

## 50-7. KOOTENAI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (IBA)

### Boundaries and ownership:

*Boundaries:* Boundaries are clearly marked; North and East - Kootenai River and Deep Creek, West: Selkirk Mountains/Westside Road

*Ownership:* U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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

A total of 220 bird species have been recorded on the refuge, including 80 species that commonly use the refuge for nesting and feeding. Red-necked Grebes (5-15 pairs), other waterbirds (Pied-billed Grebe, American Bittern, Virginia Rail, Sora, American Coot), shorebirds (Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe), Northern Harriers (2-3 pairs), and Bald Eagles (1-2 pairs) routinely nest on the refuge, as well as numerous waterfowl and Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. American Dippers nesting under bridge of Myrtle Creek. The refuge is also an important migration stop for migratory waterfowl. Spring and fall peaks of upwards of 40,000 ducks (Mallard – 80-85%, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon), 4,000 Canada Geese (fall peak), 400 Tundra Swans (spring peak), over 100 shorebirds (fall peak; Killdeer, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Wilson's Snipe, Long-billed Dowitcher), and up to 15 Bald Eagles (fall peak). Refuge ices over in winter from approximately December through February.

*Colonies:* Black Tern (25-30 pairs)

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

Functional Group	Type 1 Habitat	Type 2 Habitat
waterbirds	open water & emergent vegetation	none
large waders	emergent vegetation	rest of shoreline
secretive marshbirds	water's edge	none
waterfowl	open water, edges during breeding season	none
shorebirds	exposed mudflats	rest of shoreline
gulls and terns	breeding colonies, all areas	none

### Access to the type 1 and 2 habitat and visibility of the birds:

Many parts of the area can be viewed from auto tour route that traverses the refuge, as well as the country road along the southern portion of the refuge. Special use permit needed to survey the rest of area. All water areas are visible from service roads, and boat access should not be necessary. Dikes surrounding wetlands are high enough to get a view of most, if not all, of the wetland areas.

### Conservation issues:

- Introduced plants/animals
- Overextraction of groundwater; water rights
- Recreational development/overuse

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

- USFWS is currently working on wetland projects to manage water levels, etc. May see more shorebird habitat available in near future.

### Past and current surveys:

- Bi-weekly surveys have been conducted in the past, but not in the last couple of years
- Wood duck nest box monitoring taking place currently
- A bird checklist is available with all birds known to be present on the refuge

## Potential survey methods

### *Description*

- a. Nest searches for grebes and other waterbirds nesting in the emergent vegetation in small colonies, which should be visible from the shoreline.
- b. Colony counts for Black Terns and Black-crowned Night Herons. These counts must be done from a distance to minimize disturbance.
- c. Census for waterfowl and other waterbirds on the open from shoreline along auto tour route and service roads. Established brood count survey route should be used to allow for contribution to past data. Additional survey routes may be added to cover entire 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. Can be conducted from shorelines, along dike roads.
- f. Census for gulls and terns during waterfowl counts.

*Selection bias:* N/A

*Measurement error and bias:* some emergent vegetation issues, but very minor. Most of the area can be seen quite well from raised dikes surrounding the wetlands.

**Needed pilot studies:** None may be needed.

### **Contact:**

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