

California Department of Fish and Game
Job Progress Report

Project Number: W-65-R-3 Project Title: Nongame Wildlife Investigations

Job Number: III-2 Job Title: Inland Nesting Waterbird Survey

Period Covered: July 1, 1985 - June 30, 1986

Summary:

Fifty-four breeding sites for nine species of inland nesting waterbirds which also are species of special concern are documented. No breeding sites are recorded for the Common Loon, Least Bittern, and Harlequin Duck. Salton Sea, San Diego Bay, San Francisco Bay, and the Lower Klamath-Tule Lake-Clear Lake NWR area are very important to these inland nesting waterbirds.

Background:

Since the inception of California's Nongame Wildlife Program in 1968, inland nesting waterbirds have been a subject of great interest. Foremost in interest were the herons. The Nongame Section supported three intensive studies of heronries from 1970 to 1972 and conducted statewide heronry surveys from 1969 to 1972 and again in 1978. Studies on the California Black Rail and the Yuma Clapper Rail in the mid-1970's led to the listing of these species as Endangered in California.

In 1978 the Department published "Bird Species of Special Concern in California" by J. V. Remsen. This report listed species "whose breeding populations in the State have declined severely or are otherwise so low that extirpation is a real possibility." This list included eleven species which breed at inland wetlands: Common Loon, White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Least Bittern, White-faced Ibis, Harlequin Duck, Sandhill Crane, Snowy Plover, California Gull, Gull-billed Tern, and Black Skimmer. Also, four other species were considered for listing whose populations possibly could be declining: Western Grebe, Forster's Tern, Caspian Tern, and Black Tern. There is a definite need to determine the current status of all of these species and to determine if any are in danger of extirpation and the causes of that potential danger.

Work on the Sandhill Crane has been separated into its own Job, III-11.

Objective:

The Job's major objective is to inventory nesting waterbird populations in order to establish population trend data and provide methods to determine management needs.

Procedures:

1. Review literature and egg collection data to determine historical distribution, nesting locations and nesting chronology.
2. Survey suitable nesting locations with the aid of volunteers.
3. Document nesting colonies, species and numbers using each site and map locations for baseline data.
4. Prepare a report of findings which includes recommendations to protect and manage key nesting areas.

Findings:

A single field survey was conducted to document a new White-faced Ibis breeding colony of 7 nesting pairs at the Woodland Sugar Ponds, Yolo County, in the 1985 breeding season. The ibis nests were located in a mixed-species heron nesting colony.

An active literature search for breeding records of inland nesting waterbirds which are of special concern is under way. Many records found are in the Section's data base (see Job Progress Report, Job VI-3). We have documented 54 known breeding sites for these birds (Table 1). There are no known breeding sites in California for Common Loons, Least Bitterns and Harlequin Ducks. Some areas, particularly Salton Sea, San Diego Bay, San Francisco Bay, and the Lower Klamath-Tule Lake-Clear Lake NWR area, already appear to be of exceptionally high importance to these inland nesting waterbirds despite the relatively few breeding site records now on file.

In addition to the known breeding locations, we have 133 records of occurrence of these birds during the nesting season. These records are valuable in facilitating field surveys to discover previously undocumented breeding areas.

Analysis:


Work on this job remains a high priority. However, with other higher priorities and current manpower and funding levels, little work could be accomplished during the report period.

Much of the normal work performed in this Job is the product of general searches for sightings of bird species of special concern (Job III-12) since work on Sandhill Cranes has been separated into its own Job (Job III-11). Also, the work to record the sighting data is part of Job VI-3, Monitoring Date File Maintenance. There doesn't appear to be a reason to maintain this Job as its own entity. Future intensive studies on any one of the species covered in this Job in the past, could constitute a separate Job of its own.

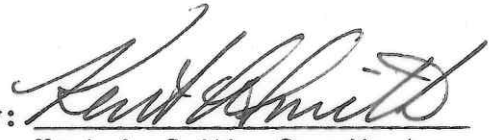
Recommendations:

1. Continue the effort to determine the status of those species of special concern which are inland nesting waterbirds.
2. Combine this Job with Job III-12, Bird Species of Special Concern, during the next AFA period.


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Date:

September 30, 1986

Table 1. Known territories of breeding areas for inland nesting waterbirds that are species of special concern, July 1, 1986

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>COUNTY</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>YEAR OCCUPIED</u>	<u>MAX. SIZE</u>
Common Loon	No known nesting			
American White Pelican	Modoc	Clear Lake NWR	'68-'70, '72	1189 nests
	Siskiyou	Lower Klamath NWR	'70	630 nests
Double-crested Comorant	Imperial	Salton Sea NWR	'57, '82	19 nests
		Noffsinger Rd.	'82	17 adults
		Beach Rd.	'82	Unknown
	Kings	Corcoran I.D. Res.	'80	4 nests
	Lassen	Eagle Lake	'70	8 nests
	Modoc	Clear Lake NWR	'68-'70, '72	52 nests
	Napa	Napa Marsh, site 1	'78	30 nests
		Napa Marsh, site 2	'78	14 nests
		China Slough	'78, '82	23 nests
	Riverside	Lincoln Rd.	'82	4 nests
	Sacramento	Stone Lake	'82	1 nest
	San Francisco	Farallon Is.	'70	50 indivs.
	Siskiyou	Lower Klamath NWR	'70	118 nests
Sonoma	Jenner	'70	8 nests	
Yolo	Beaver Lake	'82	6 nests	
Least Bittern	No known nesting			
White-faced Ibis	Fresno	Mendota W.A.	'82	10 nests
	Riverside	Lincoln Road	'78	7 nests
	San Diego	Buena Vista Lag.	'79	4 nests
	Yolo	Woodland	'85	7 nests
Harlequin Duck	No known nesting			
Snowy Plover	Mono	Mono Lk., N. Shore	'84	7 adults
		Mono Lk., S. Shore	'84	101 indiv.
	Orange	Bolsa Gap	'84	2 nests
Gull-billed Tern	Imperial	Salton Sea	'52, '54, '56-'57, '59-'61, '66, '68-70, '73, '81	60 nests
		Salton Sea, S. end	'59, '64, '69-'70, '74	4 nests
	Riverside	New River	'62, '65	1 pair
		Salton Sea, N. end	'74	10 pairs
	Black Skimmer	Imperial	Salton Sea	'69, '72-73, '76, '78-'79
Salton Sea, S. end			'71-'72, '75	5 nests
		New River delta	'74	3 nests

Table 1. Known locations of breeding areas for inland nesting waterbirds that are species of special concern, July 1, 1986 (cont'd.)

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>COUNTY</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>YEAR OCCUPIED</u>	<u>MAX. SIZE</u>
Black Skimmer cont'd.	Orange	Bolsa Chica	'82, '85	10 nests
	Riverside	Salton Sea, N. end	'68, '71-'72, '74-'75	8 nests
	San Diego	San Diego Bay	'76, '78-'80, '82	35 pairs
Foster's Tern	Alameda	Dumbarton Bridge	'52, '55, '66, '68	150 pairs
		San Mateo Bridge Bay Farm Isl.	'52 '54, '56	Unknown
	Imperial	Salton Sea, S. end	'72, '76	32 nests
		New River delta	'70	2 nests
	Monterey	Moss Landing	'50-'52	500 indivs.
	Riverside	Salton Sea, N. end	'78	200 pairs
	San Diego	So. San Diego Bay	'62,-64, 67, '69	400 nests
San Mateo	Bair Is.	'73	300 pairs	
Caspian Tern	Alameda	San Francisco Bay	'50, '52, '55, '66, '68, '75, '81, '83	1000+ pairs
		Imperial	Salton Sea	'56-57, '59
	Kings	Tulare Lake Basin	'83	Unknown
	Los Angeles	Playa del Rey	'52	250 indivs.
	Monterey	Salinas R. Mouth	'81	50 indivs.
	San Diego	San Diego Bay	'53, '55-56, '59-64, '69-'70	500 pairs
	Santa Clara	Los Gatos Cr.	'57	6 indivs.
Black Tern		Sacramento Valley	'56, '66, '77- '79, '81	Unknown
	Merced	Los Banos	'73	43 nests
	Plumas	Sierra Valley	'73	Unknown
	Siskiyou	Tule Lake NWR	'80	5500 indivs.