

2022 BPA/GPUD Avian Monitoring Report

06/27 – 07/03/2022

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES & UPCOMING EVENTS

ACTIVITIES	DATE
Survey of sites in McNary Pool above the Snake River confluence	06/28-06/29
Survey of sites in Potholes Reservoir	06/29
Survey of sites in the John Day Pool	06/30
UPCOMING EVENTS	
Survey of sites in McNary Pool below the Snake River confluence	07/04-07/10

COLONY MONITORING & WATERBIRD SURVEYS

McNary Pool above the Snake River Confluence: Site was visited on June 28.

Island 20

The Ring-billed gull colony on the northern end of the island is no longer active and may have been impacted by flooding due to high McNary Pool elevations (*Figure 1*). ~60 loafing gulls were observed on the northern end of the island. Approximately 1,000 nesting gulls were observed on the southern colony which was not affected by flooding. Many gull chicks have now fledged from the southern colony.



Figure 1. Flooding at the northern end of Island 20 on June 28, 2022.

~ 22 loafing American white pelicans were observed.

McNary Pool above the Snake River Confluence: Sites were visited on June 29.

Hanford Reach – Island A

Water levels were high in the Hanford Reach on June 29, reaching the base of the double-crested cormorant nesting tree on Island A, with water levels being even higher in previous days (*Figure 2, left panel*). ~30 attended double-crested cormorant nests were observed (*Figure 2, right panel*), and most remaining chicks in nests were in the downy stage. Cormorant fledglings were observed

loafing on the shoreline and in the water. All pre-season detection efficiency PIT tags sown on the colony along with tags deposited by cormorants during the breeding season may have been affected (e.g., washed away) by high water levels in recent weeks (*Figure 2*), which we will confirm during PIT tag recovery efforts later this year.

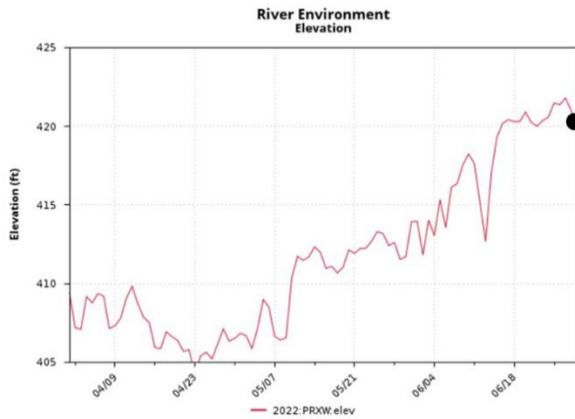


Figure 2: River elevation at Hanford Reach between April 1 and June 29, 2022 (left panel, black dot was date of visit on June 29). Double-crested cormorant nesting tree on Island A in Hanford Reach on June 29, 2022 (right panel).

Hanford Reach – Island B

No piscivorous waterbirds were observed.

Hanford Reach – Unnamed Island (downstream of Island B)

The unnamed island downstream of Island B was underwater (*Figure 3*). Caspian terns were observed prospecting for nest sites at this island in May.



Figure 3: A yellow sign on an unnamed Island downstream of Island B on May 17, 2022 (left panel) and June 29, 2022 (right panel) provides reference for variation in river elevation in the Hanford Reach.

Hanford Reach – Locke Island Complex

18 loafing American white pelicans were observed.

Potholes Reservoir: Sites were visited on June 29.

Reservoir levels have dropped over 2.0 ft in recent weeks (currently 2.7 ft below full pool), exposing many low-lying islands in North Potholes and additional shoreline habitat on Goose Island.

Goose Island

No Caspian terns were observed from the boat on Goose Island and its surrounding islets (*Table 1*; Note: the top of the island where terns have been observed nesting during earlier aerial surveys [i.e. colony area] is not visible from the boat). Caspian terns have abandoned their attempted nesting on Southwest Main (*Table 1*).

Table 1. Caspian tern counts by location at Goose Island from 4/12 – 6/29. [NA: Not Available]

Caspian terns										
LOCATION	04/12	04/18	04/27 ²	5/03	5/17	5/24	6/01	6/06 ³	6/22	6/29
Northwest Main	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Northeast Main	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Southeast Main	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Spit	0	0	0	2	1	0	4	0	4	0
South Beach	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Colony Area ¹	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Southwest Main	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	6	11	0
West Main	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Beach	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Rocks	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	6	0
Northeast Rocks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northwest Rocks	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	2	0
Total	0	0	0	6	7	0	9	6	23	0

¹ Complete obstruction from boat vantage.

² Nesting dissuasion activities occurred during counts.

³ Counts conducted from aerial imagery.

Most gull chicks have fledged from the Goose Island colony (*Figure 4*). Final counts of nesting gulls will be conducted from aerial imagery and will be made available in a subsequent report.



Figure 4. Adult and fledgling gulls on Goose Island on June 29, 2022.

North Potholes Island

No piscivorous waterbirds were observed.

Northeastern Potholes

No piscivorous waterbirds were observed; most islands were flooded.

2016 Colony

2 Caspian terns and ~50 gulls were observed loafing

Solstice Island

No piscivorous waterbirds were observed.

Equinox Island

No piscivorous waterbirds were observed on Equinox Island. We observed 2 loafing Caspian terns, 20 loafing American white pelicans, and 5 loafing gulls at a nearby unnamed island.

Macaroni Island

No piscivorous waterbirds were observed; most of the island was flooded.

Blalock Islands: Sites were visited on June 30.

Anvil Island

Gulls were loafing on the shoreline. Several chicks (4-6 weeks) and fledglings were observed.

Long Island

9 loafing Caspian terns were observed.

~ 110 loafing gulls were observed.

Middle Island

2 loafing double-crested cormorants were observed.

Southern Island

Island was still mostly flooded; however, a few rocks were above the water level.

7 loafing American white pelicans were observed.

~70 loafing gulls were observed.

Straight Six Island

25 loafing gulls seen observed on the northern spit. No activity on the interior of the island was observed.

Rock Island

34 loafing Caspian terns were observed (*Figure 5*).

24 loafing American white pelicans were observed (*Figure 5*).

31 loafing gulls were observed.



Figure 5. Caspian terns and American white pelicans on Rock Island on June 30, 2022.

Basketball Island

No piscivorous waterbirds were observed.

PIT TAGGING OF STEELHEAD AT ROCK ISLAND DAM

Due to an unexpected increase in steelhead numbers collected at the RIS smolt trap, PIT tagging of steelhead resumed the week of 6/27, with an additional 91 hatchery and 40 wild steelhead tagged during the week. This will conclude the tagging effort at Rock Island Dam for the 2022 season (10 April to 3 July). A total of 6,221 tagged steelhead (4,575 hatchery, 1,646 wild) are now available for predation analyses, analyses that will be conducted following PIT tag recovery on bird colonies this fall.