon Silverspot Butterfly — In Washington, the Oregon silverspot butterfly formerly inhabited coastal meadows from Westport south to the Columbia River. The last intensive surveys in 1986 found only a handful of adult butterflies on the Long Beach Peninsula during late summer. Habitat destruction is the cause of the decline of this federally threatened species.

In 1990, the Department of Wildlife will begin a recovery program in cooperation with the U.S.

Fish & Wildlife Service and Washington State Parks. The program will involve rehabilitation of degraded habitat and subsequent reintroduction of butterflies to the area. Dune meadow habitat will be mowed to encourage the western blue violet to grow. The violet is crucial to the butterfly's survival since it is the only plant upon which the larvae feed and develop. Recovery efforts will also involve habitat inventories, surveys for butterflies and identification of suitable habitat for acquisition.

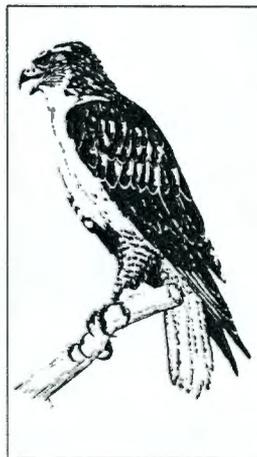


Western Pond Turtle — Western pond turtles, once well-distributed in southern Puget Sound lowland lakes and ponds, appear to be extirpated

from most of this region now. Although the reasons for the pond turtle's decline in Washington are poorly understood, the most important causes are thought to be habitat destruction and predation. Introduced species such as the bullfrog, carp and bass are thought to be significant predators on young turtles. Habitat loss has occurred through wetland development and removal of shoreline vegetation.

The total population of western pond turtles remaining in Washington occurs in only four small ponds in two counties, Klickitat and Skamania. A 1989 survey revealed that the population remains at a static low level — fewer than 150.

Recovery efforts for this species will involve learning more about the reproductive biology and population dynamics of these turtles, and possible augmentation of the population at sites with secure habitat.



Ferruginous Hawk — Department of Wildlife (WDW) biologists conducted extensive surveys in 1987 and found 62 nesting pairs of ferruginous hawks after searching 103 historic territories. Another comprehensive survey is planned in 1992. During 1989, WDW and Bureau of Land Management biologists checked a sample of 19 nests and found that 11 pairs nested and produced 22 young. Numbers of nesting birds tend to fluctuate from year to year,

perhaps coinciding with prey availability.

Populations numbers are thought to be holding steady at reduced levels. Management of this species involves protecting existing nesting habitat, monitoring the population and protecting nest sites from human disturbance.



Bald Eagle — Biologists documented 366 occupied bald eagle nests in Washington in 1989, including 12 in Eastern Washington. This exceeds

the total statewide recovery goal of 275 nesting pairs, but still falls short of the distribution needed throughout the state. Recovery goals have been achieved in three of the ten recovery zones established for Washington in the federal recovery plan. Washington still has to meet the goals in at least five of the remaining seven zones. Recovery goals also include a productivity rate of at least one young per occupied site for five years. The productivity in 1989 was .98 young per site statewide, but was only .47 young per site in the lower Columbia River area.

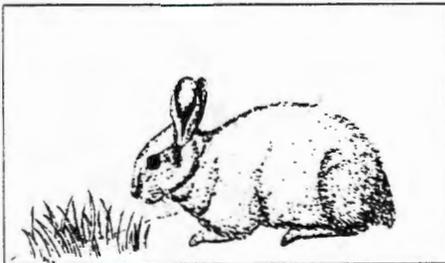
Washington has one of the largest populations of wintering bald eagles in the lower 48 states. Each winter, the Department of Wildlife (WDW), with the aid of volunteers, surveys the state for bald eagles. The 1989 survey yielded an unprecedented high count of 2,870 eagles, breaking 1988's record of 2,373. Before that, the high count was in 1985 with 1,828. The department also participated in cooperative studies with Oregon during 1989 to inventory wintering bald eagle populations along the Snake River and the Columbia Gorge portion of the Columbia River and its tributaries.

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The department continues to work with landowners to develop site management plans to protect critical habitats in bald eagle nesting territories and wintering areas. Under a state legislative mandate, the Bald Eagle Protection Rules outline a specific process in which the department works with other agencies, organizations and landowners to develop management plans where developments or forest practices are planned in bald eagle habitat. To date, a total of 39 management plans are final and have been signed by landowners and the department.

Although the prospects for bald eagle recovery are excellent, the optimism is edged with caution. There are concerns about development within bald eagle habitat and it is recognized that eagles will need to be monitored to determine the success of the site management plans currently being written. There are also concerns about the poor reproduction in the lower Columbia River and its possible relationship to contaminants. Oil spills are an additional potential threat.

Killing of eagles is also still a problem. In 1989, an investigation by WDW and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service enforcement agents resulted in the prosecution of one man who was responsible for killing 25 bald eagles on the Olympic Peninsula. Another bald eagle was killed in Pt. Defiance Park in Tacoma.



Pygmy Rabbit
— The pygmy rabbit is currently found in only one county in Washington. Recent studies by Department of Wildlife biologists

have located four separate sites within Douglas County that contain pygmy rabbits. One of the sites is on state land and three are on private land. Prior to 1987, pygmy rabbits hadn't been verified in Washington for many years.

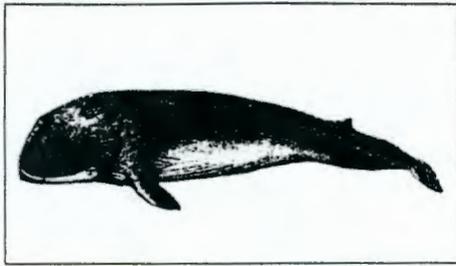
Sagebrush removal projects threatened the first site discovered. Through quick effort on the part of WDW biologists and the Wildlife Commission, a land use exchange was implemented which resulted in allowing three years to study the site and develop a plan for longer-term protection.

Department research biologists are studying the rabbits and have attached radio transmitters to determine home range and habitat use patterns. Preliminary results of a food habits study agrees with others that sagebrush is the most important food item. Based on burrow surveys, the population is estimated to be probably fewer than 200 rabbits.

The primary cause of the decline of the pygmy rabbit in Washington was habitat loss. Pygmy rabbits prefer areas of dense sage where the soil is soft enough to dig burrows. With settlement, these types of lands in Eastern Washington were rapidly converted to agricultural uses. Sagebrush removal and over-grazing also contributed to the decline.

There are few pockets of pygmy rabbit habitat left. Protection of existing habitat and restoration of potential habitat are the highest management priority to preserve this species. The need for additional surveys for pygmy rabbits is great, especially in areas of historic occupancy. In addition, the department is also considering options for increasing rabbit numbers in suitable habitat in northeast Washington.

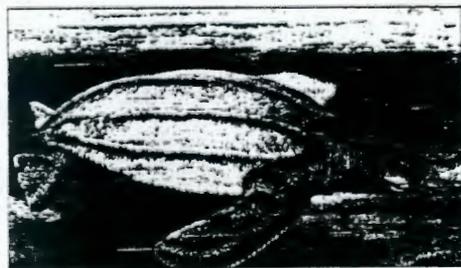
Other Species Classified as Endangered or Threatened



Whales and Sea Turtles — Whales and sea turtles are managed by international and federal agencies. Six whale species are state and federally

listed as endangered. These include the gray, sperm, fin, sei, blue, hump-backed, and right whales. Gray whale populations are now at historic population levels and may be considered for downlisting in the near future. The recovery of other endangered whale species has been slower than would have been expected given protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The recovery of the gray whale has resulted in more individuals being present in Washington waters year-round. Although in the past we only may have seen gray whales during their annual fall and spring migrations, they also are now staying in Washington waters as summer residents. It has become a regular occurrence to see them off the coast at Kalaloch, Cape Alava, Neah Bay, Pt. Angeles, Dungeness Spit and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.



Similarly, there has been an increasing number of sightings of sea turtles offshore of Washington in recent years. Three state and federally

listed species of sea turtles — loggerhead, leatherback and green — visit Washington waters, but rarely come ashore unless sick or injured. Department of Wildlife records indicate fewer than two dozen confirmed sea turtle sightings this decade along the Washington coast. During 1989, sea turtles were reported washed ashore at Copalis and Ocean Shores. The first was dead and the second, a green sea turtle, was taken to the Seattle Aquarium where it was rehabilitated and released in warmer waters.

The leatherback sea turtle is listed as a federally endangered species and the green sea turtle and loggerhead are listed as threatened species.

Concerned Washington Residents Can Help By:

- Purchasing personalized license plates through the Department of Licensing.
- Establishing management agreements or conservation easements with the assistance of the Nongame Wildlife Program or private conservation groups for protection of wildlife habitat.
- Submitting observations of special species and participating in surveys and censuses, such as the annual midwinter bald eagle survey (animal identification skills required).
- Contacting the nongame biologist in your region or a member of the Nongame Program's advisory council if you have specific suggestions or concerns.
- Donating funds or property to the Department of Wildlife.

The Washington Department of Wildlife will provide equal opportunities to all potential and existing employees without regard to race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, marital status, national origin, disability, or Vietnam Era Veteran's status. The department receives Federal Aid for fish and wildlife restoration.

The department is subject to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin or handicap. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any department program, activity, or facility, or if you want further information about Title VI or Section 504, write to: Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240, or Washington Department of Wildlife, 600 Capitol Way N, Olympia WA 98501-1091.

1989 Population Status Scorecard

STATE ENDANGERED SPECIES*	FEDERALLY LISTED					UNDETERMINED
	POP. CRITICAL**	DECLINING	STABLE	IMPROVING		
American White Pelican		✓				*Whales and sea turtles not included in rating; these are managed by Federal agencies. ** POPULATION CRITICAL Species no longer breeding in Washington or population critically vulnerable due to low numbers or poor distribution.
Brown Pelican	✓				✓	
Aleutian Canada Goose	✓				✓	
Peregrine Falcon	✓				✓	
Sandhill Crane		✓				
Snowy Plover		✓				
Upland Sandpiper		✓				
Spotted Owl			✓			
Wolf	✓				✓	
Grizzly Bear	✓	✓				
Sea Otter					✓	
Columbian White-Tailed Deer	✓				✓	
Mountain Caribou	✓			✓		
STATE THREATENED SPECIES*						
Oregon Silverspot Butterfly	✓	✓				
Western Pond Turtle		✓				
Ferruginous Hawk				✓		
Bald Eagle	✓				✓	
Pygmy Rabbit		✓				

Washington Department of Wildlife
Nongame Program
600 Capitol Way N
Olympia, WA 98501-1091

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