Wildlife

Wildlife in the Seattle District is one of the most diverse assemblages of species found in the United States. Because the District covers Washington State, Northern Idaho, and Northwest Montana, it's easy to imagine the diversity of species when you go from the temperate rain forests of Western Washington, to the arid landscape of Eastern Washington, and finally into the rugged mountain slopes of Idaho and Montana. Within these areas, numerous different species of wildlife exist. A particular species could inhabit the inside of a decaying log, or require several thousand acres of old-growth forests to roam. You might find a rare slug inhabiting that same downed log, or a spotted owl roosting silently by. In a rare instance, you might catch a glimpse of a cougar or bobcat on a far ridge. In any case, wildlife is all around us, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is committed to ensuring that all of us have the peace of mind knowing that they exist whether we see them or not.

The Seattle District, to be more specific, involves itself directly in the conservation and preservation of wildlife species that fall within its jurisdictional boundaries. Whether it be wintering habitat, nesting habitat, or even something as simple as a migratory resting area, the Corp is dedicated to preserving each species' life history traits and habitat needs. It's easy to view the Corps primarily as a water-resources based agency that would have limited exposure to terrestrial wildlife however, several water-dependent habitats exist that support an extraordinarily high number of terrestrial wildlife species. For example, the belted kingfisher is a bird that, as its name implies, depends heavily on small fish for its diet, hence its dependence on water. It also prefers sandy stream banks where both the male and female will dig a burrow in order to nest. Again, another life history trait that is intimately linked to water resources. Riparian areas also act as corridors for wildlife movement. In today's world, many areas that were previously undisturbed have been developed to the point where habitats have become fragmented. Some of the last linking corridors between these fragmented habitats exist along rivers and streams. Wildlife species such as deer, coyotes, bears, raccoons, and many others use these corridors as a means of protection to get from habitat to another. The preservation of these corridors is absolutely critical.

Wetlands are another area of responsibility the Corps maintains through congressional delegation under Section 404 of the Clean

Water Act. Numerous species are solely dependent upon wetlands for their survival. For example, the Cascade frog is heavily dependent upon wetlands for all of its life history traits. These frogs breed in shallow waters in the spring and within a few weeks hatch as tadpoles. In the fall of the first year, these tadpoles metamorphose into tiny frogs (1/2 inch long), and eventually grow to 3 inches as an adult. They spend their entire life in wetlands and they represent only one of many such species.

The Environmental Resources Section of the Seattle District provides leadership and direction for the preservation and conservation of all our wildlife resources. In all projects, wildlife biologists play an integral role in developing strategies and alternatives with the sole purpose of representing the interests of wildlife and their associated habitats.

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