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Orca study focuses on contaminants in Puget Sound salmon

Posted April 2005

The resident killer whale population in the Pacific Northwest has declined rapidly over the past decade, prompting the National Marine Fisheries Service in 2004 to propose the species as "threatened" under the federal Endangered Species Act. Marine biologists believe chemical contaminants and pesticides - absorbed by salmon and other fish that make up a majority of the orcas' diet - may be a key factor in the resident population's decline.

Contaminants in salmon were the focus of a joint study recently completed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the NOAA Northwest Fisheries Science Center. The study found significantly higher levels of certain contaminants in Puget Sound salmon - particularly chinook salmon - than in those collected in other areas of the Pacific coast. [CONTINUED](#)



*Photo courtesy of
the Center for Whale Research*

Wind power and wildlife

A discussion of WDFW's guidelines for tapping an alternative energy source

Posted September 2004



In August 2003, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) issued guidelines for siting, building and operating wind-power facilities in the Evergreen State - the first such guidelines ever produced by a state natural resource agency. Since then, those guidelines have become a model for a variety of other states and wildlife organizations seeking to balance the demand for alternative energy sources with their stewardship responsibilities for birds, other wildlife and their natural habitat. [CONTINUED](#)

Scientists investigate marine toxin plaguing razor clam fishery

Posted February 2004

Dangerously high levels of domoic acid off the Pacific coast prompted closure of Washington state's razor clam fishery for the entire 2002-03 season, the third such season-long closure since 1991. Domoic acid, a marine toxin produced by the *Pseudo-nitzschia* algae, can produce serious illness and even death in humans if ingested in sufficient quantities. While there have been no known fatalities in Washington from domoic acid poisoning, season closures designed to protect human health have cost coastal communities millions of dollars in lost economic activity and affected recreational opportunities for tens of thousands of state residents. Since 1999, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has been working with a consortium of federal, state and local agencies; tribal governments; academic institutions; and marine-based businesses to find new ways to detect and predict outbreaks of domoic acid. That group, known as the Olympic Regional Harmful Algal Blooms (ORHAB) Partnership, is addressing the problem of domoic acid in a variety of ways. [CONTINUED](#)



- OTHER STORIES -

- **[Chronic wasting disease - monitoring, precautions focus of state effort](#)**
Although it has not been found in Washington deer or elk, chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a serious concern for wildlife managers nationwide. Since it was first identified in Colorado several decades ago, CWD has since been found in 12

other states and two Canadian provinces.

[Posted November 2004](#)

- **[Wild salmon population monitoring](#)**

In 1977, the (then) Washington Department of Fisheries initiated a comprehensive, long-range research effort to address the specific needs of managing Washington's naturally-produced salmon runs. The Wild Salmon Production Evaluation unit (WSPE) was created to measure production, survival, and fisheries contribution of natural salmon stocks.

[Posted October 2004](#)

- **[Final killer whale status report](#)**

Killer whales are one of the most recognizable marine mammals in the world, and Washington state is home to dozens of these intelligent, social animals. However, beginning in the mid-1990s, scientists noted a sharp decline in the most common of four population groups of killer whales that live in the state.

[Posted April 2004](#)

- **[Scientists seek clues to mountain goat decline](#)**

Mountain goats inhabit some of the most inaccessible terrain of Washington's Cascade Range. Because of their remote habitat, there is little scientific data on the life history of mountain goats. Biologists from several state, federal and tribal agencies are working together on a mountain goat research project.

[Posted January 2004](#)

- **[Saint Helens elk transfer benefits North Cascades herd](#)**

Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Point Elliott treaty tribes successfully relocated 41 elk over a two-day period in October 2003.

[Posted January 2004](#)

- **[Scientists seek reasons for declining ferruginous hawk population](#)**

WDFW recently completed a second season of ferruginous hawk nesting surveys, one of four projects under way since 1999 to investigate an apparent decline in the population of this state threatened species.

[Posted June 2003](#)

- **[Mule deer research includes ultrasonography, WSU nutrition study with captive herd](#)**

Now in its second year, WDFW's eastern Washington mule deer research includes body condition scoring using ultrasonography for comparison with a captive deer herd diet and nutrition study at Washington State University (WSU).

[Posted August 2002](#)

- **[Project offers endangered turtles a head start to recovery](#)**
The western pond turtle, an endangered species in Washington, may be making a comeback thanks to a cooperative recovery project . . .
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- **[Captive breeding program offers hope for country's smallest native rabbit](#)**
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