Montana's Colonial Nesting Waterbird Survey General Information

The US Fish and Wildlife Service is coordinating a colonial waterbird inventory in the western United States in 2009-2011. The short-term goal is to conduct a comprehensive inventory of breeding waterbird populations and locations in the western United States. Ultimately, this information will be used to develop a long-term monitoring program to track population size, trends, and locations of breeding waterbirds in the western United States. As part of this effort, the Fish and Wildlife Service plans to produce an atlas of western colonial waterbird breeding colonies in 2012.

The Montana Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Comprehensive Strategy and Montana Bird Conservation Plan list riparian and wetland systems as communities in need of conservation action. In both documents the primary conservation strategy for riparian and wetland systems is to identify areas that are critically important to wildlife diversity. Of particular interest are those wetlands that support diverse assemblages of Species of Concern. Over half of the focal species for the US Fish and Wildlife waterbird inventory are Species of Concern in Montana (see below). Most of these also have prioritization ranks of two or three in the Montana Bird Conservation Plan.

Montana Audubon has been collecting information on bird populations in wetlands and other habitats as part of their Important Bird Area program. Biologists at the National Wildlife Refuges in the state also have fairly comprehensive data on wetland birds. In addition, there have been several regional surveys for waterbirds over the previous 10 years. The Montana Bird Conservation Partnership initiated a statewide waterbird survey in 2009 in cooperation with USFWS for Montana Species of Concern to complement these efforts and help to guide future research, monitoring, and conservation planning in Montana.

USFWS Focal Species:

	Black tern*(ii)
Clark's grebe*(iii)	Forster's tern* (ii)
Eared grebe	White-faced ibis*(ii)
Black-crowned	Franklin's gull* ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾
night-heron* ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾	(Red-necked grebe)^
Great blue heron*	(Horned grebe) ^{^(ii)}
	Clark's grebe*(iii) Eared grebe Black-crowned night-heron*(iii)

^{*}Montana Species of Concern

()Species prioritization rank in the Montana Bird Conservation Plan

For detailed information on the USFWS protocol:

http://www.fws.gov/mountain%2Dprairie/species/birds/western_colonial/index.html

For more information on Montana's surveys:

http://mtaudubon.org/birds/citizen.html#water

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[^]Not on USFWS list, but of interest to Montana partners