

## 51-2. BEAR LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (IBA)

### Boundaries and ownership

*Boundaries:* South – Bear Lake/Turnpike Road

*Ownership:* U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Utah Power and Light Co. (owns right to store water on the refuge)

### Focal species using the site and timing of use:

Primarily nesting waterfowl, with dense populations of Canada Geese, Mallards, and Redheads. Additional nesting waterbird species include: Sandhill Crane, Killdeer, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Willet, Spotted Sandpiper, American Bittern, Virginia Rail, Sora, American Coot, and Wilson's phalarope. Fall staging area for 300-500 Sandhill Cranes. Nesting Long-billed Curlews and non-nesting American White Pelicans in summer. Shorebirds and waterfowl (approx. 10,000-20,000) during migration.

*Colonies:* Eared Grebe (10-12 nests), Western and Clark's Grebe (40-50 nests), Double-crested Cormorant (50-60 nests), Great Blue Heron (15-50 nests), Black-crowned Night Heron (75-80 nests), Snowy Egret (70-80 nests), Cattle Egret, White-faced Ibis (largest colony in ID; 150-3,000 pairs), California Gull (120 nests), Franklin's Gull (4,000 nests), Forster's Tern (30-40 pairs), Black Tern (20-30 nests), Caspian Tern (6-10 pairs)

### Location of type 1 and 2 habitat within the site:

Functional Group	Type 1 Habitat	Type 2 Habitat
waterbirds	breeding colonies, open water & emergent vegetation	none
large waders	breeding colonies, emergent vegetation	rest of shoreline
secretive marshbirds	water's edge N end of lake and up to Rt. 89	none
waterfowl	open water, edges during breeding season	none
shorebirds	exposed mudflats near Salt Meadow	rest of shoreline
gulls and terns	breeding colonies, all areas	none

**Access to the type 1 and 2 habitat and visibility of the birds:** Good for rails and to see some of colonies; boat needed for other colonies, or can count from air.

### Conservation issues:

- Introduced Carp and noxious weeds are management problems
- Water diversion (entire flow of Bear River) through the refuge is adding nutrients, and sediments to the marsh
- There is an inactive mine portal on the edge of the refuge though the ore body (phosphate rock) is not on refuge property
- change their storage regimes it could negatively affect water levels in the refuge

### Conservation measures taken, in progress, or proposed:

- Efforts are under way to introduce Trumpeter Swans as a nesting species
- Mechanical, chemical, and biological control of noxious weeds and carp
- Cooperation and negotiation with Utah Power and Light to minimize negative impacts of water storage on the refuge
- All cattle grazing has been discontinued
- Haying and farming for wildlife

- Use of diking and timing of water intake to reduce influx of nutrients and sediments into the refuge
- Efforts being made upstream to reduce non-point nutrient and sediment input in Bear River

**Past and current surveys:**

Aerial surveys for goose and crane pairs. Grains fields N of NWR attract staging cranes in fall  
Aerial surveys for Trumpeter Swans  
Ground count of waterfowl breeding pairs  
Colony counts have been conducted in the past, but are not currently

**Potential survey methods**

*Description:* In spring, incorporate into aerial surveys.

- a. Nest searches for grebes and other waterbirds nesting in the emergent vegetation in small colonies. Canoe or boat may be necessary for access.
- b. Colony counts for nesting grebes, herons, egrets, White-faced Ibis, Double Crested Cormorants, gulls, and terns.
- c. Census for waterfowl on the open water by driving around area.
- d. Area searches for migrating shorebirds from observation points near Type 1 habitat.
- e. Systematic sampling, probably including the use of playback calls, for secretive marshbirds from dikes.
- f. Census for gulls and terns during waterfowl counts.

*Selection bias:* Some colonies (including the big ibis colony) cannot be reached by ground and many of the foraging spots are not visible from roads

*Measurement error and bias:* Some birds not visible

**Needed pilot studies:** Design of colony counts, and determination of colony monitoring priorities, would be helpful. All surveys must be coordinated with refuge staff.

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