

## Nature Mapping Newsletter, April 2014

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### First-of-the-Year 2014 Observations – Frances Clark, Susan Patla, Susan Marsh

Many Nature Mappers have been recording bird species returning to Jackson Hole and migrations or emergence of mammals. The First-of-the-Year observations (FOYs) are not only exciting to witness, but also help develop a long-term record of arrivals. Such data can be used to track changes due to climate change, variation in species distribution, and population trends. Recording FOYs helps us understand and enjoy the rhythms of the year.

2014 FOY Species as of April 21 compared to 2013 (in parentheses):

- 2/6 American Robin with more the 3rd week of February (3/16/2013)
- 2/10 Redwing Blackbird with more the 3rd week of February (4/18/2013)
- 3/9 Cassin's Finch with more on 3rd week (3/25/2013) They seem to disappear for most of the winter but probably they go to the local woods. Around throughout winter 2011/12 but not 2012/13.
- 3/10 Mountain Bluebird with an notable increase in the 4th week of March (3/28/2013)
- 3/14 Song Sparrow (4/12/2013)
- 3/21 Swainson's Hawk, all go to Arizona for winter. (3/19/2013)
- 3/22 Sandhill Crane (3/31/2013)
- 3/22 Western Meadowlark (4/4/2013)
- 3/25 Turkey Vulture (4/12/2013)
- 3/28 Fox Sparrow
- 3/29 Least Chipmunk (5/5/2013)
- 3/30 Kildeer - A few of these can occur in some winters
- 3/30 American Kestrel with more 2 and 3rd week of April (4/15/2013)
- 4/1 Uinta Ground Squirrel 3/30/2013
- 4/2 Northern Harrier - If snow is low, we have some overwinter especially on the refuge or valley floor. However, there is also a strong movement of migrants and residents in April.
- 4/3 Osprey (4/19/2013)
- 4/4 Black Bear
- 4/6 Grizzly bear (2) (4/9/13)
- 4/7 American White Pelican, only 1 (4/12/2013)
- 4/7 Black-headed Grosbeak (5/15/2013) This is very early.
- 4/8 Tree Swallow (4/27/2013)
- 4/8 Cinnamon Teal (5/13/13)
- 4/11 Ruby Crowned Kinglet (4/26/2013)
- 4/12 Long-billed Curlew (4/12/2013)
- 4/12 Mourning Dove (5/4/2013) Very rare in winter and none on the CBC this year
- 4/13 Black Rosy Finch - very rare in winter
- 4/14 Red-naped Sapsucker (4/30/2013)
- 4/21 Yellow-rumped Warbler (5/6/2013)
- 4/21 White-faced Ibis (5/5/13)



On Easter, April 20, two bison calves were born on Antelope Flats. A few hundred elk, a dozen or so bison, and at least two pronghorn, all likely from the National Elk Refuge, were seen north of the Gros Ventre River, as well. The mammals are moving as the grass greens!

It is curious to note that many species were observed a week or two earlier than in 2013. This may be due in part to the “observer effect”—number of people out looking when and where. However, we also had some late snows in 2013 vs. a relatively warm spring so far in 2014. More data over the years will give us a much better idea of how much variation occurs year to year in FOY arrival dates.

Other FOY species to watch for in May based on 2013 dates:

4/11/2013 Boreal Chorus Frog, Common Nighthawk  
5/2/2013 Common Loon, Violet-green Swallow  
5/6/2013 Western Wood-Pewee, White-crowned Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler  
5/7/2013 Broad-tailed Hummingbird  
5/8/2013 House Wren  
5/10/2013 Little Brown Myotis  
5/11/2013 Brown-headed Cowbird  
5/13/2013 Calliope Hummingbird  
5/15/2013 Chipping Sparrow  
5/21/2013 Tiger Salamander  
5/22/2013 Western Tanager  
5/24/2013 Warbling Vireo  
5/25/2013 Lazuli Bunting

Keep on Mapping!

**March 2014 Data - Paul Hood**

**Total Observers:** 46

**Most Observations:** Susan Marsh 98; Dave Lucas 58

**Mammals:** Total Observations: 188 Total Species: 19 Total Individuals: 978

**Birds:** Total Observations: 431 Total Species: 66 Total Individuals: 1,466  
All Observations: 619 All Species: 85 All Individuals: 2,384



Notable Observations: Relatively high numbers of American Crows, European Starlings, American Robins, Canada Geese, and Pine Siskins and later Cassin's Finches. Many contributed to Taza's PhD work on Clark's Nutcracker. More seasonal species: Horned Lark, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak, along with owls: Great Gray, Great Horned, and Pygmy. Red Crossbill and Gray-crowned Rosy Finch were unusually rare for the year. Many mule deer, bighorn sheep and pronghorn (and of course moose) attracted attention, as well as 8 wolves and one mountain lion. Also see FOYs above.

New Nature Mappers: Paul Hood, Ben Wise, and Amy Collett helped train 20 new Nature Mappers on April 21 at the Teton County Library. Some have been in the wings for years, others just heard about us at the Nature Mapping potluck. Welcome to the Nature Mapping Community!

**Opportunities for 2014!**

**Osprey Project – Coordinated by Doug Ayers:**

In 2013 Nature Mappers observed nesting Osprey pairs in 24 of the 40 monitored nests. Seventeen of the 24 pairs were successful and produced 44 chicks, an average of 2.5 per active nest. Three nests had zero production and 4 were unknown.

Last spring, you may have seen a new pole raised in the Skyline field along Hwy 22, just west of Jackson. The old platform was taken over by Canada Geese, which often start nesting one-two weeks before the osprey return to the valley. When it was obvious the geese would not budge from the perch when a pair of osprey arrived, Nature Mapper Franz Camenzind, Lower Valley Energy, Teton Raptor Center, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and the landowner acted quickly to erect another nesting platform. The ploy worked after a few days of anxious waiting and a pair of osprey moved in to produce three offspring. A pair of Osprey and Canada Geese are back again this year on their respective poles!

Thanks to volunteers, 55 platform/nests have been identified in Teton County outside Grand Teton National Park. Sixteen are damaged and need to be observed to see if Osprey are trying to rebuild.

In the past it has been difficult to track the history of specific nests as the UTM coordinates for the same site could vary from year to year depending where observers were located. To remedy this situation, volunteers were asked to provide accurate UTM coordinates taken near the bottom of nest structures or Doug determined exact locations from aerial photographs.

Thanks to Doug's hard work on creating an accurate database, this year we have created a "standard" UTM and a unique ID for each nest. The nests have been grouped into 8 loosely defined zones (driving routes).

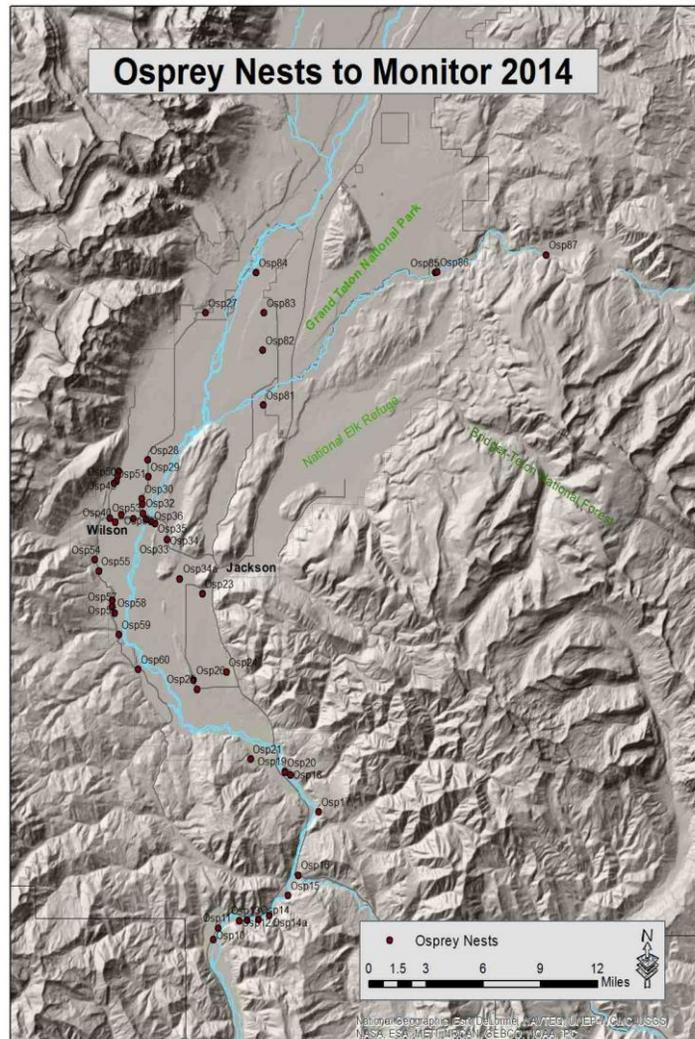
1. Snake River Canyon.
2. Henry's Rd. and Swinging Bridge.
3. RT 22 East of SR Bridge down to South Park Area.
4. RT 22 West of SR Bridge to Wilson and up 390 to the park.
5. Fish Creek Rd.
6. Fall Creek Rd.
7. North of Jackson including Lower Slide Lake.
8. Moran and Buffalo Valley

After this year's monitoring season, Doug will correct all the prior year's locations so he will be able to compile and analyze the history for each known nest site. This will be extremely valuable to understand how the nesting population changes over time in Jackson Hole. We appreciate all the effort that Doug and all the volunteer nest observers have contributed to tracking this beautiful species. As a fish eater, Osprey can be a valuable indicator of the environmental health of the fisheries and water of Teton County.

**Contact** Doug Ayers at nature1950@gmail.com 703-304-7733.

### **Snake River Float Project 2014:**

The Snake River Float Project is a bird-centric Nature Mapping effort to keep tabs on the resident and migratory wildlife of our local river corridor. Volunteers float the 8-mile stretch of river below Snake River Bridge on Hwy 22 and



record the many birds, mammals and amphibians they encounter. We are particularly interested in *migrating and nesting bird species*. Volunteers are asked to keep a species list and tally of all birds seen during the float, and also collect the information necessary to Nature Map their sightings of certain targeted species along the stretch (ungulates, eagles, etc.).

The float takes about 3 hours starting at 7 a.m., and should be done in pairs or threes. At least one volunteer needs to be trained in Nature Mapping *and at least one observer must have good bird identification skills*. The dates (all Sundays) for this coming season's floats are chosen to mirror dates in previous years: May 4, 11, 18, 25; June 8, 22; July 6, 20; August 3, 17, 31; September 7, 14, 21, 18. We Thank A.J. DeRosa's Wooden Boat Tours for this opportunity!

Contact: Anya Tyson with your name, contact info, and level of bird identification expertise (beginner/intermediate/pro). [anyamtyson@gmail.com](mailto:anyamtyson@gmail.com), 719-231-2450



#### **Wildlife Expeditions Ride Along Tours:**

Trained Nature Mappers are invited to join a Wildlife Expeditions tour, as space is available. During these educational programs, Teton Science School guides and guests witness a variety of species daily; however, rarely do they have time to enter observations into the Nature Mapping database. Nature Mappers ride along as participants, collect data, and are responsible for entering the data in return for the complimentary tour.

Typically the Ride Along is on Wednesday early mornings (time varies) with pick up at the lodging of the paying clients, Home Ranch Public Parking Lot or another predetermined location. The expedition is usually 4 hours, occasionally 8 hours, through Grand Teton National Park and/or Bridger-Teton National Forest. While the trip is free, NPS Entrance fees are not included. Thank you Teton Science Schools!



Contact: Jared Baecker  
[jared.baecker@tetonscience.org](mailto:jared.baecker@tetonscience.org) with cc: Frances  
[frances@jhwildlife.org](mailto:frances@jhwildlife.org) with: name, preferred dates (Wednesdays, June 11-September 10), email, phone, mailing address, and preferred pickup location (Town of Jackson or Teton Village).

#### **Trail Camera Data Entry:**

The Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation is seeking a volunteer or volunteers to help review and catalogue trail camera photographs. The Wildlife Foundation purchased the cameras in late 2013 to document how wildlife interact with fences that have been modified through the Wildlife-Friendly Fencing program.

So far, the results have exceeded our wildest (pardon the pun) expectations! The cameras have captured hundreds of photographs of elk, deer, moose, foxes, coyotes and other species preferentially using fences that volunteers have modified to reduce entanglements and obstructions.

In the short term, we'd like to know more about wildlife behavior around fences so we can improve our fencing designs. In the long term, we'd like to create a database that researchers could use to learn more about how fences impact wildlife.

The volunteer would screen the images, record the observations in the Nature Mapping Database, and catalogue the images on the computer. The volunteer or volunteers could accomplish these tasks whenever they choose.

This could be a great multi-year research project for a hopeful biologist, or a great opportunity for a seasoned Nature Mapper who wants to augment their annual wildlife observation count.

Contact: Cory Hatch [cory@JHwildlife.org](mailto:cory@JHwildlife.org). Learn more about the Wildlife Fencing Program: [http://www.jhwildlife.org/index.php/fencing\\_projects](http://www.jhwildlife.org/index.php/fencing_projects)

### **Hawks, Owls and Wildlife – Craighead Beringia South:**

Beginning this spring, biologists with Craighead Beringia South (CBS) will be monitoring the raptor community on and around Blacktail Butte to continue a dataset that spans nearly 70 years. Frank and John Craighead first surveyed this study area in the 1940's and published their work in the book *Hawks, Owls, and Wildlife*, which is still considered a definitive text on raptors and raptor ecology. Funded in part by the Meg and Bert Raynes Wildlife Fund, CBS biologists are going to compare the current density and diversity of raptors with the historically collected information to better understand the long-term health of Jackson Hole's most popular avian guild, and they need your help! They are asking Nature Mappers to submit all sightings of raptors spotted this spring and summer near Blacktail Butte, in the river bottom from Meadow Road north to Moose and in the sagebrush between, to help them locate as many nesting raptors as possible.

For more information: go to <http://www.beringiasouth.org/>. Please also Nature Map these sightings!

### **Calendar of Events:**

#### **Tuesday, May 13, 6:00 p.m. “Common Loon Research and Conservation in Wyoming”**

Vincent Spagnuolo (Wildlife Research Biologist) and David Evers (Executive Director), Biodiversity Research Institute Old Wilson School Community Center, 5655 Main St, Wilson, WY

Co-sponsored by JH Wildlife Foundation: Nature Mapping and JH Bird and Nature Club –

Note: Loons are a focal species of Nature Mapping.

The Common Loon is listed by Wyoming Game & Fish as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The population of only 14 pairs can be found on lakes in the northwest portion of the state in Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park, and the Bridger-Teton and Caribou-Targhee National Forests. These loons are over 200 miles from the nearest breeding population. This talk will highlight the species natural history and biology, its conservation status in Wyoming, and approaches for recovery. This important project is funded by Yellowstone National Park and Wyoming Game and Fish.

#### **Tuesday, May 20, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. “Talon Nights: Great Migrations: Using behaviors to identify wild raptors”**

Old Wilson School Community Center, 5655 Main St, Wilson, WY

Co-sponsored by the Teton Raptor Center and Nature Mapping of Jackson Hole

This is the last of the three-part series where you will learn how behaviors, including migration, nesting, and predation, can help distinguish different raptors *with a Saturday Field Option*: Advanced registration is appreciated, Please call 307-203-2551 to reserve your spot.

#### **Tuesday, May 27, 6:00 p.m. “Intermountain Flora”**

Teton County Library, 125 Virginian Lane, Jackson, WY

Sponsored by Wyoming Native Plant Society-Teton Chapter [www.tetonplants.wordpress.com](http://www.tetonplants.wordpress.com)

Drs. Noel and Patricia Holmgren, two nationally acclaimed plant taxonomists, will present how they collected, described, and illustrated almost 4,000 species—all those species growing wild in the Intermountain West between the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains. They took four decades to accomplish this definitive, 8-volume, work which helps conserve the Western Region's remarkably diverse plant life. A rare privilege to hear from this remarkable couple.

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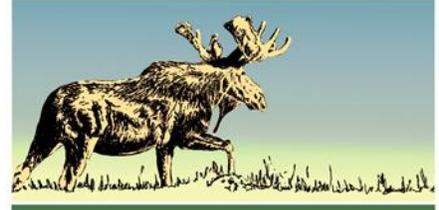
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