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- **Dec. 19 -- JH Christmas Bird Count**
- **Dec. 29 -- "This land is your land: the history of public lands in NW WY and more from Teton Raptor Center and National Elk Refuge**

Swans on the Move: Request for Winter Observations – Susan Patla

Fall is a time of transition for Jackson's birds. Many species that nest in Jackson leave to spend the winter in lower elevations or at more southern sites. Other bird species fly south from more northern locations to winter in the valley. Still others stay year-round, such as our 60+ resident Trumpeter Swans. They are joined in winter, and out-numbered, by 300-500 migrant swans. These swans pour in from interior Canada as far north as the Northwest Territories.



From November through mid-March, the swan population in Jackson increases up to 10 times, which is quite amazing for a species that requires open water for feeding. The Canada swans start arriving at the end of October, pushed down by the first winter storms. Many will visit the National Elk Refuge Flat Creek marsh just north of town and hang around in large numbers for a few weeks until the creek freezes up. Cygnets (young swans born this year) from Canada often have much darker gray feathers compared to our resident home-hatched cygnets, but adults look the same as the resident swans so can't be distinguished. There is much vocalizing and interacting on the refuge even far into the night.

Tucked among the Trumpeter Swans in November will often be a few Tundra Swans. These are best distinguished by their high-pitched calls (rather goose-like) and by a yellow mark below their eyes on the base of their upper black bills. The Tundras, except for the occasional weak or injured swan, will soon move on farther south to the Great Salt Lake and then to the Central Valley of California. Up to 500 Trumpeter Swans, however, stay and winter in the Jackson area along with another 100-200 down in Star Valley and 200 plus in the Green River south of Fontenelle Dam on Seedskaadee National Wildlife.



This winter we are asking Nature Mappers to focus on Trumpeter Swans and report locations where wintering swans are observed throughout the valley. This includes not only ponds, rivers and streams, but also where you see swans passing overhead, especially in the developed areas of Jackson. We often think only about habitats on the ground required by wildlife. But swans need to travel daily between foraging and resting (or security) sites and also need to find new foraging locations as conditions change.

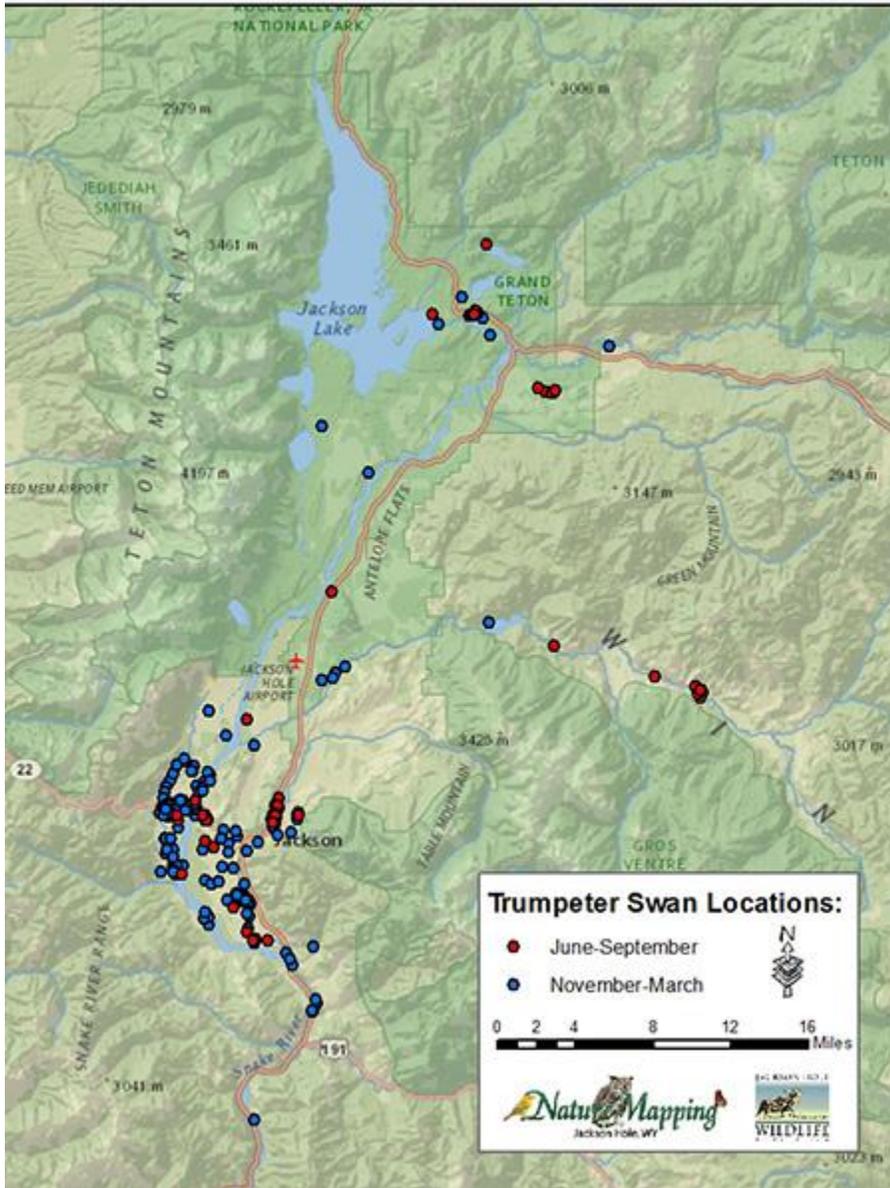
There is increasing pressure in Jackson to build taller buildings to accommodate our growing human population, so it is important to map

regular flight corridors used by swans and other waterfowl to move between winter habitat areas. When reporting flying birds, please give an estimate of their elevation and direction in the comment section of the data form. If we get enough observations, we should be able to map major flight paths in the valley. This information can help planners make wise decisions where taller buildings should be located that could help reduce bird collisions and keep flyways open.

So this winter please keep an eye out for swans, and look up as well as down. Also, please report ASAP any swans that are marked with colored neck collars or leg bands, and any dead swans that you might find (susan.patla@wyo.gov). The sight of swans in winter is perhaps one of the great gifts of living in Jackson Hole. Enjoy and report!

Susan Patla is a non-game biologist with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and also serves on the Nature Mapping Science Advisory Committee.

Map: Trumpeter Swans – Winter and Summer



Farewell to Cory Hatch - Aly Courtemanch



Cory Hatch has served as the Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation's (JHWF) executive director for two years, but recently decided to resign from his role and return to his true passion: science journalism. In his relatively short tenure, Cory has accomplished a lot for JHWF and the Nature Mapping program. Cory oversaw the development of Nature Mapping's mobile data entry form, a comprehensive wildlife-vehicle collision database for Teton County, and a new project that is set to release soon where Nature Mappers will be able to help identify animals on trail cameras at wildlife crossings on highways. Thank you, Cory, for all you've done for Nature Mapping and wildlife!

The JHWF would also like to announce that they have hired a new executive director, who will start in early January. More details to come soon.

Aly Courtemanch is President of the Board of Directors of the JH Wildlife Foundation and a wildlife biologist with Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

October 2015 Data – Paul Hood

Total Observers: 16; **Most Observations:** Tim Griffith: 137 observations; Susan Marsh 94.

Observations:

Birds:	221 observations	56 species	924 individuals
Mammals:	109 observations	13 species	560 individuals
Amphibians:	2 observations	1 species	29 individuals
Total:	332 observations	70 species	1513 individuals

Projects: Backyard 171; Casual Observations 161; Grand Total: 332

Notes: October sightings included Red-breasted (14) and White-breasted (7) Nuthatches; Mountain and Black-capped Chickadees (13 each), and the rarer Common Goldeneye (4). For once, observations of elk (29) trumped moose (17).

Keep on Mapping!

Winter brings new opportunities to Nature Mappers: new species arrive from high elevations or latitudes, secretive creatures leave tracks in snow, and ungulates move about in neighborhoods.

Birds to watch for: Pine Siskins, American Goldfinches, and both chickadees gather at feeders along with seasonal American Tree Sparrows, Common Redpolls, Gray-crowned Rosy Finches or rare Black Rosy Finch. Pine and Evening Grosbeaks and Cedar Waxwings (and Bohemian!) may first be heard in trees, and flocks of Red or White-winged Crossbills may fly fast chattering over your head. Clark's Nutcrackers, a NM focal species, should be noted wherever seen. On ice-free streams and rivers, look for American Dippers, Goldeneye — Barrow's or more rarely Common, Hooded Mergansers, and Buffleheads. Rough-legged Hawks perch, alert for voles in grasslands.

Mammals: Slides of otter, prints of snowshoe hare, and roosts of ruffed grouse are imprinted in snow. And don't forget moose, elk, deer (observe closely if it is a white-tailed or mule deer), bison, and perhaps a coyote or two. Knowing where and when large mammals find shelter and food through these tough winter months is important information.

Reminder for Project Backyard entries: Those of you who Nature Map at your home base, remember the particular protocols: Enter the high number of each species for the week. You may either enter the exact date and time of the high number or submit all entries for the week at the same time and date (which is a bit faster).



Upcoming Events

Tuesday, December 6, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. - Winter Bird Identification & Christmas Bird Count Prep! - Susan Patla & Susan Marsh. Teton County Library, Jackson. Having trouble with the Chickadees? How about Ravens vs. Crows? Can't tell the difference between a Hairy and a Downy Woodpecker? How about between a Marsh and a Patla? Susan and Susan will delve into the ID challenges of Jackson's winter avifauna in preparation for the annual Jackson Hole Christmas Bird Count! We'll also discuss details of the Christmas Bird Count and tell you how to participate. Sponsored by the JH Bird and Nature Club and Teton County. Library.



Saturday, December 19, sunrise to sundown - Jackson Hole Christmas Bird Count. It's the premier event of the winter birding calendar! This annual event is a lot of fun (even at -5°) and it's an important measure of our winter birdlife. If you want to sign up for a count area or join others in one, call Susan Marsh at (307) 733-5744. Anyone wanting to count in comfort at their feeders, please let Susan know also. On bird count morning, we will be having our usual **pre-count breakfast at Bubba's at 7:30 a.m.**, at which time people who want to join the count can sign up for areas that are not spoken for.

Tuesday, December 29, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. - “This land is your land: the history of public lands in NW Wyoming.” Teton County Library Ordway Auditorium. Local author and photographer **Susan Marsh** will provide a brief history about how the Federal lands we know came to be, from the early days of the United States to the present time. Bridger-Teton National

Forest Supervisor **Tricia O'Conner** and National Elk Refuge Public Information Officer **Lori Iverson** will share their experiences and give an overview of the challenges facing the federal agencies.

This is the first of a series of presentations about the history and significance of federal public wild lands in the Greater Yellowstone area. Sponsored by Teton County Library, Bridger-Teton NF, and others, the "Our public wild lands: treasure and legacy" series seeks to build broad public awareness and learning about the history of why public lands exists; the significance of this network for wildlife, humans, science, and sense of place; and how we can ensure public wild land values are conserved into the future.

This series on our Public Wild Lands is scheduled for the fifth Tuesday of those months with five Tuesdays, in keeping with Nature Night at the library. (1st and 3rd Tuesdays: Geology Club, 2nd Tuesday, Bird and Nature Club, 4th Tuesday, Teton Plants.)

National Elk Refuge - A variety of Refuge programs this month welcomes visitors to winter: go to - <http://www.fws.gov/nwrs/threecolumn.aspx?id=2147581881>

Ongoing at the Teton Raptor Center -- Raptor Encounters – SPECIAL 2015 HOLIDAY PROGRAM TIMES: Wednesday, December 23 at NOON and 2:00 p.m. and each Saturday at 2 p.m. Enjoy an hour-long educational experience with live birds of prey at the historic Hardeman Ranch in Wilson, Wyoming. Meet our resident raptors and learn about birds of prey in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. A portion of the program is outside, so please dress accordingly. Reservations required, program fee \$10-12, space limited - call [307.203.2551](tel:307.203.2551) to reserve.

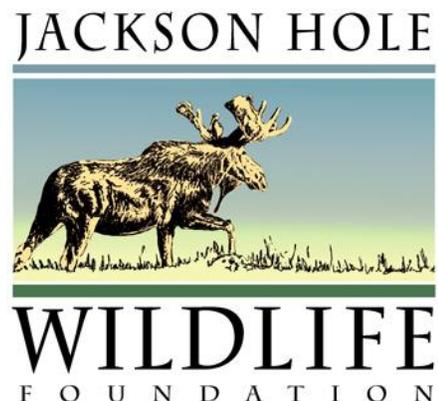
Save the Date: **Tuesday, February 9, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Tracking Program with Hunter Marrow and Tracy Blue - Teton County Library.** Sponsored by JH Bird and Nature Club.

(Photos provided courtesy of: Trumpeter Swans - Christine Paige; Cory Hatch - JHWF file photo; Red Crossbills - Kathy McCurdy; Cassin's Finch - JHWF file photo.)

Nature Mapping is a program of the Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation and is sponsored by the Meg and Bert Raynes Fund and other generous contributors.

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