**Colonial Nesting Waterbird Surveys for Montana, 2015**

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**Introduction**

This report details the 2015 results and seven year history of the Western Colonial Waterbird Monitoring and Inventory (WCWS) program in Montana. Participating in the 2015 and past seasons’ surveys were Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Montana Audubon and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Surveys of colonial nesting waterbirds were conducted for the seventh consecutive season during June and July of 2015 at sites which have been identified as important in monitoring the species of particular interest (target species). During the 2015 season a total of 9 sites were surveyed and data were collected on 17of the 18 waterbird species known to nest in Montana (this includes one seldom seen species recorded in 2014 and 2015 – Snowy Egret).

During the first three seasons (2009-2011), many sites were surveyed in order to evaluate the status of colonial nesting waterbirds throughout Montana and to document nesting colonies of Great Blue Herons and Double-crested Cormorants along all of the major river systems of the state. Sites were identified using the Montana Natural Heritage Program’s database as well as the map work and in-season discovery of the observers. All survey data were entered into a spreadsheet as part of the Western Colonial Waterbird Monitoring and Inventory (WCWS) program in Montana, initiated by the US fish and Wildlife Service.

After the initial three years of surveys, monitoring of a limited number of sites was continued in order to track changes in breeding populations with emphasis on species of particular concern. The information has been added to the WCWS spreadsheet each year. This report details the 2015 survey results and compares them with past seasons. A discussion of each species is presented. A table presents annual breeding pair counts for each species at sites selected for having relatively large numbers of nesting pairs and consistent site coverage (Table 1).

A table is included showing the sites surveyed in 2015 and those that we would like to cover in the future if resources are available (see Table 2).

**Species Accounts**

**Target species:**

**Clark’s Grebe, CLGR**

The Clark’s Grebe is an uncommon breeding species in Montana. They nest in colonies on large lakes and marshes. Although colonies may contain tens or hundreds of nests, colonies in Montana are typically small (5 to 10 pairs). The nest is a on a floating platform of vegetation in shallow water. Unless the bird is well-seen it can be difficult to distinguish from the much more common Western Grebe. During the seven years of this series of surveys the only sites in Montana with the Clark’s Grebe confirmed as nesting are Freezout Lake and Ninepipes NWR where 2 or 3 nests per year have been documented. In 2015 no nests were confirmed, but one pair was seen at Freezout Lake. There were numerous WEGR nests at the site and many of the adults seen could not be identifies as one species or the other. As very few CLGR have been identified at Freezout Lake in the past it was assumed that nearly all of the nests were of the WEGR (Table 1).

**American White Pelican, AWPE**

There are four known breeding locations for AWPE in Montana. Three of these are major colonies and one is much smaller. Nesting was documented at all 4 sites for the AWPE in 2015. The three major sites yielded a total count of 6305 nests. This compares with 5843, 4823, 4622, 5865, 6927 and 6290 nests, respectively, in 2009 through 2014 (see Table 1). While there have been large fluctuations in the annual nest numbers at each colony, the combined totals for the three sites are trending upward.

The AWPE typically nests in large colonies on an island or point that is relatively isolated from predators. The nests are shallow depressions scraped in the ground and lined with twigs and other debris. Where available, partial shade afforded by trees is preferred. Colony locations may vary from year to year depending on water levels and other factors. The timing of egg-laying may vary among colonies, even those in close proximity. For example, at Medicine Lake NWR, during the first three seasons of this study, there were two sub-colonies, one on a large island and one on a long point from which predators were excluded with an electric fence. At the time of the surveys island nesting birds had only eggs while on the point the nests had well-developed chicks, one invariably much larger than the other, in nearly every nest. In subsequent years all nesting for the species at Medicine Lake was on the point only.

Productive nesting colony survey dates (meaning active nests were documented) for this species have ranged from 5/22 to 6/16 during the six years of this study.

**Double-crested Cormorant, DCCO**

The Double-crested Cormorant is a common breeding species throughout Montana. Nests consist of a platform of sticks in a tree or on the ground on an island. The DCCO often nests in tree colonies with herons or on the ground within large gull and pelican colonies. They generally breed at three years of age and nest in large or small colonies.

Nesting was documented at a total of 5 sites for the DCCO in 2015 yielding a total count of 1,093 nests. One site usually covered was not covered and another had confirmed nesting but no nest count. The total, even without two usual sites, was close to that of past seasons. The top three nesting sites (from Table 1) were Bowdoin NWR with 387 nests, Canyon Ferry WPA with 349 and Medicine Lake with 149. The total for these top three sites in 2015 was 885 (Table 1). These three sites, all east of the Continental Divide, show a slight increase after the 2009-2011 period with some large annual fluctuations at individual sites. Productive nesting colony survey dates for this species have ranged from 5/3 to 7/13 during the seven years of this study.

**Great Blue Heron, GBHE**

The Great Blue Heron is a common breeding species on lakes, ponds, marshes and rivers throughout Montana. They breed as early as two years old and nest in large or small colonies. The nest is a platform of sticks, usually in a tree but may be on the ground on an island. The GBHE often nests in colonies with other herons and in Montana with cormorants and occasionally on an island with gulls.

Timing of nesting for this species is usually early and aerial surveys are generally done in April and May before the leaves hide the tree nests. At this time the GBHE are usually occupying the rookeries and have eggs in the nest. Productive nesting colony survey dates for this species have ranged from 4/1 to 7/24.

In the 2012-2015 period aerial surveys were not done on a wide scale and are not included in this report. Two sites were selected from the information in the WCWS spreadsheet where there was fairly consistent annual coverage and relatively large numbers of the species documented. These are Bowdoin NWR on the east side of the Continental Divide and Ninepipes NWR on the west side. The numbers at the two sites are fairly consistent through the six years of the surveys (see table 1). Nesting in 2015 was documented on the ground only at Bowdoin for a total of 48 nests, above average for the site.

**Black-crowned Night Heron, BCNH**

The Black-crowned Night Heron in Montana nests in colonies of from 5 to 100 breeding pairs in a variety of locations, all on the east side of the Continental Divide. The nest, a platform of sticks or reeds, may be on the ground, in the protection of a reed bed or in a group of trees. A protected location such as an island is preferred. Eggs usually number 3 to 8. The Black-crowned Night Heron is most active at dusk and during the night. They feed on a wide variety of small aquatic life forms.

During the 2015 survey, nesting was documented at two sites for a total of 72 nests. Two sites where this species usually nests that are usually covered were missed this season due to limited funding. The total for Medicine Lake was the lowest since 2010 (Table 1). Productive nesting colony survey dates for this species have ranged from 5/29 to 7/27.

**White-faced Ibis, WFIB**

The White-faced Ibis in an uncommon breeding species in Montana and sites are generally east of the Rocky Mountain Front. The WFIB typically nests in marsh habitat and colony size in Montana has ranged from 5 to 195 breeding pairs. The nests may be in low trees, aquatic vegetation or on the ground. The nest consists of a deeply cupped platform of coarse vegetation and sticks. They have been found nesting within or near large FRGU colonies in rushes at 4 locations during this study.

The most used nesting site in Montana for this species is Red Rock Lakes NWR where as many as 195 nesting pairs have been documented. Unfortunately counts have not been conducted there during most years of this study. (See Table 1).

In 2015 nesting was not documented for this species due to lack of funding. Productive nesting colony survey dates for this species have ranged from 6/15 to 7/14.

**Franklin’s Gull, FRGU**

The Franklin’s Gull nests in very large colonies in prairie marshes in scattered locations east of the Rocky Mountains in Montana. Colony size is often several thousand breeding pairs. The nest, composed of a floating platform of reeds, is most often in dense reeds or rushes in 2 to 3 feet of water. Nests may be on the ground in some locations or in shallower water. The nest is well-maintained and the course vegetation is lined with softer material. Eggs usually number two or three. The Franklin’s Gull feeds on insects and other small prey and will scavenge as well.

Nearly all of the nesting sites for the FRGU were not covered in 2015. The only site with any nest information on this species was Bowdoin NWR and none were found nesting there. This represents the third year of abandonment for this once major nesting site for the species.

Large annual fluctuations at individual sites are not particularly unusual for this species. Looking at Table 1 we see a zero for Homestead Lake in 2012 (drained for the summer) and a corresponding increase at Manning Lake which is located just a few miles to the south. Aside from the nearly complete disappearance at Bowdoin, the species totals seemed to be holding steady through 2014. Solving the muddy access problem at Manning Lake would improve our monitoring of this species.

**Caspian Tern, CATE**

The Caspian Tern is an uncommon but widespread nesting species in Montana. They nest on rivers and large lakes in distinct colonies or in mixed colonies with gull and other tern species. In Montana colony size is typically less than 50 breeding pairs. Nests are typically on sand and gravel, or sometimes on vegetation. Eggs number from one to three. The Caspian Tern feeds mainly on fish and is known to fly up to 60 km from the breeding colony to catch fish.

At the three sites listed in Table 1 where this species often nests: there was no coverage at Fort Peck Lake; Canyon Ferry WPA had just one nesting pair, while Bowdoin NWR had no nesting but 4 were seen over the lake.

**Forster’s Tern, FOTE**

The Forster’s Tern nests in marshes in scattered locations east of the Rocky Mountains in Montana. Colony size is typically less than 50 breeding pairs. The nest site can vary from an unlined scrape in mud or sand to a floating mat of vegetation or the top of a muskrat house. Eggs usually number three or more. The Forster’s Tern feeds mainly on fish and insects in the marsh.

There was no coverage at three of the five sites where this species usually nests and Bowdoin NWR did not report any nesting of the species. Freezout Lake WMA had 12 nests which is around average (Table 1).

**Common Tern, COTE**

The Common Tern nests on lakes in scattered locations east of the Rocky Mountains in Montana. In Montana colony size is typically less than 50 breeding pairs. Nests are typically on an island in sparse low vegetation or on bare ground. Eggs usually number from two to four. The Common Tern feeds mainly on fish in lakes and large rivers.

Nesting was documented at just one site for the COTE in 2015; 38 nests at Freezout Lake WPA. Six sites were selected for inclusion in Table 1 as indicative of population trend for the species. Of these, three were not surveyed in 2015 and two had survey effort but no COTE nests. Numbers for the COTE show considerable site variability due to a variety of causes and have shown no clear trend during the seven years of these surveys. Productive nesting colony survey dates for this species have ranged from 5/22 to 6/25.

**Black Tern, BLTE**

The Black Tern is an uncommon but widespread nesting species in Montana, present on both sides of the Continental Divide. They nest in freshwater marshes, usually in colonies of from 5 to 50 pairs. The nest, typically with 2 to 4 eggs, is either on floating marsh vegetation or on the ground at the water’s edge. They feed on fish and insects at or near the surface and catch insects in flight.

In 2015 nesting was documented at two sites for the BLTE. Both were in the Brown’s Lake Complex in Powell County on the west side of the Continental Divide. In the WCWS survey spreadsheet this group of three sites (Brown’s Lake, Blackfoot WPA and Klienschmidt Lake) is designated by a prefix of BLC and grouped together as they are close together and seem to be used interchangeably by colonial nesting water birds. The BLTE colony at Brown’s Lake in 2014 was comprised of 20 nests. In 2015 the birds seem to have split into two colonies with 10 nests at Brown’s Lake and 14 at the nearby Blackfoot WPA marsh which is 2.0 miles away.

A fourth site which is included in Table 1 with the BLTE nesting in some past years was not surveyed in 2015. The number of productive sites for this species in recent years has been much lower than in 2009 when many more sites were surveyed to establish the status of the species around the state and 13 sites were documented with active nesting. The tendency of this species to nest in isolated marshes without other colonial nesting waterbirds present means that most of the major sites that are annually monitored are not sites where the BLTE nests. During this series of surveys the BLTE was found to move from one nesting location to another more frequently than other species. The three Brown’s Lake Complex sites were added to the list of key sites in 2014 in order to better monitor the Black Tern.

Productive nesting colony survey dates for this species have ranged from 6/5 to 7/18 (WCWS spreadsheet).

**Non-target Species:**

**Snowy Egret, SNEG**

This is a non-target species because it has only been recorded nesting in Montana on two other occasions (in 1979 at or near Freezout Lake and 1999 at Bowdoin NWR) and was therefore unexpected. A pair was documented at Medicine Lake NWR on June 6 on Bridgerman Point in a very large mixed colony including AWPE, DCCO and BCNH. The nest was in a dense chokecherry thicket with several nests of DCCO and BCNH. The pair was frightened out of the thicket as the observer neared their part of the colony. After about 20 minutes they returned to the thicket, perching on the high branches. The nest was mostly hidden by dense foliage about 15 feet up in the thicket which reached a height of about 20 feet. Video was recorded of an adult returning to the thicket, descending through the branches and settling on the nest. In 2015 a pair was again documented nesting in proximity to the BCNH colony at Medicine Lake.

**Horned Grebe, HOGR**

The Horned Grebe is an uncommon breeding species in the wetlands of Montana. They are usually solitary nesters on ponds and marshes. The nest is a on a floating platform of vegetation. HOGR nests are often found in or near rush beds along the shore of a pond.

The HOGR has seldom been recorded in these surveys and, as it is not a target species, no special effort has been made to search for this bird. We had one nest observation on a pond with bulrush near shore in Sheridan County during the 2009 exploration phase of these surveys. Five individuals were seen at Freezout Lake in Teton County during the 2010 survey but nesting was not confirmed.

**Red-necked Grebe, RNGR**

The Red-necked Grebe is an uncommon breeding species on lakes and ponds across northern Montana. They nest in colonies or single pairs on shallow lakes and marshes (rarely less than 10 acres). They are at least two years of age before breeding and groups of non-breeders are found within the species nesting range during the spring and summer. The nest is a on a floating platform of vegetation. RNGR colonies are often found in or near dense rush, cattail or sedge beds along the shore of a lake but the locations often change from year to year.

In 2015 nesting RNGR were documented at all three of the Brown’s Lake Complex sites with a total of 15 nesting pairs. The monitoring situation for this species is similar to that for the BLTE in that the RNGR is not generally found at the major mixed species waterbird nesting sites, but rather in lakes and ponds that would not otherwise be on our list of key sites for continued monitoring. Fortunately, the RNGR nests at Brown’s Lake and Klienschmidt Lake along with the BLTE. That makes these sites a very good addition to the list of sites to be monitored. Brown’s Lake and two other nearby sites (Blackfoot WPA and Kleinschmidt Lake) were added to the list of key sites in 2014. Red-necked Grebe numbers at Brown’s lake and Klienschmidt Lake this year are slightly above those obtained in past years (Table 1). Another site where this species has been monitored in the past (Ninepipes NWR) was not surveyed in 2015.

Post-fledging counts of pairs of adults with young are a good way to estimate nest numbers for this species and Grebes in general. The nests are often spread out in large areas of dense emergent vegetation and it is difficult to locate more than a portion of them. After fledging, the birds tend to be out in open water where they are easy to spot. The family group stays together and at least one adult seems to always be near the young. This technique was employed in 2014 and 2015. Productive nesting colony survey dates for this species have ranged from 5/24 to 7/18 (post fledging).

**Eared Grebe, EAGR**

The Eared Grebe is a very common breeding species on sheltered shallow areas of lakes, ponds and marshes throughout Montana. They breed as early as one year old and nest in large or small colonies. The nest is on a floating platform of vegetation. EAGR colonies are often found in or near dense rush, cattail or sedge beds along the shore but the locations often change from year to year. Nests of this species are difficult to find without undue disturbance if they are in dense cover as they often are.

As this is a very common bird and is present in a huge number of marshes, lakes and small ponds, it was usually ignored during these surveys. Very large colonies were located in the same bulrush beds as the Franklin’s Gull at Homestead Lake and Bowdoin NWR with estimates of 250 to 500 nests not uncommon.

Nesting for this species was documented as early as 6/5 and the latest was the discovery of three active nests with warm eggs on 7/21/2010 at Bowdoin NWR, Phillips County.

**Western Grebe, WEGR**

The Western Grebe is a common breeding species in the wetlands of Montana. They nest in colonies on large lakes and marshes. The nest is a on a floating platform of vegetation in shallow water. WEGR colonies are often found in dense rush beds along the shore of a large lake but the locations often change from year to year making colonies difficult to find.

Unless the bird is well-seen it can be difficult to distinguish from the much less common Clark’s Grebe. This posed a problem at one site (Freezout Lake WMA) in the 2009, 2011 and 2015 surveys at one colony where both Clark’s and Western Grebes appeared to be nesting in close proximity. In that situation, the birds are documented under the heading of “CLGR or WEGR”. These were most likely nearly all WEGR as the CLGR has only been infrequently documented at that site.

Nesting was documented for the WEGR in 2015 at 3 sites for a total of 74 nesting pairs. The nests are difficult to find and the surveys at the major sites tend to be completed well before a post-fledging count of the WEGR could be done. Two sites were chosen for inclusion in Table 1 for this species as they have been fairly well monitored there while this non-target species has been largely ignored at most sites. Nesting numbers in 2015 at Freezout Lake WMA were average for the site. A survey was not done at Ninepipes NWR, the other key monitoring site for this species (Table 1).

**Ring-billed Gull, RBGU**

The Ring-billed Gull is a common breeding species throughout Montana, usually nesting on an island in a large colony and often with the California Gull and sometimes other species. Nests are a shallow cup of vegetation on the ground.

As non-target species the Ring-billed and California Gulls were often lumped together under the heading RB or CAGU. At a great distance the species are difficult to distinguish and we often did not take the time to get closer and do a separate count of each species. In other instances the two species were noted as nesting in large numbers but no estimate was attempted.

Nesting was documented at a total of 1 site for the RBGU in 2015 for a total of 500 nests.

Two sites were selected for use on this species in Table 1, Bowdoin NWR and Fort Peck Lake (York Island). The two species were almost always counted separately at these two sites and a substantial number of gulls are involved. The Fort Peck site is for York Island only and is only of use when the water level in the lake is near full and the colony is occupying that island. There was no survey in 2015 at Ft. Peck Lake. At Bowdoin the 2015 count was a RB or CAGU estimate as was the 2014 count. Past counts at the site have averaged around 80% RBGU so that percentage was applied to generate an estimate for use in Table 1. The 2014 estimate of 2424 is slightly below the 2014 estimate but well above the low counts of the 2011-2013 period.

Productive nesting colony survey dates for this species have ranged from 5/16 to 6/28.

**California Gull, CAGU**

The California Gull is a common breeding species throughout Montana usually nesting on an island in a large colony and often with the Ring-billed Gull and sometimes other species. Nests are a shallow cup of vegetation on the ground.

Nesting was documented at a total of 3 sites for the CAGU in 2015. Two of these (Canyon Ferry and Arod Lakes) had no estimate of numbers. Another (Bowdoin NWR) had a total of 3030 undifferentiated RB or CAGU. The two species at Bowdoin have averaged 20% CAGU and 80% RBGU so we can estimate that there were 606 CAGU there in 2015 (Table 1).

As for other sites important for this species: At Ninepipes NWR there was no survey. At Medicine Lake nests of the species were not counted on Gull Island as the survey was done too late in the season, and another larger colony at the west end of the lake was not counted. At Katy Lake (a part of Medicine Lake NWR, Sheridan Co.) 8 were counted around the edges of the large RBGU colony but did not seem to be nesting. At Fort Peck (York Island) there was no survey.

**Acknowledgments**

Montana Audubon and the Upper Missouri Breaks Audubon Society provided funding for the 2015 surveys and report.

Appreciation is extended to all those who helped make this year’s survey possible:

* Arod Lakes NWR: surveys were completed by Bob Jordan and Steve Dawes, USFWS.
* Bowdoin NWR: surveys were done by Jessica Larson (Refuge Biologist), Ben Morin, Raphaela McIntyre-Morton.
* Canyon Ferry WMA: Surveys were done by Fred Jakubowski, Adam Grove, Claire Gower, Kristina Smucker, all with MT MFWP.
* Freezout Lake WMA: Surveys were done by Brent Lonner, Catherine Wightman and Kristina Smucker, all with MFWP
* At Brown’s Lake: Surveys by Fred Tilly
* At Blackfoot WPA: Surveys by Fred Tilly
* At Kleinschmidt Lake: Surveys by Fred Tilly. Thanks is extended to landowner Bob Geary.
* Medicine Lake NWR and Katy Lake: Surveys by Mike Borgreen, Refuge Biologist, C. Edmondson, L. Antonello

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| **Table 1. Number of nests at the top annually monitored sites for selected species, 2009-2015** | | | | | | | |  |
| **Target Species:** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **AWPE (American White Pelican)** | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Bowdoin NWR | Phillips | 1352 | 818 | 785 | 759 | 1524 | 1507 | 1609 |
| Canyon Ferry WMA | Broadwater | 1907 | 2244 | 886 | 2051 | 2556 | 1704 | 1898 |
| Medicine Lake NWR | Sheridan | 2584 | 1761 | 2951 | 3055 | 2847 | 3073 | 2798 |
| **Total** |  | **5843** | **4823** | **4622** | **5865** | **6927** | **6284** | **6305** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **DCCO (Double-crested Cormorant)** | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Bowdoin NWR | Phillips | 133 | 254 | 110 | 551 | 313 | 428 | 387 |
| Canyon Ferry WMA | Broadwater | 340 | 371 | 360 | 346 | 330 | 282 | 349 |
| Medicine Lake NWR | Sheridan | 10 PC | 98 | 231 | 214 | 291 | 151 | 149 |
| **Total** |  | **473** | **723** | **701** | **1111** | **934** | **861** | **885** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **GBHE (Great Blue Heron)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Bowdoin NWR | Phillips | 29 | 25 | 12 | 31 | 26 | 34 | 48 |
| Ninepipes NWR | Lake | NC | 62 | 45 | 52 | NC | 53 | NC |
| **Total** |  | **29** | **87** | **57** | **83** | **26** | **87** | **48** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **BCNH (Black-crowned Night Heron)** | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Medicine Lake | Sheridan | 36 | 36 | 97 | 70 | 84 | 84 | 53 |
| Flat Reservoir | Phillips | 1 PC | 32 | 53 | 4 | 26 | NC | NC |
| Bowdoin NWR | Phillips | 2 | 10 | 14 | 35 | 26 | 8 | NC |
| **Total** |  | **38** | **78** | **164** | **109** | **136** | **92** | **53** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **WFIB (White-faced Ibis)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Bowdoin NWR | Phillips | 11 | 17 | 35 | 36 | 25 | 75 | NC |
| Homestead Lake | Sheridan | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | NC |
| Manning Lake | Roosevelt | 9 | NC | 10 | 12 | 31 | NC | NC |
| Red Rock Lakes NWR | Beaverhead | 95 | 195 | NC | NC | NC | NC | NC |
| **Total** |  | **115** | **215** | **45** | **48** | **56** | **82** | **0** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **FRGU (Franklin's Gull)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Homestead Lake | Sheridan | 0 | 2000 | 1200 | 0 | 1920 | 1920 | NC |
| Manning Lake | Roosevelt | 1970 | NC | 1800 | 2700 | 1620 | NC | NC |
| Bowdoin NWR | Phillips | 2450 | 1025 | 1820 | 2050 | 130 | 20 | 0 |
| **Sub-Total** |  | **4420** | **3025** | **4820** | **4750** | **3670** | **1940** | **0** |
| Benton Lake NWR | Cascade | 3811 | 4833 | 3280 | NC | NC | NC | NC |
| Red Rock Lakes NWR | Beaverhead | 16 PC | 87 PC | NC | NC | NC | NC | NC |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **CATE (Caspian Tern)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Fort Peck Lake | Garfield | 0 | 0 | 51 | 220 | 286 | 0 | NC |
| Canyon Ferry WMA | Broadwater | 12 | 11 | 12 | 17 | 19 | 0 | 1 |
| Bowdoin NWR | Phillips | 0 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 0\* | 0\* |
| **Total** |  | **12** | **12** | **64** | **245** | **305** | **0** | **1** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **FOTE (Forster's Tern)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Bowdoin NWR | Phillips | 17 | 4 | 10 | NC | 6 | 1 | NC |
| Freezout Lake WMA | Teton | 13 | 15 | 10 | 40 | 6 | 3 | 12 |
| Homestead Lake | Sheridan | NC | 14 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 12 | NC |
| Manning Lake | Roosevelt | 4 | NC | 12 | 12 | NC | NC | NC |
| Ninepipes NWR | Lake | 30 | 22 | 17 | 9 | NC | 1 | NC |
| **Total** |  | **64** | **55** | **49** | **61** | **15** | **17** | **12** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **COTE (Common Tern)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Bowdoin NWR | Phillips | NC | 13 | 8 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Freezout Lake WMA | Teton | 42 | 10 | 24 | 31 | 36 | 45 | 38 |
| Homestead Lake | Sheridan | NC | 0 | 37 | 0 | 15 | 6 | NC |
| Katy Lake (Med. Lk. NWR) | Sheridan | 0 | 0 | 59 | 69 | 19 | 14 | 0 |
| Medicine Lake | Sheridan | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 58 | NC |
| Wild Horse Marsh&Res. | Phillips | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 19 | 21 | NC |
| **Total** |  | **42** | **31** | **128** | **137** | **114** | **144** | **38** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **BLTE (Black Tern)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Blackfoot WPA | Powell | 6 | 19 | 6 | NC | NC | 0 | 14 |
| Brown's Lake | Powell | 6 | 14 | 12 | NC | NC | 20 | 10 |
| Klienschmidt Lake | Powell | 8 | 10 | NC | NC | NC | 0 | 0 |
| Wild Horse Marsh&Res. | Phillips | 0 | 4 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | NC |
| **Total** |  | **20** | **47** | **38** | **0** | **0** | **20** | **24** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Non-target species:** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **RNGR (Red-necked Grebe)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Brown's Lake | Powell | 5 | 2 | 6 | NC | NC | 3 | 6 |
| Klienschmidt Lake | Powell | 5 | 3 | NC | NC | NC | 7 | 8 |
| Ninepipes NWR | Lake | 0 | 1 | 6 | 0 | NC | 1 | NC |
| **Total** |  | **10** | **6** | **12** | **0** | **0** | **11** | **14** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **WEGR (Western Grebe)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Freezout Lake WMA | Teton | 77\*\* | 52 | 53\*\* | NC | 31 | 8 PC | 53\*\* |
| Ninepipes NWR | Lake | NC | 79 | 43 | NC | NC | 84 | NC |
| **Total** |  | **0** | **131** | **43** | **0** | **31** | **92** | **53** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **RBGU (Ring-billed Gull)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Bowdoin NWR | Phillips | 3519 | 3040 | 680 | 950 | 1519 | 2940\*\*\* | 2424\*\*\* |
| Fort Peck Lake | Garfield |  |  | 1300 | 1300 | 1200 | 750 | NC |
| **Total** |  | **3519** | **3040** | **1980** | **2250** | **2719** | **3690** | **2424** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **CAGU (California Gull)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| site | County | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| Bowdoin NWR | Phillips | 913 | 375 | 50 PC | 458 | 545 | 735\*\*\* | 606\*\*\* |
| Fort Peck Lake | Garfield |  |  | 720 | 350 | 700 | 550 | NC |
| **Total** |  | **913** | **375** | **720** | **808** | **1245** | **1285** | **606** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| NC = not covered |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| PC = partially covered |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| \* Bowdoin 2014 and 2015 CATE - 5 and 4 individuals were seen at the gull/pelican colony and may have nested later. | | | | | | | | |
| \*\* WEGR at Freezout Lake: The 2009,2011 and 2015 counts may include some CLGR, but probably very few as | | | | | | | |  |
| they have not been commonly documented there. | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| \*\*\* A mixed count of RB and CAGU at Bowdoin in 2014 and 15. The 3675 and 3030 are apportioned | | | | | | |  |  |
| by species at 80% RBGU and 20% CAGU based on 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2013 percentages counted. | | | | | | |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 2. Colonial Nesting Waterbird Sites surveyed in 2015** | | |
| **Covered Sites:** |  |  |
| Site | County | Comments |
| Arod Lakes WPA | Teton | Would like a "within colony" survey |
| Blackfoot WPA | Powell | Added to key sites list in 2014 |
| Bowdoin NWR | Phillips | Continue |
| Browns Lake | Powell | Added to key sites list in 2014 |
| Canyon Ferry WMA | Broadwater | Continue |
| Freezout Lake | Teton | Continue |
| Katy Lake/Lake Cr. | Sheridan | Continue |
| Kleinschmidt Lake WPA | Powell | Added to key sites list in 2014 |
| Medicine lake NWR | Sheridan | Continue |
|  |  |  |
| **Sites normally covered but missed in 2015:** |  |  |
| Flat Reservoir | Phillips | Continue |
| Manning Lake | Roosevelt | Continue |
| Fort Peck Lake | Garfield | Continue and coordinate with COE on surveys |
| Homestead Lake | Sheridan | Continue |
| Ninepipes NWR | Lake | Continue |
| Wild Horse Marsh & Reservoir | Phillips | Continue |
|  |  |  |
| **Sites we would like to add to the list of those annually surveyed:** |  |  |
| Benton Lake NWR | Cascade |  |
| Red Rock Lakes NWR | Beaverhead |  |