



Wildlife Conservation at Lookout Natural Area: An ecological stronghold in a developing area

Nestled between the City of Wenatchee and over 168,000 acres of connected public lands managed by state and federal partners, Lookout Natural Area is a landscape that plays a critical role in regional conservation. It protects fragile shrub-steppe habitat and supports vital mule deer winter range and migration corridors. It is also home to bighorn sheep and a variety of native plants, offering unique wildlife viewing and educational opportunities. Following the 2021 wildfire, the area now offers a natural classroom for understanding and supporting habitat recovery and resilience.

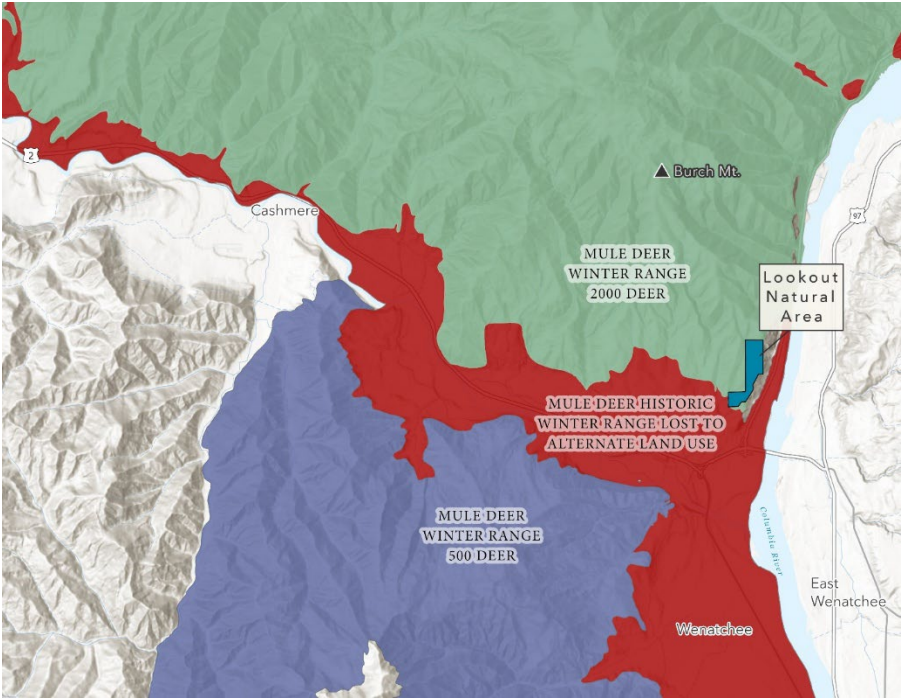
Safe Haven for Wildlife

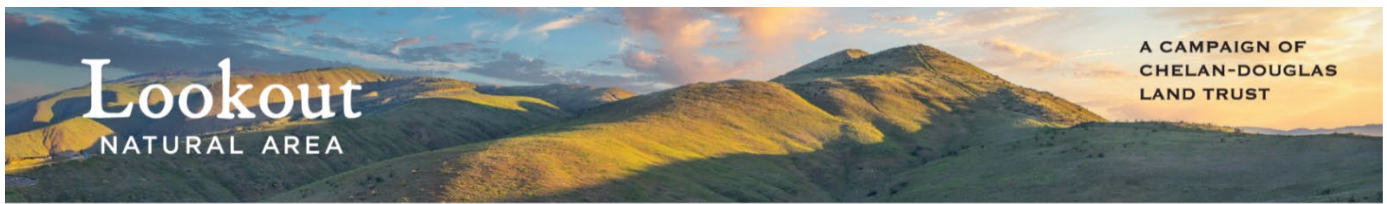
Protected lands like Lookout Natural Area provide intact habitat where wildlife can move, feed, and winter undisturbed. Due to its lower elevation, Lookout provides important forage during winter months, the time of year when wildlife’s survival is most uncertain. This property is contiguous with the Swakane Wildlife Unit, making it a critical link for bighorn sheep and wintering mule deer as it offers continuity with protected high-quality habitat.

Located at the edge of quality mule deer winter range, Lookout safeguards essential habitat for wildlife and birds whose ranges are increasingly fragmented by urban development. Without protection, the loss of this land would sever a key ecological pathway and disrupt the continuity of wildlife movement across the foothills.

Home to Ecological Diversity

Lookout Natural Area is home to a remarkable diversity of species. This diversity starts with the land itself. The property has a dramatic topography of cliffs, hillslopes, and swales across many different aspects. Through the seasons, this terrain allows wildlife extended access to green forage, while also including the steep escape terrain—called refugia by biologists—that bighorn sheep rely on to evade predation.





These same cliffs provide nesting habitat and perching areas for Species of Greatest Conservation Need like the golden eagle and peregrine falcon. The habitat next to the cliffs supports prey species and provides hunting areas for these raptors. These cliffs also create perfect conditions for the rare plant, Chelan rockmat (*Petrophyton cinerascens*). Chelan rockmat is endemic to the metamorphic rock cliffs along the Columbia River between Chelan and Wenatchee (a distance of only 17 miles). It is found nowhere else in the world.

A Post-Wildfire Ecosystem Worth Saving

Wildfire has repeatedly swept through Lookout, most recently in 2021, but nature recovers. Fire-resistant native grasses, shrubs, and wildflowers re-sprout. The shady cliff-top nooks act as both a fire break and a refuge from fire, where unburned plants provide seeds that help revegetate nearby burned lands. This pattern creates a natural classroom for understanding ecological succession and climate resilience in our local fire-adapted ecosystems. CDLT plans to work with neighboring agency partners and university researchers to strengthen fire recovery efforts and use the land to teach students and adults alike about resilience.

Protecting the Lookout Natural Area Protects Our Future

Lookout Natural Area represents irreplaceable habitat that helps maintain diverse ecosystems that benefit wildlife, plants, birds, and people. The evidence is clear that protecting natural places is essential on the pathway to climate resilience and healthy communities. Its protection and stewardship is an opportunity to leave a legacy where nature and people can thrive together.

With support from Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife:

“These 134 acres of shrub steppe encompass important bighorn sheep habitat used by the Swakane herd year-round as well as valuable mule deer winter range, something which continues to become scarcer and more fragmented every year due to development. This acquisition would ensure the protection of lands that provide these iconic wildlife species and others connectivity with thousands of acres of existing protected lands managed by BLM, DNR, and WDFW, helping to secure a brighter future for the wildlife that are a key part of what makes the Greater Wenatchee Area such a beautiful place to live.”

Emily Jeffreys District Wildlife Biologist, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

“The property is frequently used by nesting peregrine falcons (within 1-2 miles) and golden eagles (within 2-3 miles). The cliffs are important perching areas where the raptors rest and the upland habitat adjacent to the cliffs support prey species and hunting areas for them. Both the nesting territories and hunting areas for these raptor species would be negatively impacted should the property be developed.”

Jon Gallie Wildlife Biologist, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife