

Stratum 1: Discrete Sites

51-1. AMERICAN FALLS RESERVOIR (IBA)

Boundaries and ownership:

Boundaries: Located near towns of American Falls, Fort Hall, Aberdeen, and Springfield (Power and Bingham counties). Southern boundary is the American Falls Dam, roughly follows the shorelines northeast, and includes the Fort Hall Bottoms area along the Snake River and Spring Creek (up to the Tilden Rd. Bridge)

Ownership: U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs (Fort Hall Indian Reservation), Idaho Department of Fish & Game, Idaho Department of Lands, municipal, and private

Focal species using the site and timing of use:

There are over 200 species recorded in area including many rare Idaho species. The reservoir attracts thousands (>40,000) of migrating/wintering ducks, geese, and shorebirds (Black-bellied plover, American Golden Plover, Snowy Plover, Killdeer, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Willet, Long-billed Curlew, Spotted Sandpiper, Marbled Godwit, Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Baird's Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe, and Red-necked phalarope). The Intermountain West Regional Shorebird plan names this as one of only 2 sites (other is Lake Lowell) in Idaho with greater than 5000 shorebirds in more than half years surveyed (Peak = 5,000-10,000). It is a breeding and wintering area for Trumpeter Swans, a wintering area for Bald Eagles, and a minor fall staging area for Sandhill Cranes (200 to 400 cranes).

Fort Hall bottoms should have good rail habitat.

Colonies: Eared Grebe (McTucker-Danielson), Western and Clark's Grebe (McTucker-Danielson, Rainbow & Seagull; 75-100 pairs), Double-crested Cormorant (McTucker-Danielson, Portneuf Mouth; 400-420 nests), Great Blue Heron (McTucker-Danielson; 30-50 nests), Black-crowned Night Heron (McTucker-Danielson; 70-90 nests), Snowy Egret (McTucker-Danielson, Portneuf Mouth), Great Egret (Portneuf Mouth), Cattle Egret (Portneuf Mouth), White-faced Ibis (McTucker-Danielson; 200-250 nests), Forster's Tern (McTucker-Danielson), Black Tern (Portneuf Mouth), California Gull (Gull Island; 1700-1800 nests), Ring-billed Gull (Gull Island; 2000-2200 nests)

Location of type 1 and 2 habitat within the site:

Functional Group	Type 1 Habitat	Type 2 Habitat
waterbirds	breeding colonies (see above for locations), open water & emergent vegetation	none
large waders	breeding colonies (see above for locations), emergent vegetation	rest of shoreline
secretive marshbirds	possibly Fort Hall Bottoms	none
waterfowl	open water, edges during breeding season	none
shorebirds	exposed mudflats at NE end, N of Sterling, Big Hole, Willow Bay to AF Dam, and Bannock Creek (owned by reservation)	rest of shoreline
gulls and terns	breeding colonies on Gull Island, all areas	none

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

Shorebirds: reservation surveys would require permission (or they could do them); most other spots could be reached. Four-wheelers might be used for access. When water goes down, mud flats at north end are too extensive to cover. A small boat could provide access to this area.

Open-water birds: probably would take boat or plane surveys though good vantages for a scope.

Colonial birds: Good access.

Conservation issues:

- Nutrient enrichment and pesticide runoff from surrounding agriculture lands
- Recreational activities are a disturbance to the avifauna
- There have been several episodes of botulism in the waterfowl
- Grazing may reduce the understory in willow and cottonwood habitats as well as contributing to the introduction of nutrients in the form of wastes to the system

Conservation measures taken, in progress, or proposed:

- Most of shoreline is federal or tribal lands
- A management plan has been written along with an irrigation water operation plan by the USBR in progress
- Springfield Bottoms has been designated as a shorebird reserve

Past and current surveys:

- Chuck Trost has done shorebird and colony surveys
- Mid-winter waterfowl and swan aerial surveys
- Christmas Bird Counts

Potential survey methods

Description: Ground based surveys for most area (see above)

- 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 herons, egrets, White-faced Ibis, Double-crested Cormorants, gulls, and terns. Gull island colonies: Can walk most of way around it so might be able to do it from the ground. Otherwise, photography by air.
- c. Census for waterfowl on the open water using a boat or plane.
- d. Area searches for migrating shorebirds from observation points near Type 1 habitat, or by using a boat. Contact Chuck Trost to determine if census routes used in the past can/should be used for future surveys.
- e. Systematic sampling, probably including the use of playback calls, for secretive marshbirds at Fort Hall Bottoms.
- f. Census for gulls and terns during waterfowl counts.

Selection bias: NA

Measurement error and bias: NA (colonies a problem)

Needed pilot studies: Need to fly the whole area for colonies. Carl Anderson is a F&G employee and a pilot; not OAS approved but could take pictures

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