

# INSIDE/OUTSIDE

CONSERVATION NEWS AROUND THE NORTHWEST

## Wolves: Teanaway and Smackout

This summer, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) confirmed the existence of Washington's fourth and fifth wolf packs, the Teanaway pack in the Cascades just 90 miles east of Seattle, and the Smackout pack in northeast Stevens County near Abercrombie Mountain, an area recommended by the Forest Service for wilderness in their current forest plan for the Colville National Forest.



Two members of the new Teanaway wolf pack.  
Photo: Western Transportation Institute

Volunteers working for Conservation Northwest's Citizen Wildlife Monitoring Program captured the first images of the Teanaway pack, déjà vu to discovering the Cascades' Lookout pack in 2008.

Only two animals are thought to

remain in that pack; the others are assumed to have been poached, with federal indictments leveled against the alleged poachers. The female in the Teanaway pack is thought to be a descendent of the Lookout pack near the Methow Valley.

DFW has been working since 2007 to develop a Wolf Conservation and Management Plan in anticipation of the natural return of wolves, a state endangered species. The plan is quickly approaching its final stages of public review.

Please show your support for the wolf plan; attend a wolf hearing in Olympia on October 6 or on November 3, and send a message to the Commission. *To take action, see page 9.*

## Easement: Ranchers and wolves

Conservation Northwest is proud to announce closing on a conservation easement on the 504-acre Dawson Ranch near Colville, WA. The easement allows the Dawsons to commit their ranch permanently to open space and stay in operation.

"This conservation easement is ... good for wildlife and helps

the economy of ranching communities," said John Dawson.

The easement ensures that the Dawson ranch is forever protected from development. It is also pivotal in the recovery of wolves in Washington. One of the newest of Washington's five confirmed wolf packs, the Smackout Pack, lives in the area.

The Dawsons lease large tracts of private and public land, including within the Colville National Forest and Abercrombie-Hooknose, a roadless area that we (with the Dawsons' support) have proposed for wilderness protection.

## Confirmed: Cascades grizzly

A team of government and independent grizzly bear experts affirmed that hiker Joe Sebille's photograph of a bear in North Cascades National Park is, in fact, a grizzly bear. It is the first confirmed sighting in 15 years.

"I took the pictures because the bear was so close," Sebille said. "The moment itself will stick out in my mind for the rest of my life. Like 1080 HD memory format, it's one moment that won't go away."

Joe didn't know that the encounter was any more special than an adrenaline rush and photo opportunity. He didn't recognize the bear as a grizzly, but he felt compelled to document his encounter with a few photographs on his iPhone.

Several months later, Joe showed the photographs to a park ranger, who thought that the bear might be a grizzly. The park ranger passed the photographs on to experts, and the rest is history.

## Stemming owls slow slide

Despite more than 20 years of conservation effort and a new recovery plan, the northern spotted owl continues to slide toward extinction. The northern spotted owl population in the US is declining at a rate of 3 percent per year, says the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), who have just released a draft recovery plan for the owl.

The recovery plan recognizes the value of existing old growth and habitat conservation and considers awarding incentives for





Northern spotted owl.  
© Paul Bannick

the protection of owl habitat on state and private lands. The plan identifies barred owls as a key threat to northern spotted owls and outlines a test “hoot-and-shoot” program that would kill or trap and relocate hundreds of barred owls to allow for the restoration of northern spotted owl populations.

The barred owl is a larger owl, in the past much less common in the West, that is now encroaching on northern spotted owl habitat and outcompeting them for food.

The recovery plan also calls for extensive active management, including logging, of lower quality, non-habitat areas which are mostly in drier forests. This will be where rubber meets the road for owls and will require scrutiny.

A related, critical habitat plan for northern spotted owls is expected by year’s end; it will be the true test of FWS commitment to owl recovery, outlining specific owl habitat needed to protect to recover this beleaguered species.

## Extinction rider nixed—for now

This fall, Congress proposed a multitude of anti-environmental riders to FY12 Appropriations bills—slashing everything from climate to clean water, clean air, and public health. Fortunately for America’s endangered wildlife, Congressional Representative Norm Dicks lead the effort to defeat a rider that would have stripped funding for the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The “Extinction Rider” would have prevented the US Fish and Wildlife Service from spending any money to implement some of the most crucial sections of the ESA, including the listing of new species and designating habitat critical to endangered species’ survival. The Department of Interior is already working to improve the ESA for wildlife and people by beginning a comprehensive effort to streamline and improve the regulations and policies that implement the Act. The Extinction Rider would only derail this effort and jeopardize America’s natural heritage for all future generations.

## Wolverines in dire straits

In July, the US Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it will determine by the year 2013 whether wolverines deserve full protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Wolverine populations are at an all time low, and the threat of global warming and habitat degradation puts them at general risk for extinction. Wolverine den in deep snow. The best available data suggests that there are fewer than 300 wolverines across the entire western US and only about 10% of the population is successfully breeding.

“The wolverine is in dire straits,” said Dave Werntz with Conservation Northwest. “Its current plight is exactly what Congress had in mind when it passed the Endangered Species Act in order to save America’s wildlife from extinction.”

The US Fish and Wildlife Service agreed on a listing determination date of no later than September 30, 2013, putting wolverines near the top of the list of more than 250 other candidate species that may be listed in the next five years. Tough times are ahead for top carnivores.

## What’s up, fisher?

In a successful partnering with the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), we have helped reintroduce fishers, a native forest carnivore, to Washington. From 2008-2010, nearly 100 fishers were relocated to the Olympic Peninsula from British Columbia.

Assessing how the fishers are doing in 2011 has proven challenging, said lead DFW biologist Jeff Lewis. “Our ability to track fishers has been hampered by radio collar problem sand the challenges created by studying animals in such a



A fisher on the Olympic Peninsula approaches her den (distant middle old growth snag).  
Photo: DFW & Olympic National Park

rugged and hard-to-access area,” said Lewis. These difficulties have resulted in a lack of information about survival, reproduction, occupancy, and movements for many fishers. Still, biologists

are “cautiously optimistic right now that fishers are doing well.”

“We’ve seen good survival in 2 of the 3 release cohorts, we’ve seen some reproduction, and we’ve seen some fairly widespread occupancy... but it will likely take a new monitoring effort to determine whether we have successfully reestablished a self-sustaining population of fishers on the Olympic Peninsula.”

The reintroduction program was very rewarding, says Lewis. “I was surprised at how well it all worked, both the release and initial monitoring: from all the planning and coordinating and working with the more than 100 people involved. There were a lot of really capable, sharp, resourceful, big-hearted, well-meaning, and skilled folks who made this happen.”

Sadly, a denning female documented this spring was found dead, killed by a predator, likely a bobcat. “Bobcats are the most important predator of adults, but mountain lions (and probably coyotes) also take fishers,” says Lewis.

The agency is trying to secure funding for long-term monitoring to investigate how well fishers are doing on the peninsula. Conservation Northwest hopes to be a monitoring partner.

## Ruling favors Methow Valley

In a case that affects the future for wildlife and people in the Methow Valley, the Washington Supreme Court ruled that Attorney General Rob McKenna must represent Commissioner of Public Lands Peter Goldmark, moving



*A ruling allows defense of public lands like these open pine forests in the Methow, slated for a new powerline. Photo: George Wooten*

forward an appeal of the Okanogan Public Utility District’s attempt to wrest control of a wide band of Washington’s public land in the Methow Valley for a new powerline.

“Commissioner Goldmark is attempting to defend the state’s trust lands from harmful and poorly conceived development,” said Dave Werntz of Conservation Northwest. “We’re pleased that the Commissioner will have his day in court.”

The proposed new powerline—26 miles long by 100 feet wide—would cross 12 miles of state land and require construction and maintenance of 20 miles of new roads. The development

would fragment wildlife habitat, degrade range lands, increase fire risk, erode soils, and damage fisheries by cutting through the largest contiguous block of state-owned shrub-steppe habitat in the Methow Valley.

With many fewer impacts and lower overall costs, a new transmission line could be constructed and maintained within the existing powerline corridor along state highways.

Conservation Northwest has joined local organizations, including People for Alternatives, Conservation and Education in protecting scarce remaining pine shrub-steppe just east of the Cascades, important for connectivity and home range for wildlife like mule deer in the area.

## Forests as carbon sinks

An international study has concluded that forests annually suck up one third of the carbon emissions pumped into the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels. The study also determined that oceans remove an additional 20% of the carbon emissions.

Forests and oceans act as immense carbon sinks, places where carbon from the atmosphere is absorbed at a faster rate than it is released. The carbon is removed from the air and stored elsewhere in the ocean and in the bodies of trees and plants.

“Protecting old forests, soils, and wetlands keeps a lot of carbon out of the atmosphere. Protecting old growth provides habitat connectivity, allowing wildlife to adapt to a changing climate and vegetation patterns,” said Dave Werntz, Conservation Northwest science director.

“This report arrived just in time,” he continued. “Old-growth forests perform a critical role mitigating the effects of climate change. As management plans for the Okanogan-Wenatchee and Colville National Forests are revised over the next year, the Forest Service will need to lay out how it will protect the carbon locked in deep storage in our old-growth forests.”

## Partners receive awards

Conservation Northwest recently received an Environmental Excellence Award from the Federal Highway Administration for our work on the Washington Connected Landscapes Project as a part of the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group. The award is the agency’s highest form of recognition for innovative solutions that reduce the environmental

impact of the nation's highways.

"It is fantastic to be recognized for the collaboration and the products of our working group," said Jen Watkins of Conservation Northwest.

The Washington Department of Transportation (WDOT) and US Forest Service also received an award for the I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East Project. The collaborative approach taken by WDOT and its partners, like our I-90 Wildlife Bridges Coalition, enabled the project team to consider ecological issues early, saving both time and money. The preferred alternative that resulted will improve wildlife connectivity and allay hydrological impacts while improving transportation mobility and safety.

Congratulations to our corecipients: Western Transportation Institute, WDOT, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, and the University of Washington.

## I-90 project gets a move on

The Washington Department of Transportation (WDOT) is using past project savings to help fund a construction contract awarded for the latest phase of the I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East Project, an essential step in the eventual, full 15-mile Hyak to Easton freeway upgrade, and one that benefits all travelers.

The contract bid for the latest upgrades was approximately \$20 million less than originally expected for this phase.

Thanks to clear direction from the state legislature, the saved funds will remain in the I-90 corridor, benefiting human safety, wildlife connectivity, freight mobility, and capacity. Down the line, the savings translate into an additional new lane in each direction along the much-traveled interstate, as well as several new wildlife crossings—including the first wildlife bridge in the state—to help wildlife navigate those new lanes.

"The award-winning I-90 project has received international attention for its innovative design, partnerships and educational outreach. We are excited that these funds will go towards the next phase of the project that includes the first wildlife overpass," said Charlie Raines, I-90 Wildlife Bridges Coalition director.

"When built it will be an icon of the Mountains to Sound Greenway," he continued, "not only providing excellent connectivity for wildlife, but also demonstrating the value of partnerships and sparking learning about wildlife and highways."

## Thanks to you all!

**This year, interns helped advance Conservation Northwest campaigns for wildlife and wilderness:** Aaron Theisen, Ariel Logan, Ben Silver, Hilary Bland, Ian Coleman, Kathryn Davis, Meagan Whiteside, Sarah Smith, Tiffany Chao

**Volunteers are integral to our success!** Adam Martin, Adelle Waln, Alex Molina, Allison Lee, Alyssa Artiano, Amy Gulick, Amy Tsui, Andrew Forcier, Andrew Haeger, Anna Simpson, Ayako Okuyama-Donofree, Benjamin Tsai, Bill Whipple, Bob Aegerter, Bob Freifer, Bob McCoy, Brian McDirmid, Brian



*Writing letters for wilderness in Spokane.  
Photo: Crystal Gartner*

Torrell, Caroline Magnuson, Cathy Clark, Cathy Gaylord, Charlene LaCourse, Charlie Arvidson, Chelsey Wheeler, Chris Lee, Christian Cabanero, Cindy Shebley, Dave Braun, Denise

Beardslee, Dennis Cowley, Dina Lund, Don Griffiths, Don Maroney Jr, Doris Ferm, Doug Beeman, Drew Gaylord, Eloise Capellano, Glorie Garlinghouse, Guthrie Schrengohst, Harvey Berman, Holly Weiler, Jay Friedman, Jenn Dean, Jim Clark, Joyce Alonso, Kathleen Grier, Katie Remine, Katrina Hernandez, Kelli Young-Beach, Kelly Staples, Ken Mondal, Ken Vanden Heuvel, Keri Young, Kerrie Murphy, Kim Des Rochers, Kim Thorburn, Kipp Schoenleber, Kourtney Startin, Kyli Rhynalds, Larry O'Neil, Larry Whitesitt, Laura Ackerman, Laurie Morley, Lee Wales, Leo Sooter, Lindell Haggin, Marcus Bianco, Marie Wilds, Mark Turner, Mark Walker Rhodes, Matthew Cohen, Michele Larson, Mike Ruehlen, Mike Webb, Nevada Ruehlen, Patrick McGowan, Paul Balle, Paul Ryhajlo, Peggy Macki, Peter McGlenn, Philip Lundahl, Prentiss Andrews, Rachel Haemmerle, Ray Robertson, Rebecca Wolfe, Richard Champlin, Richard Champlin, Richard Hernandez, Ron Hill, Ryan Packer, Sara Brooke Benjamin, Shallan Knowles, Shannon Schelinder, Stacey Selcho, Stephanie Smith, Sue Wheatley, Susan Rhodes, Tana Kaiser, Taylor McDowell, Tom Murphy, Trent Elwing, Tricia Cook, Troy Matthew Montgomery, Vernon Robinson, Walt Hunner, Wanda Daehlin