



ODFW Field Reports

Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission
Sept 12, 2025

East Region

Nick Myatt, Region Manager

Porcupine research underway in Deschutes watershed

Ochoco district staff have continued to work on the Porcupine Investigation, which officially began in June 2025 and will run through June 2027. Due to limited research and anecdotal evidence that porcupine populations are declining, they will be added to the list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in 2026. ODFW staff in the Mid-Columbia and Deschutes Districts will participate in the project and will utilize community science data as well. Ochoco staff also met with the Wildlife Diversity program staff to identify opportunities to utilize their expertise and ensure all common goals are met. The project's overall goal is to gain a baseline understanding of porcupines in the Deschutes Watershed, given the lack of research and understanding in this region.



Porcupine photographed by a trail camera deployed in the study area, 2025.

To begin locating porcupines, staff combed through iNaturalist reports in the study area to gain an understanding of where to begin search efforts. We have partnered with the High Desert Museum on their "Wildlife Watch" community science project, where they will supply cameras for our volunteers to use in locating porcupines. Volunteers will be responsible for recording and uploading their observations (both porcupine and

otherwise) to iNaturalist. The Wildlife Ecology Institute and the Oregon Wildlife Foundation are providing funding, supplies, and data analysis.



Mikayla Bivona, Acting Assistant District Wildlife Biologist for the Ochoco District, deploys a trail camera during the filming of a TV broadcast segment about the project, July 2025.

Staff have conducted multiple outreach efforts, including two television interviews ([Great Outdoors - Bend segment](#)) and a podcast to inform the public about the project and general porcupine biology. They have also created a flyer and a public reporting form, which has already received over 120 reports. Overall, the public is excited about the project and eager to learn more about porcupines.

Between our staff and dedicated volunteers, we have utilized our draft survey methods and successfully confirmed roughly 20 porcupines on our trail cameras. Our efforts are now shifting toward locating individuals in a variety of habitats to ensure we gather as much information as possible. We are moving forward with our first volunteer training day on August 16 to prepare our volunteers for surveys.

The project has eight objectives:

- Identify areas occupied by porcupines in the Deschutes watershed through the use of multiple monitoring tools.
- Capture, radio-collar, and monitor 20 porcupines based on data collected using those monitoring tools.
- Assess seasonal space use (e.g., home-range sizes) and resource-selection patterns.

- Document movements, including dispersal events by juveniles, when possible.
- Evaluate demographic patterns (e.g., survival, cause-specific mortality) in association with space use and resource selection.
- Collect scat samples to assess seasonal dietary characteristics and limitations.
- Gain an estimate of distribution and abundance in the study area.
- Develop a standardized protocol to be implemented throughout the eastern portion of the state.

Foley Creek fish passage and road relocation

Foley Creek, a tributary to Trout Creek which flows into the Lower Deschutes River, saw major restoration activities from 2023 to 2025. The entire project: from conception to design to construction, seeding and tree planting was completed on time and under budget by two ODFW staff, one Jefferson SWCD employee, and one contracted dozer operator.



ODFW staff completed the Foley Creek project. Photos show restoration improvements.

The project targeted ESA-listed Mid-Columbia steelhead, as well as resident fish and aquatic species by improving fish passage, increasing instream structural complexity, expanding riparian and floodplain area, along 0.9 miles of the creek. Funding for the project was provided by BPA and Portland General Electric.

Staff also relocated a bridge in the area as part of a road realignment activity to allow the stream to re-meander. In 2024, revegetation included planting more than 3,600 trees and seeding approximately 500 lbs. of native grasses and forbs.

Post project monitoring shows:

- Increased channel length by 246 feet (5.3% increase), sinuosity (1.06 to 1.11), function, quantity and quality of habitat diversity, and improved sediment transport and sorting.
- Increased channel access to the floodplain from 3.69 to 12.5 acres to (339% increase).
- 8.5 acres of vegetation planting and improved riparian conditions.
- Increased number of pools from 11 to 33 (300% increase) in the project reach. Pools have complex habitats from large woody debris (LWD) structures.
- Removed seasonal fish passage barrier, allowing access to approximately 7.8 miles of habitat upstream.
- Created 0.47 acres of off channel ponds to increase water storage and exchange to the stream in late season.

West Region

Mike Gauvin, Acting Region Manager

Clackamas River habitat improvements

This summer, ODFW, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service through a Good Neighbor Authority agreement, launched the Two Rivers Side Channel and Mainstem Enhancement Project. The work took place on the Clackamas River, just downstream of its confluence with the Collawash River. Using logs salvaged from fire-damaged trees, a team of private, state, and federal agencies installed large wood jams to reshape the river channel and bring year-round water flow back into a historic side channel. These restoration actions created islands and scour pools that will shelter and feed coho salmon, winter steelhead, spring Chinook, lamprey, cutthroat trout, and bull trout.

This project is part of a larger restoration program in the upper Clackamas River where partners including Trout Unlimited, Portland General Electric, Clackamas River Basin Council, and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs are collaborating on habitat improvements across multiple sites in the mainstem and in priority side channel reaches. Just upstream at Austin Hot Springs, teams are working to restore the riparian zone by removing access roads, preventing trespassing, and planting native vegetation to rebuild functioning habitat and shade the river. New side channel connections and massive apex jams will provide habitat throughout the entire life cycle of salmonids in this area.

Further upstream, at Cub Creek, restoration teams are undertaking a "Stage Zero" approach—aiming to restore the stream to its most natural, self-sustaining condition. To date, the work includes reconnecting floodplain areas, placing 150 to 200 large pieces of wood, and bringing an important side channel back into action at the Cub Creek-Clackamas confluence. This project provides more floodplain connectivity, improves off channel habitat, and creates diverse juvenile rearing spaces.

Efforts are guided by a coordinated strategy which seeks to improve habitat complexity, water quality, and native fish populations across the basin. This includes specific goals such as placing thousands of pieces of large woody debris, increasing access to side and off-channel areas, and planting native vegetation throughout the upper Clackamas watershed between 2022 and 2025 and beyond.



Large wood jams were installed to reshape the river channel and bring year-round water flow back into a historic side channel.



Large wood jams were installed to reshape the river channel and bring year-round water flow back into a historic side channel (continued from previous photo)

Fish stocking Cascades and Eagle Caps

ODFW fish biologists and hatchery teams from East and West Regions collaborated this summer on another successful round of stocking fish in high-elevation lakes in the Cascade Mountain range from the Mt. Hood National Forest to the Klamath area as well as in the Eagle Cap Wilderness. Air stocking by helicopter this year dropped approximately 220,000 sterile rainbow, cutthroat, and brook trout in 320 lakes.



ODFW crew and helicopter pilot stock fish in a lake along the Cascade crest.

The main purpose of stocking high-elevation lakes in Oregon is to provide a unique outdoor experience in remote areas of the state. Starting in the 1940s, fixed-wing aircraft were used to stock wilderness lakes. In the 1980s, ODFW switched to helicopters because of their speed and efficiency. Today, helicopters equipped with ODFW's air stocking device are used to stock

the majority of the lakes in the Cascades and Eagle Caps. Staff also utilize other methods during non-helicopter years such as backpacking, horses, mules and llamas.



ODFW and helicopter crew prepare the air stocking gear at Hoodoo Ski Area, June 2025.

Operations typically consist of four safety crew members on the ground, two biologists in the helicopter who serve as a navigator and a bombardier (person who releases the fish by pushing a button that corresponds to a canister that is filled with fish for a specific lake). There are also multiple districts, headquarters, and hatchery staff that help to load fish on the ground to get the helicopter up in the air as quickly as possible.

Thanks to all the staff who participated and especially staff at Oak Springs, Wizard Falls, Fall River and Klamath hatcheries who reared fish to fingerling size.

OPB films future spearfishing episode in Coquille Basin

Producers with OPB's Oregon Field Guide visited the Coquille watershed to film a future episode focused on spearfishing smallmouth bass.

OPB spent time with Charleston office fish biologists Gary Vonderohe and Morgan Davies along with Coquille Tribe staff in early August, recording interviews and videos of crews' electro fishing for smallmouth bass. They also interviewed and filmed a spearfishing angler.

The OPB production staff may return this fall to get footage of hatchery Chinook broodstock collections. At this time, there is no estimate of when the episode will be aired.



Spearfishing in the Coquille River system has been in place since 2020 as a unique angling opportunity.

Beaver biology and ecology presentations garnered public interest

The Rogue Stream Restoration Biologist gave presentations on beaver biology and ecology to five libraries in the Rogue Watershed. The presentations were a way to increase beaver acceptance and education around Jackson County. The talks were well attended by adults and children, reaching about 80 people.

Staff also gave the same talk to Illinois Valley landowners earlier this summer and were contacted by several landowners about restoration in general.

An ODFW series of talks on beaver biologist and ecology was well attended in the Rogue Watershed.

Beaver 101

Phil Simpson & Geoff Gerdes



Oregon State Police

Captain Casey Thomas, Fish & Wildlife Division



Unlawful salmon seized during OSP boat patrol.

Fish and Wildlife Troopers conducted an ocean patrol out of Garibaldi; conditions were good, and many boats and anglers were contacted and checked. Multiple citations and warnings were issued for Taking Wild Coho Salmon, Angling Prohibited Species- Chinook, Fail to Immediately Validate Harvest Card and Angling Prohibited Method – Barbed Hooks for Salmon. On one contact the anglers on board had retained two Chinook in the ocean where taking Chinook was closed. Another boat had an angler that had retained a Chinook but claimed he had caught it in the bay prior to coming to the ocean and used the code for the bay on his tag. The angler had tagged a coho he caught in the ocean one line above the Chinook making it blatantly clear he had knowingly retained the Chinook in the closed area. One wild Coho and three hatchery Chinook were seized and donated to Loaves and Fishes in Astoria.



Bear poacher had items seized by Oregon State Police.

On the opening day of bear season, OSP Fish and Wildlife Division members from the field, the Special Investigations Unit and the Aviation Unit investigated a hunter baiting bears in the Scappoose Wildlife Management Unit. The location of his bait site and tree stand was located and surveillance was conducted on the area. After watching the suspect walk into the site with a handgun, bow and two jugs of molasses, contact was made as he was actively hunting while sitting in his tree stand. After an interview, the hunter was cited for Hunting Bear over Bait. The area reeked of molasses and there was a large pile of wet cob thirty-one yards from his stand. A consent search of his trail camera app showed multiple bears at the site almost every day since March. His bow, pistol, tree stand, two cameras and two empty jugs of molasses were seized.



Antelope hunter takes photo with Fish and Wildlife Trooper.

A Fish and Wildlife Trooper worked the Hart Mountain Archery Antelope season for 5 days, contacting 14 of the 22 tag holders; as well as the auction Antelope tag holder. Four antelopes were harvested and checked by the Trooper. One hunter was observed over 3 miles away via spotting scope harvest an antelope; and the hunter was met when he returned to camp and took a selfie photo with the Trooper and his buck antelope. Another hunter also wanted to take a selfie photo with his buck. While patrolling, the Trooper also contacted two women driving northbound onto the refuge that were lost and trying to find their way to California. They were led back to the town of Adel and given directions to Lakeview and California.

Several Hart Mountain Refuge staff members were contacted as well as other user groups. They appreciated the OSP presence.



OSP assists in getting help for injured hawk.

Fish and Wildlife Division members responded to a call for service involving a juvenile Red-Tailed Hawk. The hawk was in bad shape and being cared for by a Milton-Freewater resident. The resident was thanked for taking care of the injured bird and the hawk was transported to Blue Mountain Raptor Rescue in Pendleton.



Illegal dumping investigated by Oregon State Police

A Fish and Wildlife Trooper investigated three different dump sites, all on Green Diamond Company property. Green Diamond owns a significant portion of the land surrounding Klamath Falls. These lands provide much of the local hunting and fishing opportunities. Of the three dump sites found, one suspect was issued a criminal citation for offensive littering, and trespassed from Green Diamond properties for

90 days, with the exception he may enter the property to clean his trash up, which he agreed to do. The Trooper has suspects for the other two trash dumps.

Marine Resources Program

Justin Ainsworth, Marine Resources Program Manager

Grant continues long-term kelp bed data sets

In 2022, ODFW received a grant from the Oregon Ocean Science Trust (OOST) to study how climate change is affecting kelp bed ecosystems. The focus is on abundance and health of key invertebrates—sea urchins, abalones, and sea stars—which have been negatively impacted since a major warm water event in 2014–15.

This grant gives ODFW the opportunity to work with dive teams from Oregon Coast Aquarium, Oregon State University, and University of Oregon. The teams will survey kelp beds along the Oregon coastline. Divers have already surveyed Depoe Bay and Charleston and will survey Orford Reef and Brookings soon.

ODFW has maintained long-term datasets for sea urchins, abalones, and sea stars dating back to the early 1990s when staff did dive surveys. Now, the dive teams include student volunteers who repeated these surveys previously performed by ODFW and contract divers.

New tools include the use of cameras and lasers to measure sizes of sea urchins more safely and quickly. The grant, partnerships and efficiencies increase the durability of datasets, which are critical to inform management decisions.

Results from these surveys will inform population trends of kelp communities in Oregon. Examples of how these data may be used could include consideration of sea urchin fisheries and culling; assess level of imperiled abalones and sea stars; and if reintroduction and other human manipulation in the kelp bed communities is needed.

Staff aim to wrap up this grant by the end of 2025 and update the Fish and Wildlife Commission on the condition of kelp beds and the populations of invertebrates surveyed.



Volunteer divers from Oregon State University and the University of Oregon at Whale Cove near Depoe Bay.



Divers deploying for an underwater survey near Depoe Bay.

Critical survey underway to inform management of Oregon's black rockfish fishery

The Marine Fisheries Research team is conducting a nearly 10-week at-sea survey to better understand the population status of black, blue, and deacon rockfish—three species that form the foundation of Oregon's nearshore recreational, charter, and commercial fisheries.

This is the second coastwide, fishery-independent study of its kind. The first, conducted from August-October 2021, filled longstanding data gaps and helped avoid dramatic reductions in black rockfish quotas during the most recent stock assessment (2023).

While both commercial and recreational quotas of black rockfish decreased by 33 percent this year, it could have been worse if not for the 2021 survey data being included in the stock assessment.

Black rockfish are incredibly important to coastal economies and communities. Without the survey data, quotas would have been further reduced causing even more economic impacts to coastal communities.

Historically, fish population estimates were based on commercial and recreational fisheries catch data. These data were the only data used in the stock assessment (a model that uses fishery and survey information to create a population estimate) to inform quotas in both fisheries. But the fishing community, managers, and scientists alike have pushed for more accurate, science-based methods. In response, the research team developed a survey approach using scientific fish finders and underwater video cameras to count fish in nearshore waters.

This survey method, reviewed and validated by international experts, generates credible data that is expected to increase the accuracy of the next black rockfish stock assessment.

Future fishery-independent surveys will be funded in part by the ocean endorsement fee for recreational ocean fishing that begins Jan. 1, 2026 (ocean salmon fishing and shell fishing are excluded.) The 2025 Oregon State Legislature approved HB2342 that included this endorsement to specifically fund marine fish research such as this rockfish survey. More nearshore fish population surveys are important because they give the scientists assessing stocks more confidence in survey data, ultimately benefiting anglers with better data informing decisions.

The ocean endorsement cost for those who intend to fish in the ocean is \$7 for an annual fishing license and \$2 for a daily license with an additional \$2 agent fee.

The Marine Fisheries Research team departed from Newport Aug. 1 to begin the survey. All the Oregon coast's rocky reef nearshore habitat will be surveyed. When the survey is completed, researchers will begin finalizing the data.

**End of field reports for
Sept 12, 2025**