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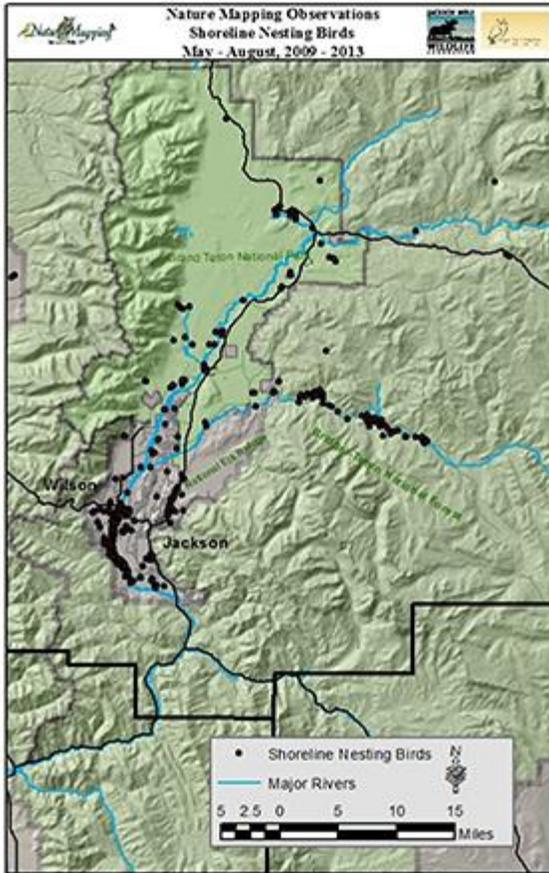
[Common Loon Study 2014 – Susan Patla, non-game biologist, Wyoming Game and Fish](#)

The common Loon is one of the rarest nesting bird species in Wyoming. Last year, intensive monitoring of lakes in Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park and surrounding forest service lands documented only 14 nesting pairs. A five year study is underway in Wyoming and other regions in the US, funded by the Ricketts Conservation Fund and Biodiversity Research Institute of Maine, to determine population status and conservation risks. New management strategies will be developed and tested to make sure that the population in WY and elsewhere remains secure. The small population in WY is the most southern nesting population in North America and is separated from the nearest nesting group in Montana by over 200 miles.

Last year two female adults were marked with color bands and equipped with geolocators, which are very small data loggers attached to leg bands that record the amount of daylight on a daily basis. Both adult females have returned to their nesting lakes this spring. Researchers will recapture these birds to retrieve the data loggers which may provide the first data on where Wyoming loons winter and also important stop-over sites. This year, researchers hope to mark and draw blood samples from other nesting pairs. Blood samples will be used for genetic analysis and to test for heavy metals, such as mercury and lead.

Most nesting lakes were frozen until early June this year and access to more remote sites in YNP is still impossible. However, survey flights and site visits have documented at least 4 active nest sites so far. High water in some lakes has flooded out nesting islands. Initial trapping efforts have been successful with 2 adult males captured on June 13—not such an unlucky Friday! Observations of loons in Teton County by Nature Mappers, especially those visiting remote mountain lakes, will be very valuable. Please include reports to lakes that you visit this summer, even if you do not see loons there. This will help researchers direct future survey efforts.

[Map: Ground Nesting Birds of Rivers, Lakes and Marshes* – Paul Hood and Frances Clark](#)



In summer we people migrate to water for recreation. We float the Snake River and its tributaries, paddle lakes and ponds, and hike along lush wetland edges. However, these same places are key breeding habitats for many birds. Killdeer and spotted sandpipers depend on stony shores; dabbling ducks – mallard, teal, wigeon, etc.– as well as pied-billed grebes, coot, and Wilson’s snipe, nest on the ground, obscured by vegetation. Bufflehead, Barrow’s golden-eye, and common merganser breed in nearby tree cavities but soon bring their chicks to water. Our most charismatic water birds: loons, trumpeter swans, and sandhill cranes nest on islands and other isolated points by water.

We encourage you to steer clear of these critical breeding sites and curb your dashing dogs as well. Stick to well-used trails and landings. You may not see how your movements threaten the survival of these secretive birds nurturing their young, but they do. Birds can be on nests up to mid July, and they will use the reeds and water for protection and food through the rest of the summer. Please view these feathered families from a distance and Nature Map your observations! Thank you.

*Nature Mapping data was pulled of all relevant ground nesting species from May 15-August

15. Observations include all types of behavior, not just nesting, to show areas used by potentially breeding birds.

May 2014 Data—Paul Hood

Total Observers: 26 **Most Observations:** Bernie McHugh (118) and Susan Marsh (116)

Mammals: 122 observations of 20 species totaling 1,098 individuals
Birds: 543 observations of 107 species totaling 1,720 individuals
Amphibians 6 observations of 1 species totaling 12 individuals
Total: 671 observations 128 species 2,830 individuals

Volunteers

Profile: Frances Clark, Nature Mapping’s “volunteer” volunteer coordinator-extraordinaire - Cory Hatch



Botanist Frances Clark credits her grandmother for cultivating her conservation roots while on family trips to New Hampshire when she was just a small child.

“My grandmother grew peonies and had a fabulous garden,” Clark said. “She was also a fisherwoman and a birder. She had this walled garden. It was magic to someone who was three feet high.”

Now, as Nature Mapping Jackson Hole’s “volunteer” volunteer coordinator, Clark is passing on that magic to the dozens of trained citizen scientists who gather wildlife observations for the Nature Mapping database.

Born and raised just outside of Boston, Clark was one of five siblings. Until 3rd grade, she attended Shady Hill School, an experiential learning environment that furthered her exposure to wild animals and wild places. “They had this great science program,” she said. “We got to handle snakes and turtles, and we would break apart owl pellets to see the tiny bones.”

After attending George Washington University for two years, Clark took a break from college and volunteered at the New England Aquarium. The hands-on experience with living things triggered something fundamental, and Clark began thinking of a career in biology.

She eventually settled on plants and focused her year off on volunteering at Harvard’s Arnold Arboretum. It was there that she experienced the satisfaction and sense of community that volunteering can foster.

At the conclusion of this hiatus, Frances finished college at the University of New Hampshire, majoring in plant science and continuing what has become a lifetime passion for public gardens and flowers.

After a stint at the Callaway Gardens in Georgia and a fellowship at the University of Delaware, Frances began what proved a long-term relationship with the New England Wildflower Society. There, she started as an educational program coordinator and eventually worked her way up to serve as the chair of the board of directors. Even now, she continues her association with the group as she runs her own botanical consulting business.

Frances and her partner, Bernie McHugh, landed in Jackson after spending a portion of eight summers here “mostly to enjoy the wildlife and the wildflowers,” she said. “We needed a break... and this seemed to be the logical spot.”

While plants remain her true passion, the Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation’s Nature Mapping program has cultivated in her a deep appreciation for our spectacular wildlife. Nature Mapping started out as a way “to focus on and learn about the wildlife while helping to conserve them,” she said. “The Nature Mapping program was easy and fun.”

Training

FAQs – Juvenile vs. Yearling: This time of year the age class of Juvenile and Yearling can be confounding. Juvenile is attributed to an individual that is less than one year old (for example, born this year 2014 through next spring 2015). After that, the individual is called a yearling when it is between 1-2 years old. These terms apply most particularly to the ungulates: moose, deer, elk, bison, and pronghorn. Good birders may be able to distinguish this age class in some ducks and raptors. As always, when in doubt of the age, simply record “unknown”.

Bird Walks a Success: We thank Susan Patla for leading two morning bird-song walks. Twenty-seven Nature Mappers enjoyed hearing and/or seeing 24 species of birds and learning about their ecology from an expert (bird list available).



Nature Mapping Certification Training: Monday evening June 30 or July 7. Summer is a great time to learn about Nature Mapping. As trained Nature Mappers, you know how much fun and important the program is. Please refer your friends to this training workshop. Ask them to contact Paul Hood at Paul@jhwildlife.org.

Opportunities:

Wildlife Expeditions Tours – We are still looking for Nature Mappers to volunteer on Wednesdays for half or full days. Your assistance is needed as the expert guides do not have time to log species while showing their guests the incredible wildlife. National Park scientists often do not get to report these particulars either.

“It’s a privilege to wander about the park with an expert and meet people who are in the park for the first time.” said a recent NM volunteer.

Please contact Jared Baecker at Jared.baecker@tetonscience.org with cc to Frances at frances@jhwildlife.org to set up your trip. This valuable space is donated by Teton Science Schools. Take advantage of the opportunity!

Calendar of Events/Programs:

Wednesday, June 18, 6-8 p.m. “Unsung Heroes: the Amazing Superpowers of Bats.” The National Museum of Wildlife Art and Bat Conservation International is sponsoring this program and reception at the museum. Don’t miss it! Check the paper or museum for details.

Tuesday, June 24, 7 p.m. “Red Desert to Hoback Mule Deer Migration” presentations and photo exhibit reception - National Museum of Wildlife Art. Come explore the longest mule deer migration ever documented, which was recently discovered in western Wyoming. This will be an evening of photography, maps, and presentations, including Dr. Matthew Kauffman (professor at the University of Wyoming), Dr. Hall Sawyer (wildlife biologist at WEST Inc.), and Joe Riis (photographer from National Geographic). The migration photo exhibit will be on display at the Museum from June 14 – August 10. To view video footage of this remarkable migration, visit: <http://vimeo.com/88619272>

Wednesday, July 2, 6-8 p.m. “Living the High Life: Bighorn Sheep in the Teton Range” - Aly Courtemanch, Wildlife Biologist, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Teton County Library’s Ordway Auditorium. Aly will discuss the results of her recently completed master’s research examining the history, conservation status, and impacts of backcountry skiing on this unique bighorn sheep herd. Don’t miss this special opportunity to hear about this small, isolated group of bighorn sheep that survive at some of the highest elevations in the Teton Range. Plus a question and answer session with U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, and Wyoming Game and Fish Department representatives after the talk.

Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. Harlow Seminar Series sponsored by University of Wyoming and National Park Service at the AMK Ranch. Dinner (\$5 donation) starts at 5:30, with talk at 6:30. Expert visiting scientists present their research on wildlife, geology and more! AMK Ranch near Leeks Marina. Well worth the trip! <http://www.uwyo.edu/uwnps/summer-seminar-series-2014>

Teton Plants: The Wyoming Native Plant Society – Teton Chapter -- sponsors walks regarding native plants. www.tetonplants.wordpress.com will connect you to their programs, or just google “tetonplants”.

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