

Animal study falls prey to budget cuts

By JOHN STANC
Herald staff writer

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Soper said the Nature Conservancy plans to look for extra money from private sources. He contended the inventory is important to many agencies and constituencies interested in Hanford.

As the future of the cleaned-up areas is debated, all sides need to know the locations of sensitive species needing protection, he said.

Also, the studies have led to scientific discoveries with practical applications, he said. For example, ladybugs eat aphids, which damage crops. And the inventory showed Hanford has about 50 types of ladybugs.

The 1994 inventory also found three previously unknown insect species and one new plant species.

The three yet-unnamed insect species are types of leafhoppers. They look like cicadas, but are one-tenth to one-fifth of an inch long. Hanford holds about 40 species of leafhoppers.

The study's 20,000 insect, bird and plant specimens covered about 600 species, which doubled the number scientists previously confirmed at Hanford, Soper said.

Most of the new species also are elsewhere in Washington, but about 20 had only been found outside the state before 1994.

The study also is the first time nine species of birds — common elsewhere — have been found at Hanford.

These are annas hummingbirds, Pacific slope flycatchers, Hammond's flycatchers, blackpoll warblers, snow buntings, black-throated sparrows, red-necked grebes, short-billed dowitchers and gray flycatchers.

Soper said the inventory aims to fill gaps left by other Hanford animal inventories, which focused more on larger animals and birds.

Also, the 1994 inventory found 62 previously undocumented areas — ranging from small patches to big fields — that contained 15 species of rare or sensitive plants.

Those 15 species include five never found before at Hanford. Four are Geyer's milk-vetch, Snake River cryptantha, desert dodder and Canadian St. John's-wort.

The fifth is the still unnamed new bladder pod plant discovered by botanists Kate Beck and Florence Caplow.

Beck said that finding was confirmed by Harvard University botanist Reed Rollins, who found the only other dried specimen of that plant in a Harvard storage room. That unnamed specimen was picked by a botanist in 1883 in the Hanford area.

New insect, plant species discovered at Hanford site

By the Herald staff

Three previously unknown species of insects and one previously unknown plant species have been discovered on Hanford.

Scientists from the Nature Conservancy of Washington discovered the four new species earlier this year, according to a U.S. Department of Energy press release.

Three of the species are insects of the leafhopper group. Those species have not been named yet by the people who discovered them.

The yet-unnamed plant is a form of bladder pod, which is part of the mustard family. It was found in the White Bluffs area of the Hanford Reach.

The conservancy is a nonprofit organization that signed an agreement with DOE in 1992 to study plant and animal life on Hanford's uncontaminated areas.

DOE gave a three-year grant of \$810,000 to the conservancy this year to pursue those studies. The conservancy has worked with Battelle-Northwest for several years on some plant and animal studies.

Remember, do not find mutant species at Hanford
or you will lose your funding!

Animal study falls prey to budget cuts

By JOHN STANG
Herald staff writer

TH 2 Feb 1995

Upcoming federal budget cuts have trimmed in half a study to inventory the plant and animal life at Hanford.

A three-year federal grant of \$810,000 to do the study has been cut to a \$400,000 two-year grant, said Curt Soper, study coordinator for the Nature Conservancy.

The Nature Conservancy, with help from local volunteers and biologists, is doing the study for the U.S. Department of Energy. The study's first year was 1994.

The budget cuts have eliminated the inventory's third year and greatly reduced the scope of what will be done in 1995, Soper said.

He briefed about 60 local biologists and study volunteers Wednesday at Washington State University Tri-Cities.

The 1994 inventory concentrated on plants, birds and insects on Hanford's North Slope and the Fitzner-Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve.

The 1995 inventory will look at amphibians and reptiles, and it will concentrate on the Hanford Reach and the dunes in central Hanford, Soper said.

The budget reduction probably means mammals won't be inventoried and the remaining inventory will not be done in as much detail as originally planned, Soper said. Much of central Hanford won't be studied.

Soper said the Nature Conservancy plans to look for extra money from private sources. He contended the inventory is important to many agencies and constituencies interested in Hanford.

As the future of the cleaned-up areas is debated, all sides need to know the locations of sensitive species needing protection, he said.

Also, the studies have led to scientific discoveries with practical applications, he said. For example, ladybugs eat aphids, which damage crops. And the inventory showed Hanford has about 50 types of ladybugs.

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DOE gave a three-year grant of \$10,000 to the conservancy this year to pursue those studies. The conservancy has worked with Hanford Northwest for several years on environmental and animal studies.