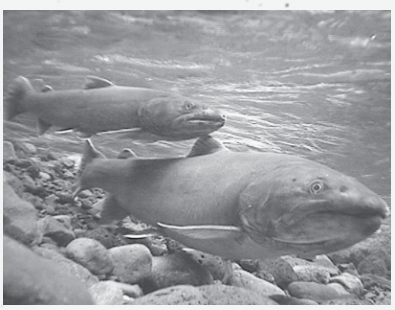
INSIDE/OUTSIDE

CONSERVATION NEWS AROUND THE NORTHWEST

Bull trout gone critical



Bull trout, related to dolly varden, need clear, cold streams. Photo: Dave Bickford

Bull trout are one of the top ten species most threatened by climate change. This beautiful native char is found in rivers and streams throughout Washington, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Idaho, and Nevada, including in the Columbia Highlands of northeastern Washington. They need cool, clear water to survive, not the warm, muddy waters often left behind by poor logging, mining, and grazing practices. Bull trout also need complex habitat conditions (large wood, stable stream banks, deep pools) and watershed habitat connectivity for seasonal migrations between spawning and rearing sites.

In the late 1990s, bull trout were listed under the Endangered Species Act as threatened with extinction, and they currently occupy only half of their historic range. A new proposal would designate "critical" habitat—those areas necessary to ensure survival and recovery—for bull trout in the greater Northwest.

Protecting further miles of stream habitat for bull trout should help them recover in the face of climate change and warming river waters. By April 5, 2010, urge the US Fish and Wildlife Service to extend the best possible protections to bull trout. *"Do Something" at www.conservationnw.org/wildlife-habitat.*

5 of the 10 "hottest" wildlife

It turns out that the Pacific Northwest is home to half of the top ten "hottest" wildlife species in the US. That's no claim to fame. The list, recently published by the Endangered Species Coalition, includes wildlife in North America that are being strongly, and negatively, affected by climate change. Here's our five:

1) **Canada lynx.** Lynx made the list with only 1,000 remaining in the lower 48 states. Washington is believed to have around 100, many living in the Loomis Forest.

2) **Grizzly bear**. Grizzlies in the West are having a hard time with changing climate and warming temperatures as well. They are beginning their hibernation later in the fall, which has resulted in more encounters with humans, which frequently don't end well for the bears. White bark pines—and pine nuts, a major food source for bears—are also on the decline. Today, less than ten grizzlies are thought to live in the Washington's Cascades.

3) **Pacific salmon**. Destroyed stream habitat and rising water temperature are part of what has led the group of seven fish species, collectively known as Pacific salmon, to decline. Their population today is a mere 10% of what it was historically.

4) **Bull trout.** This beautiful char made the "hottest" list due to increasing river temperatures. Their habitat is declining at the same time that water quality is dropping. Cloudy waters make it difficult for bull trout to migrate and spawn in the fall.

5) **Leatherback turtle**. Though not an animal we commonly think of here in Washington, these turtles range over both the eastern and western coasts of the United States. They lay their eggs in warm, tropic waters in winter and move to cooler, northern waters in the summer. As temperatures rise, leatherbacks will likely continue expanding their range northward.

Cascades grizzlies need you

Washington's Cascade and Selkirk Mountains give refuge to diverse wildlife, including grizzly bears. Yet fewer than ten of these shy and elusive bears are thought to remain in the North Cascades.

Everything but the funding is already in place to protect our great bears. Federal agencies need Congressional support to implement the long-languishing Cascades grizzly bear recovery plan. Especially with the consequences of a rapidly changing climate, Cascades grizzly bears need us to throw them a lifeline.

Selkirks grizzly bear. Photo: Dana Base/ WDFW

Please call Senator Patty Murray at 202.224.2621. Thank her for her past support and urge her to support adequate funding for rescue of grizzly bears in the North Cascades. *Go to "Do Something" at www.conservationnw.org/wildlife-habitat.*

"Outstanding" Blanchard

Good news for Blanchard Mountain. Photo: Alan Kearney

Conservation Northwest welcomes the recent announcement by State Lands Commissioner Peter Goldmark that the Department of Natural Resources intends to establish a natural resource conservation area on Blanchard Mountain. Home to wildlife from bats to salmon, this diverse forest, where the Cascades meet the sea, is widely popular with hikers, bikers, and equestrians.

The new designation builds on work we did as part of the Blanchard Strategies Group, when in 2006 DNR brought together diverse interests to find solutions to protect the core recreational and ecological values of Blanchard Forest and combat conversion of forests to sprawl. As a natural resource conservation area, the core of Blanchard would be protected as an "outstanding example of a native ecosystem."

Dee plan, dee climate plan

The US Fish and Wildlife Service last year released a climate adaptation plan for wildlife. It was the first bureau in the Department of the Interior to release a specific climate strategy, and about time. The plan outlines the Service's response to wildlife migration patterns, rising sea levels, and spreading invasive species, directing agency employees to incorporate climate change into all management decisions.

"Sold!" forests save carbon

Last fall, 400 metric tons of trees were sold on the Olympic Peninsula in the Bulis Forest Preserve—but the trees weren't cut down for timber and won't be cut for a century. ShoreBank Enterprise Cascadia purchased the trees to offset three years of their carbon footprint. In the coming century these trees will continue to collect carbon, storing it within their wood, leaves, and roots. This is the first purchase of its kind for an organization in the Pacific Northwest and is also the first for the Olympic Peninsula.

On the move with climate change

A team of scientists have calculated that on average, ecosystems will need to shift about 0.42 kilometers (a quarter mile) per year to keep pace with changing temperatures across the globe.

"When we look at residence times for protected areas, which we define as the amount of time it will take current climate conditions to move across and out of a given protected area, only 8% of our current protected areas have residence times of more than 100 years. If we want to improve these numbers, we need to both reduce our carbon emissions and work quickly toward expanding and connecting our global network of protected areas," says Healy Hamilton of the California Academy of Sciences and other scientists in the December 2009 *Nature*.

Eep, eep! Call of the pikas

Climate change spells big change for a little mountain relative of rabbits. Pikas got bad news in February, when the US Fish and Wildlife Service denied an application for their protection under the Endangered Species Act. The agency based their decision on the animal's range throughout the western United States, without regard to the plight of local populations like those in Washington.

Pikas, with a changing climate, nowhere to go but up. Photo: Douglass Owen

Pikas are highly sensitive to temperature variations. For them, spending just a few hours above 78 degrees Fahrenheit can be fatal. Pikas in winter live in tunnels they've excavated under rocks and snow. Heavy snowpacks insulate and warm resting

pikas. But higher temperatures lead to lighter than normal snowpacks, causing pikas to freeze to death during winter.

The agency says they expect to see some individual populations of pikas at lower elevations to decline as temperatures increase but that the populations of pikas in the higher elevations should be able to withstand the changing temperatures. A problem in Washington is that with warming temperatures, pikas—already living at the highest elevations—will have nowhere to go.

Old growth, the best carbon bank. Photo: Brett Baunton

Forests' crucial role

The Copenhagen Accord that resulted from the Copenhagen climate meeting managed these few words on forests:

"We recognize the crucial role of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and the need to enhance removals of greenhouse gas emission by forests and agree on the need to provide positive incentives to such actions..."

The next few years must see bigger steps if we are to weather climate change.

Whatcom watershed wildlife

If designation of a new Lake Whatcom Watershed Preserve becomes official, as expected, not only will the new park protect Bellingham's drinking water source, it will also ensure long-term habitat for species living in and around the lake.

One rare resident of the watershed is the Salish sucker. This bottom feeder, an ice age remnant, spawns in gravel shoals. Like bull trout, the small native fish needs cool, clear water. Its habitat has declined rapidly with forest removal and accelerating urban development, and today Salish suckers are found only in small sections of northwest Washington, including Lake Whatcom and in the Fraser Valley of BC.

Another animal that depends on the cool, clean water of the Lake Whatcom watershed is the tailed frog. With semi-permeable skins, tailed frogs are extremely sensitive to poor-quality water. They cannot live in water that has been disrupted by logging or human disturbance. A watershed preserve at Lake Whatcom will give much needed habitat for both these species, as well as marbled murrelets, known to nest in the remnant old-growth Douglas fir and western red cedar at water's edge.

Survey and Manage

Last December a federal judge upheld the "Survey and Manage" policy which demands that federal forests be surveyed for wildlife species associated with old growth before logging or other human disturbance. Together with colleague organizations, we helped bring the original case, ensuring policy enforcement.

Federal Judge Coughenour in his deciding opinion stressed the importance of saving all aspects of en ecosystem, even the smaller, less noticeable species, such as fungi and amphibians. He quoted the famous conservation biologist and entomologist, E.O. Wilson, that it is "the little things that run the world."

Powerline powerplay

Conservation Northwest recently entered on the side of the Department of Natural Resources as an intervenor in a lawsuit the Okanogan Public Utility District has brought against the agency for opposing a new powerline through the Methow Valley.

A report from the Department of Natural Resources suggests that the PUD dramatically underestimated impacts of a new powerline (rather than upgrading an existing one) through the Methow Valley. The new line would fragment the largest block of shrub-steppe habitat in the Methow Valley and degrade mule deer winter habitat.

State Lands Commissioner Peter Goldmark made a good faith effort to address an easement request from the PUD when the utility unilaterally filed a lawsuit to take possession of public property.

Methow mule deer, how will they fare if a new powerline is built? Photo: Methow Conservancy

Condemning private lands and homes for a project is never desirable; and when you add the costs of all the PUD's litigation against valley residents, the need for heavy

equipment and blasting to set up new power poles, and the construction of a vast network of new roads into remote and healthy wildlife habitat, this route is clearly the most expensive and environmentally damaging. These costs will ultimately be passed onto valley residents and businesses, and that's just wrong.

More wilderness

A proposal expanding the Alpine Lakes Wilderness by 22,000 acres and designating the Pratt and Middle Fork Snoqualmie Rivers as Wild and Scenic recently passed the Natural Resources Committee of the House. That's good news for Washington. On the east side of the state, we hope to have proposed wilderness legislation introduced for roadless areas on the Columbia Highlands later this year. This vital area represents ten times the Alpine Lakes addition. As is, protected wilderness in northeastern Washington represents just 1% of all wilderness in the state.

Welcoming Oregon's wolves

Recent wolf sightings in the southern Cascades and Ochoco Mountains, and possible tracks near Wickiup Reservoir, suggest Oregon's wolves are extending their range westward. Oregon currently has two established packs living in the northeastern corner of the state, with a total of 15 to 20 wolves.

According to Oregon's Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, wolves can be delisted, or removed from Endangered Species Act protection, in eastern Oregon when four breeding pairs have been documented for three consecutive years. That differs from a more conservative draft Washington state plan, which puts that number at a minimum of 15 breeding pairs.

Volunteer thanks

Many passionate volunteers and interns help us ensure a wild future for Washington. By monitoring wildlife in the backcountry, writing letters to the editor, phoning supporters about important initiatives, and helping out at events, this fall and winter these folks made our work possible. A "thank you" also to all who have supported return of Washington's wolves by writing letters, speaking up at hearings, and getting postcards signed by friends and neighbors. We are honored to have your support!

Rendezvous repast. Photo: Leif Jakobsen

Briana Abrahms • Chantal Argyle • Paul and Donna Balle • Johanna Bell • Doug Beeman • Rob Bendixen • Robby Bendixen • Harvey Berman • Leeza Broome • Margaret Brownell • Elizabeth Borges • Drew Butler • Jace Bylenga • Kellie Cardwell • Jocelyn Caton • Richard Champlin • Kathy and Robert Chrestensen • Ann Christianson • Jim Clark • Travis Coletti • Luke Conyac • Jeremy Conyac • Sarah Cortes • Steve Daehlin • Jenn Dean • Jamie Deik • Jake Dunton • Maggie Early • Chas Eberle • Nathalie Ellis • Trent Elwing • Kai Engen • Todd Erickson • Diedra Ericson • Doris Ferm • Jenn Forbes • Naoko Forderer • Joanna Frank • Bruce Frank • Alyssa Fritz • Kirsten Gantenbein • Marc Gauthier • Peter Gebhard • Tim Gibbon • Jonathan Goff • Graham Goodman • Joan C Golston • Barbara Gregory • Annie Grinolds • Chris and Amy Gulick • Travis Haney • David Hanson • Kim Harmson • Micheal Hewson • Michael Hinkel • Kari Hiser • Gayle Hoffman • John Howell • Walt Hunner • Leif Jakobsen • Kate Johnson Kiefer • Nicole Jordan • Ben Kaufman • Gair P Keith • Joseph Kiegel • James Lambert • Irene Lawson • Ryan Lazzeri • Arnie Leslie • Steve Leslie • Randy Leventhal • Paul Liebertz • Jennifer Lillith • Steve Llewellyn • Kevin Loughlin • Abby Lund • Cathy Macchio • Sara Manetti • Aly Marczynski • Tom May • Regina Mays • Patrick McGowan • Kirk Melhorn • Hannchen Menck • Julie Meneely • John and Tiffany Meyer • Matthew Milne • Olivia Moulton • Tom and Kerrie Murphy • Tina Nef • Tom Nims • Larry B O'Neil • Mike Pagan • June Parker • Peter and Janice Peterson • Rob Polasek • Sonya Remington • Susan Rhodes • Ray Robertson • Paul and Kelly Ryhajlo • Brooke Sargeant • Rory Savatgy • Guthrie Schrengohst • Ed Scullywest • Scott Shaffer • Christian Shope • Jennifer Smead • Nichole Smith • Andrew Spanjer • Dennis Sticker • Heather Swift • Joe Talbert • Aaron Theisen • Kristi Theisen • Melinda Torgerson • Bryan and Teresa Torrell • Ryan Traylor • Amy Tsui • Mark Turner • Russell Turner • Ken Vanden Heuvel • Hannah Vianno • Valerie Wade • Mary Weathers • Michael Webb • Holly Weiler • William Whipple • Monica White • Tom White • Andrew Whiteman • Jake Wilson • Aaron Wirsing • Preston Wolf • George Wysup