

INSIDE/OUTSIDE

CONSERVATION NEWS AROUND THE NORTHWEST

Why we should all suck more— carbon that is

While scaling back the use of fossil fuels is a critical step to fighting climate change, it isn't enough to get us there. That's why Conservation Northwest is a partner in the Northwest Biocarbon Initiative, a project of Climate Solutions, and Mitch Friedman serves on its steering committee.



My, what big biomass you have! Old-growth ponderosa pine near Wapaloosie on the Kettle Crest. Photo Leif Jakobsen

The Pacific Northwest has a unique capability to lead the world in carbon storage. Our forests store amazing amounts of carbon, if we plant more trees and allow them to grow longer and larger.

Leading scientists say the safe amount of atmospheric carbon is 350 parts per million, a level we rocketed past in the 1980s. Today we're at 388 ppm, which helps explain the melting glaciers of Washington state, Texas on fire, and the receding Alaskan coastline.

Much of the work that Conservation Northwest does to keep the Northwest wild relates to helping nature adapt to changing conditions. For instance, we promote thinning of dry forests to reduce their vulnerability to increased wildfire, and we protect habitat corridors to enable wildlife to move in relation to changing temperate and other environmental conditions. We also protect larger natural areas to give those ecosystems a better chance of withstanding larger disturbances.

But the present rate of climate change is too extreme for these adaptations to keep up. In fact, models of how the climate is changing predict such major shifts in environmental conditions that many plant communities in the Northwest might not be recognizable within only a half century.

The good news is that there are things we can do about it. We must all suck more!

Check out the amazing solution stories and videos to learn how practical it can be to suck up carbon; go online to climatesolutions.org/programs/NBI. Read more at conservationnw.org/scat. And support Conservation Northwest's own work for forests at conservationnw.org/donate

Seen this year in Scat!

Doggies rollin' and Twilight howling. Sucking carbon and sucky poachers. PBS Nature stars and superstar volunteers. Cute cat photos and Cascades wolves caught on film. Snowshoeing with senators and hiking the Highlands.

Our blog Scat! is the place to be in the know about all these things and all we do at Conservation Northwest. Come join the conversation! conservationnw.org/scat

Roadless? It's the law

In a huge win for wildlife and habitat, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule created by President Clinton in 2001 is again the law of the land after a federal circuit court decided unanimously to overturn Bush-era rule changes. Earthjustice attorneys argued the suit brought by conservation groups including Conservation Northwest.

In Washington state, two million acres of roadless forests will remain wild and roadless, continuing to amass biocarbon and help slow climate change, maintain habitat connectivity, and succor wildlife from roadkill, poaching, and habitat loss. Roadless forests promise non-mechanized travel opportunities for many.

The path to roadless area protection has been a real roller-coaster ride. The Clinton Roadless Rule in 2001 protected 58 million acres of national forest lands. Once in office, President Bush repealed the rule. Conservation Northwest fought for the rule in the 9th Circuit Court in 2002 and again in 2003 against a nationwide injunction from the 10th Circuit Court.

This latest ruling aligns the 10th and 9th Circuit Court rulings, asserting the validity of the rule and protecting roadless forests as part of America's heritage.



Back: S & M for wildlife

We missed reporting this to you earlier in the year: Following nearly a decade of contentious debate and litigation, a historic agreement has been reached over federal rules that require wildlife surveys in old forest habitat. The agreement between the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and conservation groups sets a new course for habitat restoration and wildlife protection in the Pacific Northwest.

Negotiations began last summer after a federal court ruled for the second consecutive time that the agencies had violated the law in its effort to eliminate the "Survey and Manage" wildlife provision of the Northwest Forest Plan. US District Court Judge John C. Coughenour approved the agreement this year.

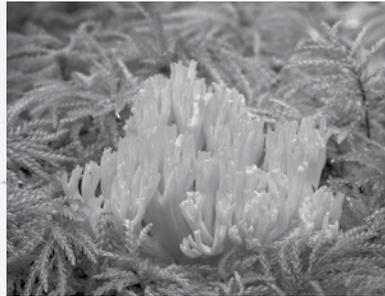
"We all started from the sensible premise that rare species that rely on rare old forests deserve protection, and bona fide restoration projects that improve wildlife habitat should move forward efficiently," said Dave Werntz, science director at Conservation Northwest. "The rest was figuring out the details."

"Survey and Manage" requires field surveys to determine whether rare and sensitive species are present so that logging plans or other habitat-disturbing projects can be adjusted to avoid harm.

Murrelets avoid the last blow

The Radar Ridge Wind Project is dead—the four participating utilities have unanimously voted to terminate the project.

The project site was directly adjacent to the Nemah Murrelet Area near Willapa Bay. If built, four dozen 400-foot-tall wind turbines would have killed significant numbers of murrelets in what is the highest concentration of murrelet nests in Washington State. Murrelets, a threatened species dependent on old growth, nest in platforms high in old trees and make up to five excursions each day from forest to ocean to hunt for fish for their young.



The bright red coral mushroom, Ramaria araiospora, lives in old-growth forests in close association with Douglas fir and western hemlock fine roots. Photo © Brett Cole

While Conservation Northwest commends efforts to develop alternative energy sources, the Radar Ridge project is the worst possible site for a wind farm in southwest Washington. Murrelet experts predicted more than 2,600 murrelets would have been killed by the wind turbines over a 30-year period.

There are about 4,700 murrelets in Washington, and their populations are declining due primarily to extensive loss of their old-growth forest habitat and unpredictable marine conditions. This power project could have been the final blow.

The end of this dam proposal

The Okanogan Public Utility District in November finally withdrew its application to build a 260-foot-high dam at Shankers Bend on the Similkameen River near the scenic town of Loomis, WA.

The river and uplands of the Similkameen are home to one-third of the red-listed (the BC equivalent of threatened and endangered) species in Canada. The Similkameen River valley, particularly the habitat north of Palmer Lake at the eastern edge of the North Cascades, is the most important riparian reach in the US portion of the Okanogan watershed. It would have been underwater, but for the recent decision.

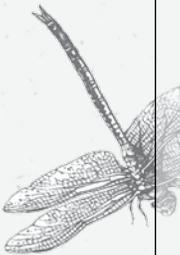
Thanks to the end of this dam proposal, one of Washington's most beautiful valleys will remain as invaluable grassland habitat and a critical connection for wildlife from bighorn sheep to mule deer between the Columbia Basin and the arid British Columbia Okanagan—instead of a flooded reservoir behind an unaffordable \$7 billion concrete wall.



Not damming the Similkameen River valley protects shrub-steppe for local bighorn sheep. Photo © David Moskowitz

Rules off on northern border?

The US Border Patrol is claiming that environmental rules impede their ability to safeguard US borders with Mexico and Canada. Congress has introduced a bill that would allow border



patrol to evade many environmental laws, including the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act in areas of protected wilderness, even including building new roads and establishing bases on the federal protected land.

At stake is a 100-mile zone (that's an area extending down to Olympia, Tacoma, and Spokane in Washington) that encompasses large amounts of protected wild lands, including North Cascades National Park and the Salmo-Priest Wilderness.

The amount of illegal activity along the northern border is estimated to be minimal compared to the Mexican border. The lack of illegal immigration or activity has many people arguing that

the ecological damage of giving a free-hand to the US Customs and Border (CBP) is not worth risking wilderness and roadless wildlife habitat for the sake of expanding border control.

In preparation for the bill, CBP this year commissioned a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for US CBP Activities along the Northern Border. Public meetings were held at several communities along the border and comments solicited through the end of October.

Fall of the WOPR

The Western Oregon Plan Revision (WOPR) has finally gasped its last breath. With the plan's demise comes protection for rare remaining old-growth forest and rare wildlife on public lands in Oregon.

The death knell, and latest update since the controversial plan's first introduction, came in September 2011 with a ruling by US Magistrate Judge James Hubel that the WOPR should be vacated because BLM failed to consult federal biologists regarding the potential harm to endangered species.

"The judge confirmed what everyone's been saying for years—that BLM took an illegal shortcut to avoid scientific scrutiny," said Kristen Boyles, an attorney for Earthjustice who represented conservation groups.

A federal judge must approve Judge Hubel's recommendation before the WOPR can be withdrawn and these old-growth forests and countless species they harbor are again kept whole and safe. That decision is expected in the coming months.

Good news, mountain caribou!

In November, the US Fish and Wildlife Service announced a plan to designate 375,000 acres of critical habitat for the endangered South Selkirks mountain caribou. In May, thanks to Conservation Northwest and others, mountain caribou near Revelstoke received snowmobile recreation closures in caribou habitat. Both are important steps toward recovery of one of the most endangered mammals in North America.

For BC caribou, the 2009 Mountain Caribou Recovery Plan protects 5.5 million acres of caribou habitat from logging and road building. This year, augmentation of caribou to bolster dwindling herds is moving ahead at last.

Mountain caribou prefer high elevations and steep terrain with old-growth forests. Large hooves allow caribou to stay on top of deep snows to feed on lichens growing from low-hanging boughs. In winter, they rely almost exclusively on these arboreal lichens that grow only on trees more than 100 years old.

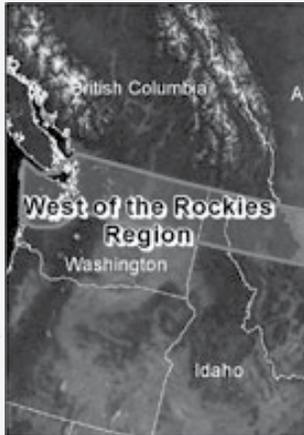
The greatest threats to mountain caribou survival are loss of old-growth forest, habitat fragmentation, the movement of predators into caribou habitat—and climate change.

Public comments to the Selkirks plan will be accepted until January 30, 2012. To make your voice heard, sign up to receive our email alerts! Go to conservationnw.org/email-sign-up

All eyes on wildlife

Through our citizen monitoring programs, we train the eyes of volunteers to document the presence of wildlife in our state.

I-90 Wildlife Watch, launched in 2010, is a citizen-based wildlife monitoring project that invites motorists to report wildlife sightings along Interstate 90 (I-90) in the Snoqualmie Pass region of Washington.



CBP wants freedom to avoid environmental laws in a 100-mile swath south of the border.



Nov 2011 deer and fawn. Photo Conservation Northwest remote camera

The program asks I-90 travelers who observe wild animals (living or dead) to report their observations at I90wildlifewatch.org

In its first year, hundreds of sightings have been reported including mink, bobcat, bear, elk, birds, cougar, deer, raccoon, and river otters. "The information we're collecting via the I-90 Wildlife Watch website is an invaluable addition to our monitoring dataset, and clearly demonstrates the important role motorists can play in making I-90 safer for people and wildlife," said project partner Paula MacKay, research associate with the Western Transportation Institute (WTI).

Our Citizen Wildlife Monitoring Project has trained approximately 100 volunteers in remote camera and snowtracking skills. This year, monitoring teams set and maintained cameras from the Olympic Mountains to the Iron Gate entrance to the Paysaten Wilderness on the northeastern flanks of the Cascade Mountains and the Manastash southeast of Ellensburg.

Our cameras (and those of WTI) caught the first-ever images of the Teanaway wolves, and many other critters walking our landscape including wild turkeys, black bears, deer, elk, cougars, bobcats, coyotes, and pine martens. To prepare a 2011 annual monitoring report, we are still sorting through the many photos that came in from the spring and fall, and we are anxiously awaiting deeper snowfalls to begin a busy winter season.

This winter, we'll be working with the Wilderness Awareness School to conduct snowtracking in key connectivity areas along I-90 east of Snoqualmie Pass. We're also helping the WTI's Cascades Carnivore Project to document and collect genetic information on pine martens in the central Washington Cascades. And, once again, we'll deploy remote cameras in strategic locations to monitor the Teanaway wolf pack and watch for wolverines.

Thanks to the volunteers engaged in these programs, we have documented many wildlife over the past year, showing that Washington's lands are not only beautiful but home to a wide variety of critters. For a full thanks and listing of our volunteers and to learn more, please go online to conservationnw.org/monitoring



Citizen Wildlife Monitoring Program volunteers at work last winter.

Conservation all stars—thanks for keeping the Northwest wild!

Interns help advance Conservation Northwest campaigns for wildlife and wilderness: Aaron Theisen, Ariel Logan, Ben Silver, Kathryn Davis, Lindsey Moyer, Liza Weeks, Megan Whiteside

Volunteers are integral to our success! Adam Martin, Adelle Waln, Alexandria Molina, Allison Lee, Amy Tsui, Andrew Forcier, Andrew Haeger, Andrew Luk, Anna Simpson, Antoinette Butler, Ashley Eriksson, Ayako Okuyama-Donofree, Ben Kantner, Benjamin Tsai, Bill Whipple, Bob Aegerter, Bob McCoy, Bob Pfeifer, Brian Torrell, Carla Lee, Catherine Farrar, Cathy Clark, Cathy Gaylord, Charlene LaCoursiere, Charlie Arvidson, Chris Lee, Dallas Bolen, Dan McShane, Dan Price, Dan Swenson, Daniel Berg, Daniel Davidson, Daniel Probst, Denise Joines, Dina Lund, Don Maroney, Donna Snow, Doreen Olsen, Doris Ferm, Doug Beeman, Drew Gaylord, Ed Wilson, Eileen O'Neill Pardo, Ellen Dorfman, Eric Brown, Forest Cat, George Keefe, Gillian Brightwater, Guthrie Schrengohst, Helen Moir, Henry Lagergren, Jack Stewart, James Bracher, Jamie Sandberg, Jane Martin, Janet Strong, Jay Friedman, Jay Kehne, Jim Clark, Joseph Enzensperger, Julie Schafer, Kara Weinand, Karin Porrini, Katie Remine, Kelli Young-Beach, Kelly Staples, Kendall Norcott, Keri Young, Kerrie Sumner Murphy, Kim Des Rochers, Kipp Schoenleber, Kipp Schoenleber, Kristin Mitchell, Kyle Merritt, Kyli Rhynalds, Larry O'Neil, Larry Whitesitt, Lee Wales, Leo Sooter, Lindsey Moyer, Lisa McShane, Marcus Bianco, Marie Wilds, Mark Lange, Mark Rhodes, Mark Turner, Matthew Miller, Melinda Hirsch, Michael Hinkel, Mike Pagan, Mike Ruehlen, Mike Webb, Nancy Enz Lill, Naomi Bunis, Nevada Ruehlen, Patrick McGowan, Paul Ryhajlo, Peter McGlenn, Prentiss Andrews, Rachel Dussell Chamberlain, Ray Robertson, Rebecca Wolfe, Rianne BeCraft, Rich Curtis, Richard Champlin, Roger Crafts, Ron Good, Ron Hill, Sara Brooke Benjamin, Sarah Uhlemann, Scott McCredie, Shannon Kachel, Shannon Schelinder, Shawndra Michell, Skie Bender, Stacy Griffin, Stephen Symms, Susan Bakke, Susan Rhodes, Suzi Hokonson, Tana Kaiser, Tanya Maurer, Taylor McDowell, Thomas Stonhocker, Tom May, Tom Murphy, Travis Coletti, Trent Elwing, Tricia Cook, Troy Matthew, Wendy Bretz, Wendy Danielson, William Whipple, Yinghua Zhang, Yvonne Autrey-Schell