

## 51-11. CARTIER SLOUGH WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA (WMA/IBA)

### Boundaries and ownership:

*Boundaries:* Boundaries are well-marked; East/South – Henry’s Fork of the Snake River, North – (wire fence and gravel road) Highway 33

*Ownership:* U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

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

Canada geese and other waterfowl (mostly Wood Duck) use the area for breeding. The area is used extensively for foraging by large wading birds (Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, White-faced Ibis) that are nesting elsewhere. There is a Bald Eagle pair nesting in the area, and an osprey nest that has been active for many years. Waterfowl (Mallard, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Common Goldeneye, American Coot) use area extensively during spring and fall migration, and some overwinter (depending on how frozen the river and sloughs are). Up to 60 Trumpeter Swans are found here during fall, winter, and/or spring seasons.

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

Functional Group	Type 1 Habitat	Type 2 Habitat
waterbirds	open water & emergent vegetation, particularly in large slough at north end of site	none
large waders	emergent vegetation	rest of shoreline
secretive marshbirds	water's edge in large north sloughs	none
waterfowl	open water, edges during breeding season	none
shorebirds	exposed mudflats along river and slough during spring/fall migration, when flooding ends	rest of shoreline
gulls and terns	all areas, although not common at this site	none

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

A canoe is best way to survey most sloughs, but many can also be seen well from land. Along river, canoe anytime, or jet boat if there is enough water in the river. Access to the main slough area, except areas on north side near uplands, is difficult during spring-summer flooding. There are several good places to view birds in the large north sloughs from the brushy edge of the lava rock along north side. Also good viewing from the main dike and water control structure at west end. These sites are along an open public road or easily accessed via a short walk.

All areas within the WMA are accessible by foot. Use of canoes and other non-motorized boats on the sloughs is open to public, and there are several places to slide a canoe in (including primitive boat ramp on north side). For access to Henrys Fork River, there is a developed boat ramp and dock at Beaver Dick County Park, adjacent to the WMA.

Visibility of birds is fair to good from the north lava rock ban, and fair to poor from other land areas (due to flat nature of terrain and dense woody vegetation). Visibility is best from a boat.

### Conservation issues:

- The primary conservation problem of this site is infestation of noxious weeds, particularly leafy purple, and the potential for extensive infestation by purple loosestrife, which is found at low levels on the WMA and surrounding area.

- Pressure to use the area for livestock grazing could increase, resulting in overgrazing and disturbance.
- Recreational use causing disturbance to birds. Game farm pheasants have been stocked on the WMA in recent years, and the high level of hunter activity may be reducing use of the area by migratory waterfowl.
- Residential expansion is increasing in area.

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

- Biological control agents have been released to control leafy spurge, thistles, purple loosestrife, and spotted knapweed. Prescriptive goat grazing is also being used to control leafy spurge.
- Through Upper Snake Cooperative Weed Management Area, have released biological controls and used herbicides to treat purple loosestrife upriver of Cartier Slough.
- Restricting public access to foot or equestrian use only.

**Past and current surveys:**

- Bald Eagle nesting surveys
- Goose nesting platform use
- Wood duck nest box use

**Potential survey methods**

*Description:*

- a. Nest searches for grebes and other waterbirds nesting in the emergent vegetation in small colonies, using a canoe for access.
- b. Colony counts for nesting large waders.
- c. Census for waterfowl on the open water from either a viewing area (described above) or by boat. Late summer or winter counts may be better than breeding season counts, as waterfowl are more easily detected during this period. Sloughs and river usually frozen in winter.
- 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.
- f. Census for gulls and terns during waterfowl counts.

*Selection bias:* Within WMA, access by non-motorized craft only, variable by season depending on water levels (hazardous in June due to flooding, many sloughs go dry in late summer, etc.). The entire area is open to the public, but closed to unauthorized motor vehicle access. Note that part of 'Cartier Slough' proper is on private land.

*Measurement error and bias:* Dense woody vegetation makes observation difficult in many areas. Water level in sloughs varies annually and seasonally, and is dependent on whether certain irrigation wells are pumping. IDFG has no control of the water level, can only hold it temporarily in the north sloughs. There have been years when 80% of the area was flooded until mid-July, others the flooding only lasted a couple weeks. Also, some years the north slough and river freeze early, thus not much use by fall migrants.

**Needed pilot studies:** None may be needed, although determining best places and times to survey may be helpful.

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