

February 5, 2019

## Pelton Round Butte Fisheries Newsletter — February 2019



As fisheries biologists gear up for the start of our busiest fish passage season, we're taking some time this month to focus attention on our terrestrial scientists, who work diligently year round to monitor and protect the bird and mammal populations of the Deschutes basin. Our terrestrial efforts in Central Oregon include tracking raptors, planting shrubs to restore shoreline areas and managing the Mule Deer Winter Range — a critical habitat for elk, deer, bats and birds. Learn more about our bird monitoring efforts and terrestrial staff throughout this newsletter, and please forward it to any friends or family who share your interest in the Deschutes.

Subscribe or unsubscribe from our distribution list by emailing [deschutes.passage@pgn.com](mailto:deschutes.passage@pgn.com).

This newsletter and past issues can be found at [PortlandGeneral.com/DeschutesUpdates](http://PortlandGeneral.com/DeschutesUpdates).

### Featured Study: Deschutes Basin Mid-Winter Bird Surveys

PGE's terrestrial biologists took to the water in January to perform an annual bird count, combining local and national efforts into one extensive survey of avian populations within the Pelton Round Butte project area. This year, as in most years, the cold weather on the reservoir required the use of "survival suits" — bright orange insulated jumpsuits that double as flotation devices. Looking a little silly but feeling safe and enthusiastic, the team boarded a boat and headed out across Lake Billy Chinook just as the sun began to rise above the shoreline's dramatic cliffs.

#### How does the study work?

- As part of a national initiative to survey eagle populations at the start of every new year, terrestrial biologists identify and record all eagles observed within the project area. Both bald and golden eagles can be found in the Deschutes basin, and within just a few minutes of starting this year's search, we noticed our first golden eagle of the day perched on a tree overlooking the Selective Water Withdrawal.
- In addition to looking for eagles, biologists keep an eye out for a variety of waterfowl, shorebird and mammal species. All birds, except for passerines, songbirds and few other common species (like the crow and magpie), are recorded.
- This year, from the headwaters of Lake Billy Chinook down to the Warm Springs Bridge, we identified the following species: golden and bald eagles (adults and juveniles), red-tailed hawks, Canada geese, Western and pied-billed grebes, coots, great blue herons, cormorants, many duck species (bufflehead, ruddy, ring-necked, common and Barrow's goldeneye, mallard, gadwall, American widgeon, scaup, common and hooded merganser, green-winged teal), and one river otter.



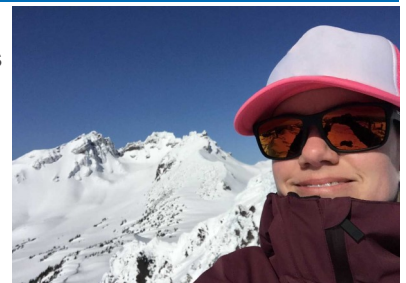
#### What have we learned from the study?

- Study results are weather-dependent and highly variable from year to year. In colder years, biologists tend to observe more birds, which flock to the reservoir when other sources of water have frozen over.
- Despite its variability, the survey remains a useful index of bird populations in the basin. Bird populations appear to be healthy, and we have no indication that populations are declining.
- Combined with our golden eagle tracking efforts, the annual bird survey suggests that there are at least 20 breeding pairs of golden eagles along the Deschutes and Crooked Rivers in Jefferson County.
- Join us for [Eagle Watch 2019](#) to learn more!



### Staff Feature: Leah Hough

Leah Hough is a terrestrial biologist for PGE at the Pelton Round Butte Project. As a child, Leah enjoyed exploring Oregon's outdoor opportunities, and she continued developing these interests through the study of biology at Long Beach State. Leah returned to Oregon after college, working in the fisheries field for eight years before taking a position as an administrative assistant in PGE's Environmental Services department. From this role, Leah transitioned into her current position as a terrestrial biologist. Leah loves studying raptors and values spending time alongside her hardworking colleagues. She currently lives in her hometown of Bend, where she enjoys snowboarding, backpacking and knitting.



## Juvenile Fish Update

| Juvenile Species | Dec. 2018 | Yearly Total<br>(through Dec. 2018) |
|------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| Chinook          | 690       | 21,855                              |
| Kokanee          | 392       | 45,208                              |
| Bull Trout       | 11        | 609                                 |
| Steelhead        | 1         | 8,889                               |

- In December 2018, 1,097 fish from five species of salmonids were processed at the Fish Transfer Facility at the Selective Water Withdrawal. 690 Chinook and 1 steelhead were released downstream into the Lower River.
- February 1 marks the official start of the juvenile fish passage season. Any kokanee collected at the SWW are now considered sockeye and passed downstream.

## Adult Fish Update

| Adult Species    | Jan. 2019 | Yearly Total<br>(hatchery, wild and upper basin) |
|------------------|-----------|--|
| Summer Steelhead | 246       | 1,249 (Sep 2018 - May 2019)                      |
| Fall Chinook     | 4         | 4 (through Jan. 2019)                            |

- Complete daily fish counts (including identifying tags and hatchery vs. wild origin) can be [found online](#).
- Summer steelhead are continuing to arrive at the Pelton trap. In January we captured a total of 246 steelhead, including five fish with a left maxillary clip. This mark indicates that these fish originated from hatcheries and were released into the upper tributaries as smolts. These five adult fish were returned to the upper basin.
- This run year, we've released a total of 29 steelhead into the upper basin.

## Announcements, News, and Events

- PGE and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs are still accepting applications for the 2020 Cycle of the Pelton Round Butte Fund, and **the fund's deadline has been extended from March 1 to April 1**. The Fund provides funding for watershed restoration projects that benefit salmon and steelhead in the Deschutes River Basin above and below the Pelton Round Butte Hydroelectric Project. The application materials and directions can be found on the [PGE website](#).
- [The 55th Annual Meeting](#) for the Oregon Chapter of the American Fisheries Society will be held in Bend this year, from March 4 to March 8. The theme of this year's program is: "At the nexus of science and restoration: what do we know?"
- Come find us at the [Pacific Northwest Sportsmen's Show](#) (Feb 6 – 10) in Portland and the [Central Oregon Sportsmen's Show](#) (Feb 28 – March 3) in Redmond. Visit our booth to ask us your questions in person and to learn more about PGE's parks, fisheries work and other environmental programs across the state.

### Join Us for Eagle Watch 2019

All-day fun for the whole family in Eagle Village — hot dogs, kids' activities, education stations, traditional dancing and more. Proceeds from the silent auction and raffle will support ongoing Golden Eagle research.

**When:** February 23-24, 2019

**Where:** Round Butte Overlook Park at Lake Billy Chinook

Visit [oregonstateparks.org](http://oregonstateparks.org) or find us on [Facebook](#) for more information.



### Discover PGE Parks

Dreaming of a remote weekend with your rod and reel? Or a family-friendly park with reservable picnic areas? Find your [PGE park](#) and see our [full list of amenities](#).

[Perry South](#) and [Monty Campground](#), on Lake Billy Chinook, are now open for reservations for all summer dates after Memorial Day Weekend.



## Thank you for reading our February 2019 newsletter!

Visit our [website](#) to find more information about the Deschutes, including informative videos, fact sheets, and reports. News, updates and past issues of this newsletter can be found [here](#).

- ◇ Have suggestions for what you'd like to see in the next newsletter? Want to schedule a tour? Please contact us at [deschutes.passage@pgn.com](mailto:deschutes.passage@pgn.com).
- ◇ To unsubscribe, send an email to [deschutes.passage@pgn.com](mailto:deschutes.passage@pgn.com) with the subject line "unsubscribe."

Follow us on social media:

[Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#)

