

Nature Mapping Newsletter March 2015

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Nature Mapping Data 2014 – How are we doing? Great!

The intent of Nature Mapping is for citizen scientists to map wildlife throughout Teton County to increase our awareness, understanding, and conservation of species both common and rare. To help gauge our progress, we track number of observers, # of observations, # of species, and # of individuals and their distribution. Because numbers and accuracy count, we try to make the data-entry process as easy as possible. We also encourage Nature Mappers to enjoy and learn from their encounters with wildlife to create a fully engaged Nature Mapping community. While we await some final 2014 entries (hint hint!), we want to let you know the preliminary findings for 2014 and what we are doing to help you Nature Map in 2015. The final report will be available at our annual Nature Mapping Potluck, March 24.

[Summary of 2014](#) (all figures are preliminary):

Totals

Total # observers - 80
Total # observation - 5,865 in 2014 vs 3,787 for 2013- **a 55% increase!**
Total # species - approx. 236
Total # individual animals - 25,175 individual animals.

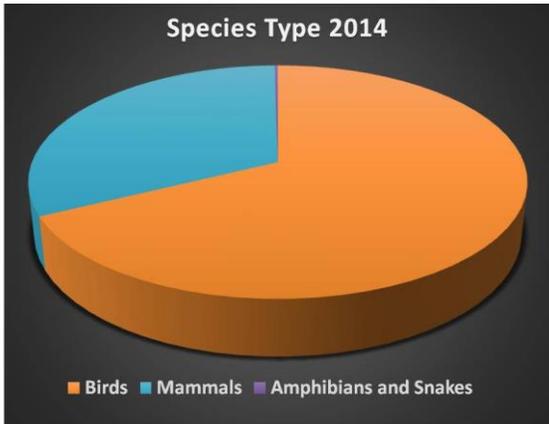
Break out by Project:

Backyard: 34 observers 2,563 observations 99 bird sp. 26 mammals
Casual: 69 observers 3,045 observations 157 bird sp. 32 mammals
Other Projects (Snake River, Osprey, Moose Day, Education): 253 observations

Map of 2014 Observations:

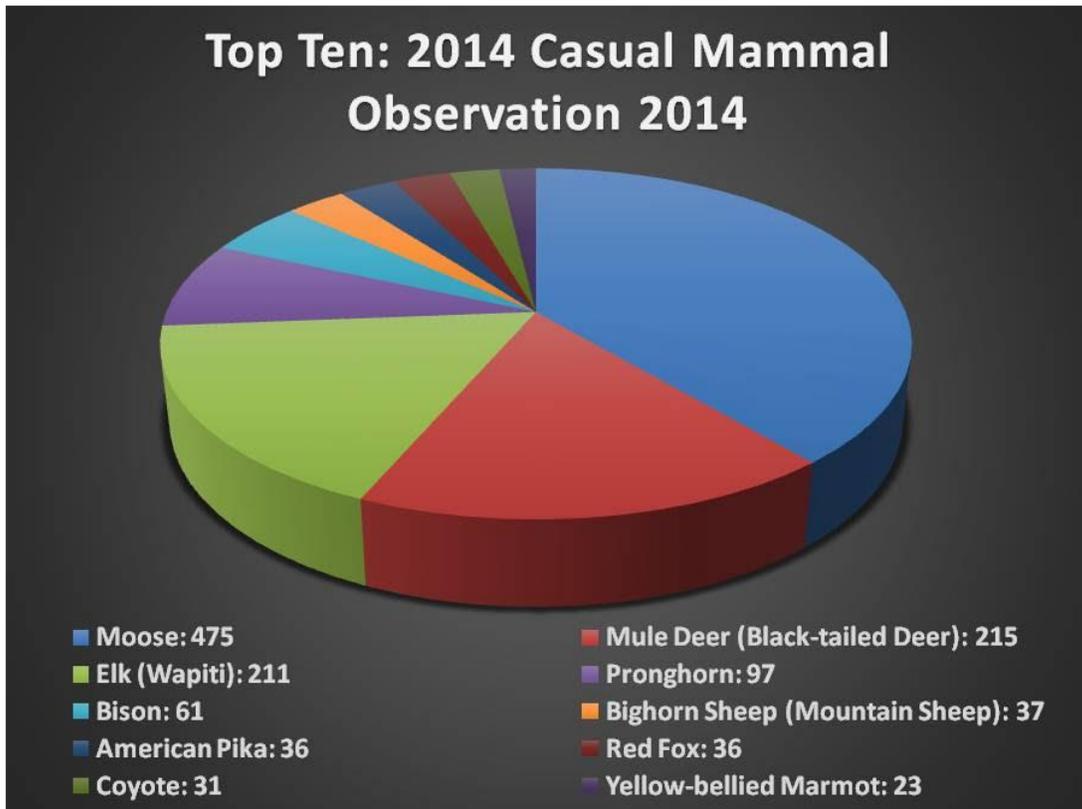
Looking at the Map of 2014 Observations, it is clear that Nature Mappers are recording wildlife throughout Teton County, WY. Project Backyard Project observers (red stars) are well distributed with clusters in and around Wilson and Jackson, along with important outliers to the south and northeast, as well as Alta. Casual observers (green dots) are documenting wildlife in many private neighborhoods and along drives and hikes into our public lands. Snake River Float (blue) covers the Snake River south of Wilson, and the Osprey Project (white bull's-eye) has a scattering of nesting sites. Moose Day observers (brown bull's-eye), including agency volunteers, reach far to the east, south and north.

Species Groups:



Not surprisingly, more bird species are mapped than mammals. Amphibians and snakes make up a very small percentage. There are roughly 234 bird species that are typically found in Jackson Hole vs. 64 mammals, of which 20 species are hard to identify accurately in the field. Amphibians and reptiles comprise 7 species.

[Top Species:](#)



[Project Backyard:](#) **34 observers made 2,563 observations for a total of 125 species.**

Below are the top 10 most observed mammals and birds:

[Less frequent Backyard observations:](#) Nature Mappers recorded everything from bison, mountain lions, and bears in their backyards along with plentiful elk, moose, and deer. Unusual sightings were mostly birds: the rarest birds according to the “Birds of Jackson Hole” checklist were Eastern Bluejay in downtown Jackson, Harris’ Sparrow in Wilson, and a Rusty Blackbird in Alta. Oddly, a

Greater Sage Grouse was seen in Wilson. Other unusual species: Gray Catbird, American Tree Sparrow, Bohemian Waxing, Cordillarian Flycatcher, Spotted Towhee, and Sharp-tailed Grouse were also seen by keen observers. Nature Mapping in your backyard is fun and rewarding.

Casual Observations: 69 observers made 2,045 observations for a total of 194 species

Less frequent “Casual” observations: The Map of 2014 Observations indicates that Nature Mappers recorded wildlife throughout the valley. Besides the top 10 bird and mammal species shown in the charts, Nature Mappers mapped occasional mustelids, as well as flying squirrels and porcupines. Mountain lions and mountain goats were surprises. Several bird species typical of wetlands, and listed as “occasional” for JH included:

American Avocet, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitcher, Common Tern, and Great Egret. Nature Mappers recorded all three small owls: Northern Pygmy, Northern Sawwhet, and Boreal. Williamson’s, vs the more common Red-naped, Sapsucker was confirmed, along with a Bobolink. Most rare were a Common Poorwill and Western Bluebird. Other species have not yet been verified.



Note: The least reported groups of species are amphibians (4) and snakes (1-2*). We had 12 verified observations for 2014. *Our two species of gartersnakes are readily confused: common gartersnake is more rare than wandering gartersnake).

Some preliminary conclusions:

- It all adds up. Thank you!
- Good distribution of coverage throughout Jackson Hole, both on private and public lands. And note the observations on the west side of the Tetons—thanks to Chi and Renee Melville in Alta.
- A quarter to a half of the total number of Nature Mappers for 2014 were active each month. We each do what we can when we can.
- The most observed species tend to be the most frequent, easy to ID, and appealing (e.g. moose, deer, robins, and chickadees).
- More programs to help us ID common species, such as ducks and songbirds, would likely increase the number of observations.

Data requests: Your data contributes to important planning and research projects. Here are some selected data requests that we filled this year:

1. Provided road kill observations to Teton County planners for the draft Integrated Transportation Plan.
2. Provided data to Teton County for the Focal Habitat Features Study, to be incorporated into the new Land Development Regulations and the Jackson/Teton County Comprehensive Plan.
3. Provided American kestrel observations to Craighead Beringia South for a research project.

Adding more: We encourage you to keep on mapping. Here are some pointers.

- Project Backyard: From your home base or favorite spot, keep handy a weekly tally sheet for common species, add unusual species by precise time and date. See the Haberfeld

interview in our Oct. 2014 enews for

inspiration: <http://www.naturemappingjh.org/content/doc/Newsletters/October%202014.pdf>

- Casual Observations: Dedicate a hike, paddle, or wildlife drive to Nature Mapping once a week or month. Map all you see, even the ravens and robins.
- Add those unusual species – do it now! Most of us tell our friends about a cool sighting. Have you mapped it? Please do. The remote entry form makes this easy.
- Sign up for a Snake River Float or TSS Wildlife Expedition tour. Take advantage of these opportunities.
- Choose a Focal Species – Read up on the species and concentrate on it for a period of time.
- Attend a wildlife identification program, e.g. bird ID or the like, to learn new species to map. We promote these opportunities in our enews. (see below).
- Recruit a new Nature Mapper: Know a friend who might be interested? Let them know of our training opportunities and contact: frances@jhwildlife.org

[We are here to help:](#)

- If you are having difficulty entering your data, contact Paul Hood: paul@jhwildlife.org or Frances. Also, the NM Advisory Committee is working on streamlining the data-entry process:
- Limiting the list to only those species found in Teton County (vs. the entire state) and including more common references e.g. Raven vs. Common Raven; Robin vs. American Robin. Adding a “not on list” report column.
- Using the smart phone, be able to type in first letters of the name of species vs. scrolling. Add a “not on list” data field.
- Linking the locator map to a satellite GIS signal, so you don’t need a cell phone signal.

Let us know your comments, questions, suggestions by contacting your volunteer coordinator: Frances Clark: frances@jhwildlife.org. Please share your experiences and photos. We will incorporate your thoughts into our e-news, trainings, and web-site. Keep on mapping!

(photo weasel by R. Haberfeld.)

Volunteers

Moose Day 2015 - On a beautiful Saturday morning, Feb 28—Moose Day, over 60 volunteers scoured the Valley for moose. The count at this time is 83, up from 74 in 2014.



Search success was spotty. Several teams in the densely populated areas of Jackson and environs batted 0. Bert Raynes saw 2 on Boyles Hill. Local Nature Mappers in Wilson found a scattering of moose in the willows of various neighborhoods, but often commented in frustration. “They were there yesterday, but not today!” A group of 5 were seen in John Dodge: “The neighbors were great inviting us to walk around their properties to look for moose.” More encouraging, 9 moose were seen up Cache Creek.

Further north in and around Grand Teton National Park, results were also uneven. The entire area of Antelope Flats, Blacktail Butte and the Gros Ventre River floodplain—yielded only half a dozen moose. Other Mappers to the north and west had much

better luck: 10 moose around Solitude and other areas west of the airport and 17 moose out the Buffalo Valley--the mother lode!

While not all of us found moose, we saw other wildlife: eagles, trumpeter swans, magpies with nesting material, coyotes, fox, and many deer and elk. We particularly enjoyed the company of other Nature Mappers.

And on Sunday, the moose that had “disappeared” on Saturday were back!

Paul Hood and Aly Courtemanch will write a formal report which we will post in our next enews

(Photo of Bert Raynes by F. Clark; of moose: R. Reedy.)



Wanted: Clark’s Nutcracker sightings. Clark’s Nutcracker has been a NM Focal Species for several years <http://www.naturemappingjh.org/content/doc/Clarks%20Nutcracker%20Info.pdf>. Taza Schaming, PhD candidate at Cornell University, is conducting cutting- edge research on the ecology of these birds. Once again Taza asks Nature Mappers to help: “It’s already mid-February, which means the nutcracker breeding season is about to start, if it hasn’t already. We saw the first nest building activity in any year on March 5. If you are seeing nutcrackers at your feeders, please keep a look out for birds carrying sticks and for fledglings. If you see any breeding activity, please Nature Map it and email me Taza: tds55@cornell.edu. The Nature Mapping website has a handout on how to distinguish fledglings from adults and an image on how our radio tagged birds are moving much longer distances!”

Special Event

Nature Mapping Potluck, Tuesday evening, March 24, Center for the Arts. This is an evening of appreciation for you our volunteers and all those who care about wildlife here in Jackson Hole. David Quammen, distinguished travel, nature and science writer, will be our guest speaker. His topic will be announced soon.

Upcoming Programs



Tuesday, March 10, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Great Grey Owls - sponsored by JH Bird and Nature Club, Teton County Library in Ordway Auditorium B. Bryan Bedrosian will be presenting results from the past few years of a cooperative Great Gray Owl study in Jackson Hole and discussing the ecology and behaviors of our largest North American owl. Not to be missed! Note seating capacity is limited in the library's auditorium. Come early to assure a seat.

National Elk Refuge continues to offer a wonderful variety of programs. Below are the programs most relevant to Nature Mappers: e.g. wildlife identification and ecology; however, don’t miss the other programs for children and families, as well as adults by going to their For more information on March programs at the National Elk Refuge, call [\(307\) 201-5400](tel:3072015400).

Wednesday, March 4, 6:30 – 8:30 pm. “Moonlight Walk behind Miller Butte”. Conversations will focus on the night sky, the effects of light on wildlife, and ecological consequences of human development. Parking will be limited, so carpooling is recommended. Reservations are required

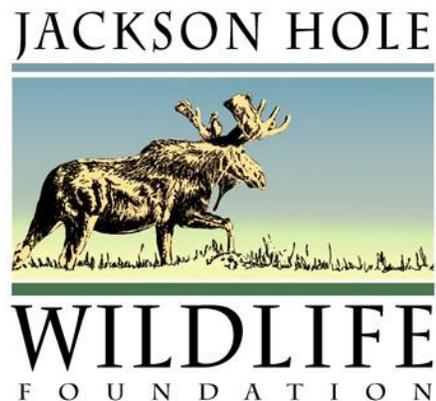
and can be made by calling [\(307\) 201-5400](tel:3072015400). Participants are asked to bring a flashlight or headlamp. Refreshments and warm beverages will be provided at the end of the program. **Wednesday, March 11, 1:30 – 3:30 pm. “Wild Women” refuge tour.** Participants will travel to several refuge locations to discuss when female elk, bison, bighorn sheep, pronghorns, and other animals give birth and how they care for their young. Reservations are required and can be made by calling [\(307\) 201-5400](tel:3072015400). Part of a series of programs and exhibits on Women in Conservation developed for Women’s History Month.

Saturday, March 21, 9:30 – 11:30 am. “Birding for Beginners”. This mini-seminar includes a 20-minute presentation at the visitor center on birding basics and a field session on the refuge to practice identification skills. Participants should be appropriately dressed for the outdoor outing, which will last up to two hours. Naturalists will have binoculars and field guides to share, but guests are encouraged to bring their own supplies if available.

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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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