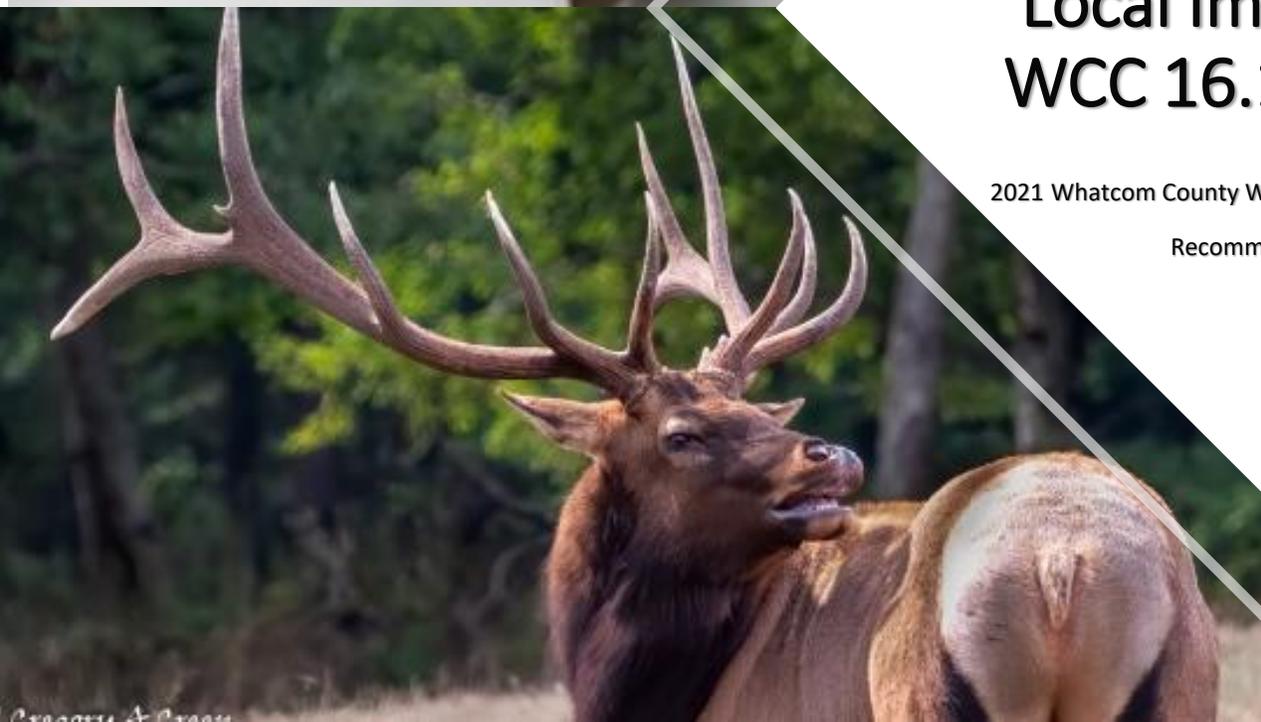




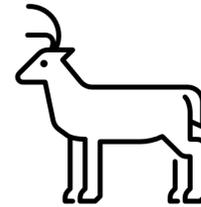
**Proposed Species of
Local Importance
WCC 16.16.710(D)**

2021 Whatcom County Wildlife Advisory Committee
Recommendations



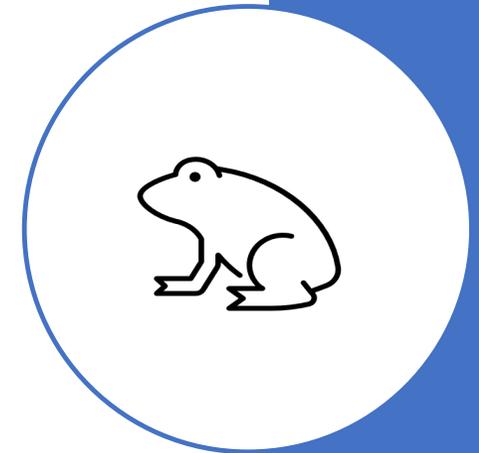
Introduction

- The Whatcom County Wildlife Advisory Committee (WAC) was created by Ordinance 2015-031 on July 7, 2015. The WAC was reactivated per Ordinance 2017-068 on November 8, 2017.
- The function of this committee is to “provide recommendations on integrating wildlife management and protection issues relative to fulfilling goal nine (9) of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA); namely: to retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.”
- Fish and wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas that must be considered for classification and designation include: **Habitats and species of local importance**, as determined locally (WAC 365-190-130(2)(b))
- Counties and cities should identify, classify and designate locally important habitats and species. Counties and cities should consult current information on priority habitats and species identified by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Priority habitat and species information includes endangered, threatened and sensitive species, but also includes candidate species and other vulnerable and unique species and habitats. While these priorities are those of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, they should be considered by counties and cities as they include the best available science. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife can also provide assistance with identifying and mapping important habitat areas at various landscape scales. Similarly, the Washington Department of Natural Resources' Natural Heritage Program can provide a list of high quality ecological communities and systems and rare plants. (WAC 365-190-130(4)(b))
- The Council directed the WAC to review and present potential Species and Habitats of Local Importance.



Species Nomination Process

The process for adding recommendations to the Species of Local Importance list is outlined in WCC 16.16.710(D). In order to nominate an area, species, or corridor to the category of “locally important,” an individual or organization must...

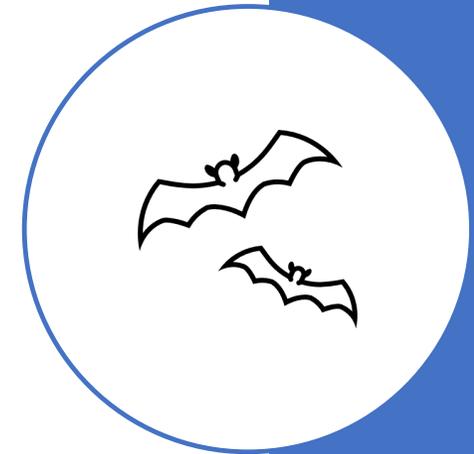


Species Nomination Process (cont.)

1. Demonstrate a need for special consideration based on one or more of the following:
 - Identified species of declining population;
 - Documented species sensitive to habitat manipulation and cumulative loss;
 - Commercial, recreational, cultural, biological, or other special value; or
 - Maintenance of connectivity between habitat areas.
2. Propose relevant management strategies considered effective and within the scope of this chapter;
3. Identify effects on property ownership and use; and
4. Provide a map showing the species or habitat location(s).

Species Nomination Process (cont.)

Pursuant to WCC 16.16.710(C)(12), this list is to be maintained by Planning and Development Services; thus, there is no need for an amendment to WCC Ch. 16.16.



Pursuant to WCC 16.16.710(D) the Wildlife Advisory Committee (WAC) respectfully requests that the Council consider holding a public hearing and passing a motion designating the following four wildlife species as “Species of Local Importance.”

Western Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*)

Coastal Tailed Frog (*Ascaphus truei*)

Townsend’s Big-Eared Bat
(*Coryrhinus townsendii*)

Elk (*Cervus elaphus*)

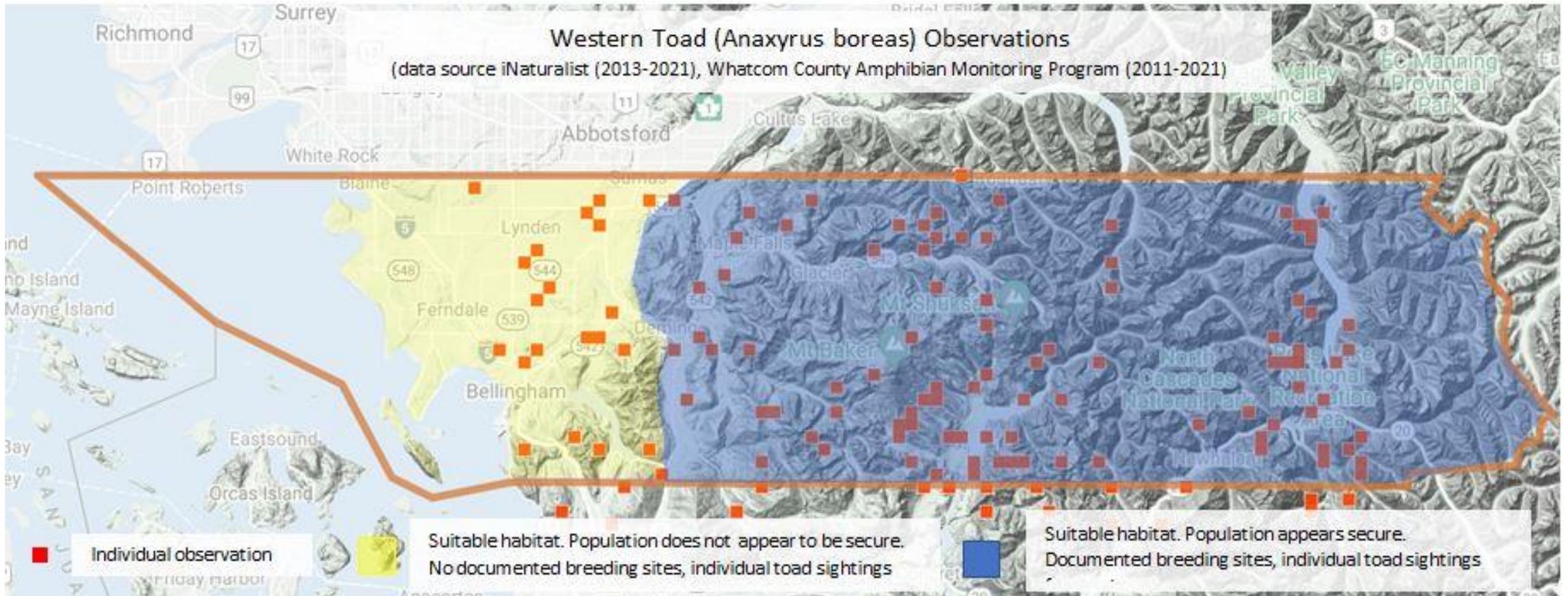
Species and Criteria for Listing

Western Toad (a.k.a Boreal Toad) **(*Anaxyrus boreas*)**

- Documented declining population; and
- Sensitive to habitat manipulation and cumulative loss.



Western Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*) documentation in Whatcom County



Western Toad

Protection and Management Recommendations

- Identifying and mapping breeding and mass migration route locations;
- Educational signage, buffers, or seasonal use restrictions on County-owned public lands with vulnerable life stage concentrations;
- Establish buffers at breeding sites using a Category I Wetland Rating;
- Retain potential hiding cover (e.g., down wood and rocks) in terrestrial habitats;
- Minimize soil disturbance and prevent pollution of runoff to breeding sites; and
- Consideration of road crossing improvements in the design of culvert replacements on roads adjacent to western toad breeding sites and known migration routes.
- Consider timing restrictions on some projects that occur adjacent to breeding sites or in known mass migration routes.



Potential Western Toad management effects on property ownership and use:

Western Toad is a mobile species during terrestrial stages and could co-exist with many human impacts on the landscape provided its habitat requirements are met and its most vulnerable stages are protected. Management of this species would occur as part of the existing system of HCA project permitting reporting requirements.

- May require hiring a specialist that has demonstrated experience with Western Toad.
- Project timing may be modified to protect breeding and migration.
- Buffers around breeding sites may be required but would be consistent with existing wetland and shoreline regulations.
- Potential project design changes to avoid and minimize impact to critical life activities of Western Toad.

Species and Criteria for Listing

Coastal Tailed Frog (*Ascaphus truei*)

- Documented species sensitive to habitat manipulation and cumulative loss.
- Population status unclear but appears restricted in Western Whatcom County where suitable habitat is limited.



Coastal Tailed Frog (*Ascaphus truei*)

Protection and Management Recommendations

- Identify and map occurrences in westernmost Whatcom County, where the species may be most vulnerable because of patchy distribution of suitable habitat and resulting isolated populations;
- Maintain ample buffers of occupied streams, particularly fish-free streams that may not otherwise be adequately protected;
- Maintain slash-free conditions in occupied headwater streams;
- Ensure adequate erosion-control measures and management of silt-generating activities;
- Prevent pollution of runoff; and
- Design adequate culverts associated with occupied streams (suggested minimum of 6-foot diameter, preferably open-bottomed with natural substrates).



Potential Coastal Tailed Frog management effects on property ownership and use:

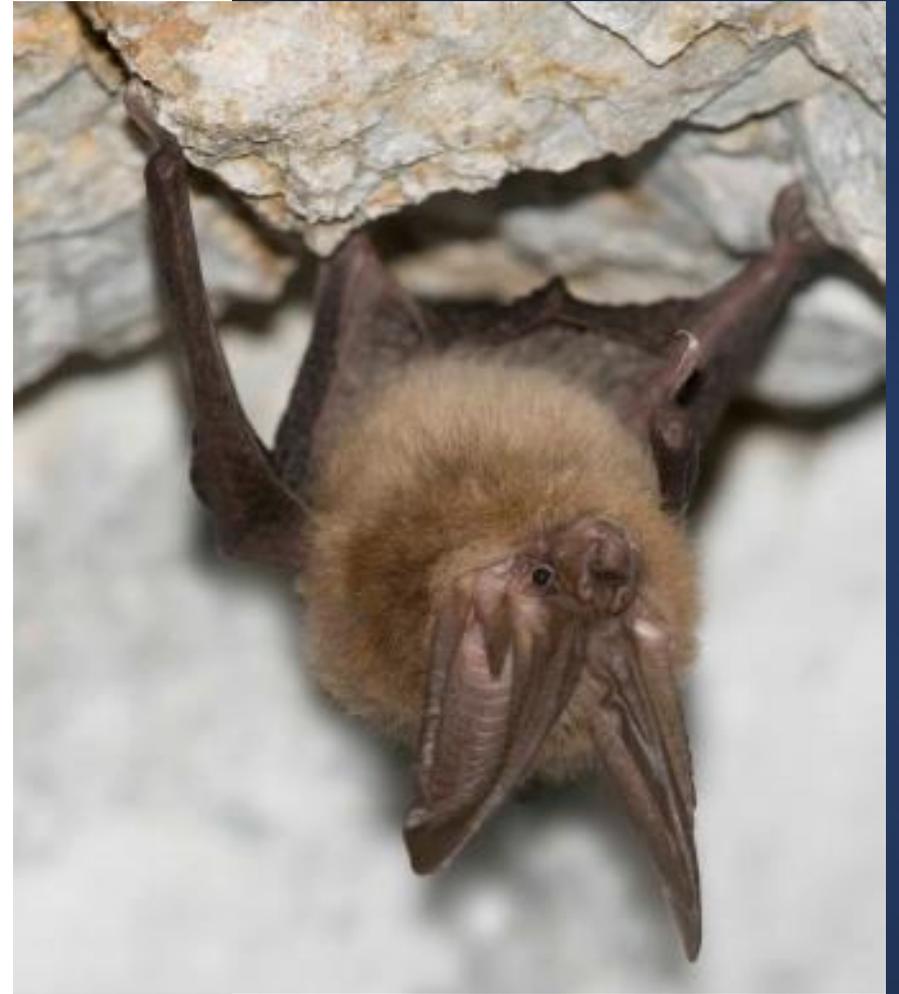
The effects of listing on property ownership and use are likely minimal and consistent with protection overlays used for fish, although Coastal Tailed Frog often occurs in fish-free streams. Management of this species would occur as part of the existing system of HCA project permitting reporting requirements.

- May require hiring a specialist that has demonstrated experience with Coastal Tailed Frog.
- Project timing may be modified to protect critical life stages of this species.
- Buffers from breeding sites may be required but would already be required by stream HCA regulations.
- Potential alternative location for project is possible if the project cannot be designed to avoid and minimize impact to critical life activities of Coastal Tailed Frog.

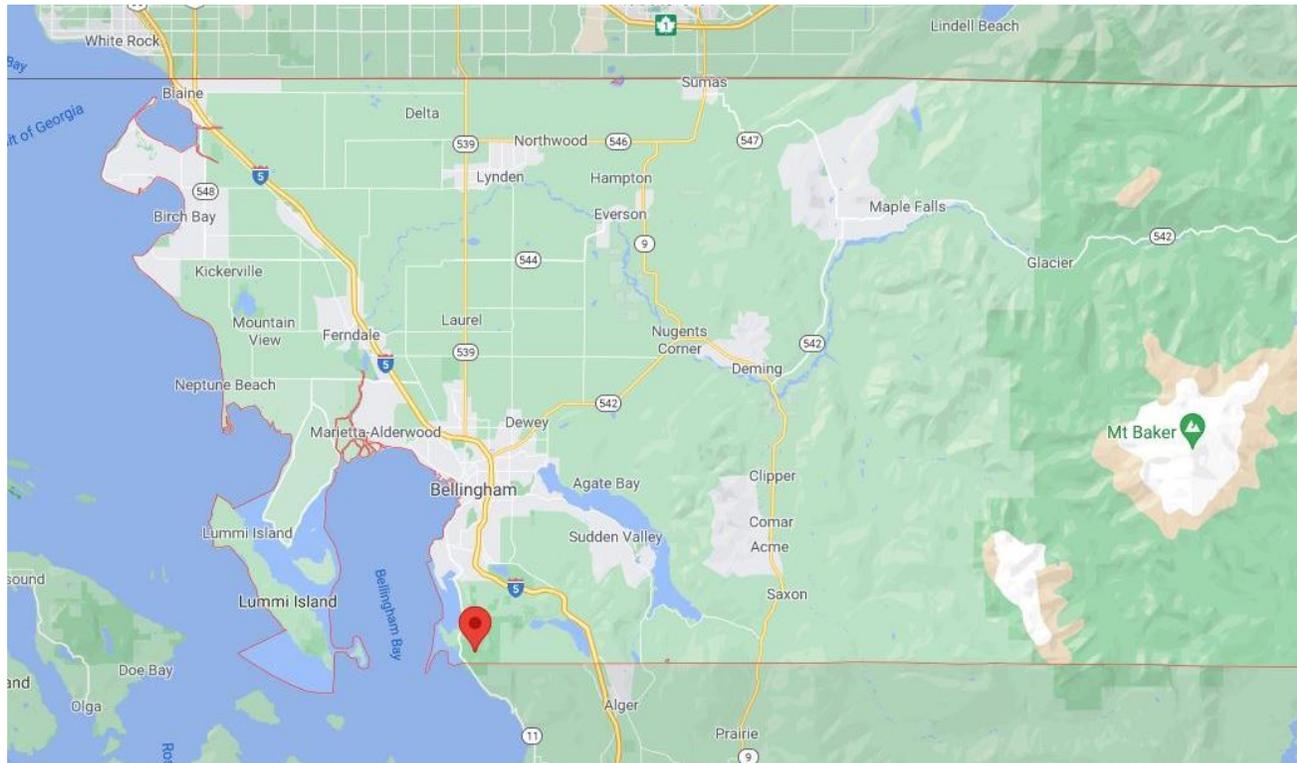
Species and Criteria for Listing

Townsend's Big-Eared Bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)

- Identified species of declining population;
- Documented species sensitive to habitat manipulation and cumulative loss.



Townsend's Big-Eared Bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)



General known distribution of Townsend's Big-eared Bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) in Whatcom County.

Townsend's Big-Eared Bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)

Protection and Management Recommendations:

- Conduct surveys for bats prior to maintenance or retrofit activities at bridges, caves, mines, and derelict buildings.
- Provide educational signage, buffers, or seasonal use restrictions on the caves, mines, buildings with known populations.
- Consider adding bat-friendly gates/human exclusion devices at known/potential roost/hibernacula sites (caves/mines) with potential human access.
- Consider scheduling maintenance and development to seasons when these bats have moved to hibernacula.



Potential effects of Townsend's Big-Eared Bat management recommendations on property ownership and use

Townsend's Big-Eared Bat is a mobile species and could co-exist with many human impacts on the landscape provided that hibernacula are protected.

- Consultation with WDFW and/or bat specialists may be required.
- The effects of listing on property ownership and use are likely minimal and management of this species would occur as part of the existing system of HCA project permitting reporting requirements.
- Project timing may be modified to protect critical life stages of this species.
- Potential alternative location for project is possible if the project cannot be designed to avoid and/or minimize impact to critical life activities.

Species and Criteria for Listing

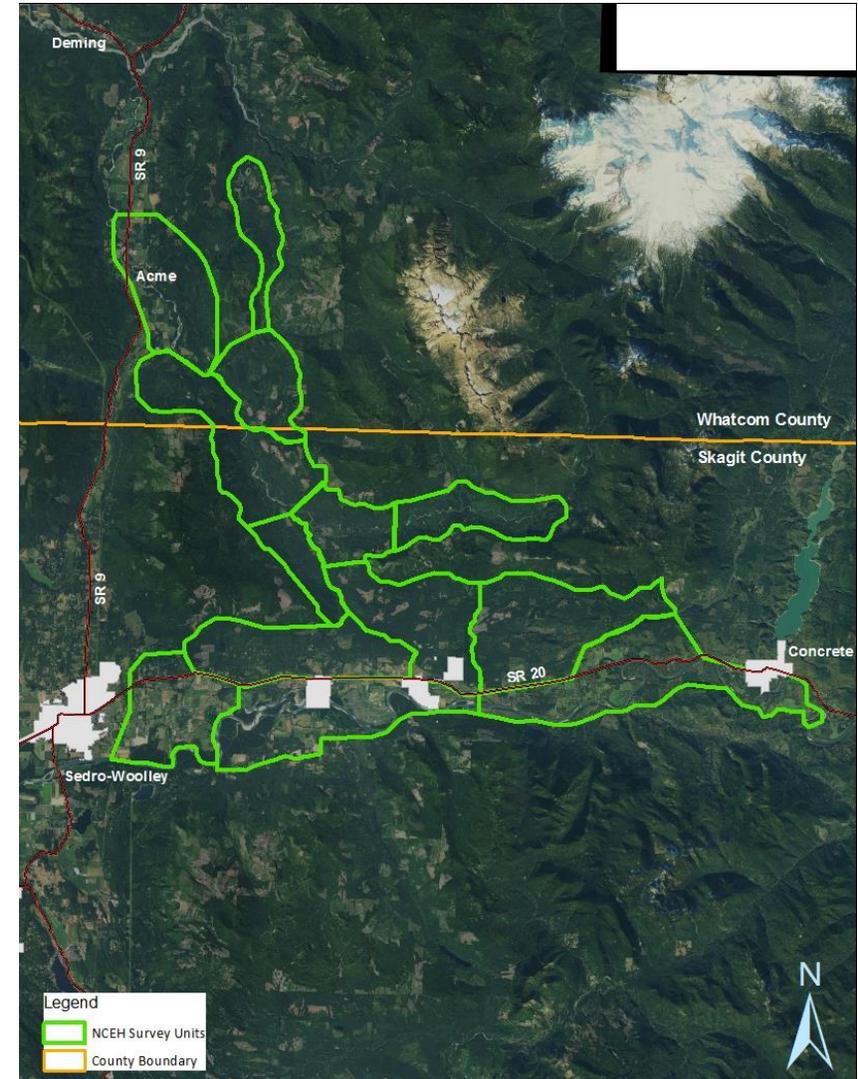
Elk (*Cervus canadensis roosevelti*)

- Recreationally important and a culturally significant species.



Elk distribution in Whatcom County

- Currently, most of the North Cascades elk herd resides in Skagit County
- This map represents the core area for the North Cascades elk herd and survey units used by WDFW and Tribal co-managers. The WDFW and co-managers agree that likely an additional 200-300 elk may reside outside this core area.



Elk (*Cervus canadensis roosevelti*)

Protection and Management Recommendations:

- Protection of forested habitats in Whatcom County for continued success and expansion of herd.
- Keep large, connected patches of undeveloped native and maintain low zoning densities (ideally no more than 1 dwelling unit/2.5 acres) within and immediately surrounding high-value habitat areas and encourage maintenance of native vegetation.
- Manage road systems to minimize the number of new roads and the potential for elk-vehicle collisions in areas likely used by elk.
- Where possible, plan open space to maintain and/or incorporate high-value habitat and corridors for elk movement.
- Zone for higher densities within urban and developed landscapes in Whatcom County to avoid sprawl that could impact high quality elk habitat.



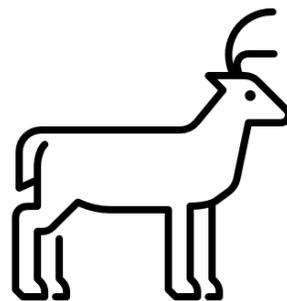
Potential effects of Elk management on property ownership and use:

- The effects of listing on property ownership will vary depending on the situation. Degradation and fragmentation of elk habitat due to development is of concern. Also, elk may cause damage to commercial crops, irrigation equipment, gardens, etc., especially on properties adjacent to forested uplands occupied by elk.
- Management of this species would occur as part of the existing system of HCA project permitting reporting requirements.
- Consultation with WDFW and Tribal Co-Managers may be required.

Process for the development review of these species

- Applicant submits for development permit within existing process.
- County review to see if maps show location is near species of local concern known area.
- Site visit to evaluate site conditions.
- Consult with State or Federal agencies, regional biological specialist, tribal managers, or other knowledgeable entities.
- May require specialist to be hired, WDFW be contracted, or County staff may assist Applicant through development process for management or mitigation measures.
- Conditions of development permit approval may include (but not limited to) items such as timing restrictions, signage, fencing, monitoring or mitigation.

Questions



Wildlife Advisory Committee

- Barry A. Wenger, Chair – Environmental Planner
Department of Ecology, Retired
- Vikki Jackson, Vice-Chair – Ecologist, Retired
- Frank Bob – Lummi Tribe
- Joel Ingram – WDFW Habitat Biologist
- Greg Green – Ecologist, WWU
- Stephen Nyman – Amphibian Ecologist, HDR
- Robert Waddell – WDFW District Wildlife Biologist
- Shannon Crossen – Biologist, ICF
- Trevor Delgado – Nooksack Tribe
- Chris Kazimer – Public Citizen

- PDS Administrative Staff: Amy Dearborn