

Western Canada Cooperative Waterfowl Banding Program



Yorkton, Saskatchewan 2019

Personnel

Shannon Hansel (Crew Leader), Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Dave Nicholson (Crew Leader), Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Andy Gilbert (Assistant Crew Leader), Illinois Natural History Survey
Jessi Tapp (Crew Member), Missouri Department of Conservation

Abstract

Eleven to twenty-eight traps were run every night beginning August 4th through August 26th during our stay in Yorkton, with a total of 479 trap nights. The Yorkton crew banded a total of 2501 new birds. A total of 9 species were encountered this trapping season.

Blue-winged Teal were the most encountered species, with a total of 1422 new birds banded accounting for 57% of the total. The second most encountered species were Mallards, with a total of 1038 new birds accounting for 42% of total birds banded. The remaining 1% consisted

of small numbers of redhead, American Green-winged teal, wood duck, northern pintail, American wigeon, gadwall and one mallard/black duck hybrid.

Introduction

The Yorkton Banding Station is part of the Western Canada Cooperative Waterfowl Banding Program, a long-term, large scale, pre-season waterfowl banding program. This program is a joint effort between the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian Wildlife Service, state and provincial wildlife management agencies, the Flyway Councils, First Nations, and non-governmental waterfowl advocacy and research organizations. The Yorkton Station has been staffed by the Mississippi Flyway Council states for decades. The banding data has increased our knowledge of waterfowl population dynamics and have helped inform management decisions.

Study Area

The study area is located near the town of Yorkton in southeastern Saskatchewan, Canada. Most historical trap locations are within 15 miles of town center. The trapping locations utilized in 2019 encompassed a loop surrounding Yorkton of approximately 150 miles. Listed below in the appendix are trap sites utilized in 2019 (Table 1) and a map of trap locations (Figure 1).

The habitat surrounding Yorkton is a mixture of native prairie, wetlands, small woodlots, and agricultural fields, with the latter making up the largest component. This area is collectively known as the prairie pothole region. Historically, it has been, and continues to be one of the most vital areas for breeding waterfowl in North America.

Methods

The 2019 banding crew arrived in Yorkton on July 28th and began scouting banding sites the first day. The crew baited and set traps on July 29th – August 3rd. Traps were then closed and set on August 3rd, and the first birds were banded on August 4th.

Habitat conditions continued their drying trend that began in 2017. Conditions were much drier in 2019, with several trapping sites abandoned or moved to different locations than 2018. Permanent water bodies were the only available sites for banding.



Trap sites were on each side of dirt strip on left side of ditch in 2018



Picture was taken from scour hole of last years traps.

We placed between two to nine Benning II style traps at each of eight trap locations. Traps were set throughout the entire 23-day trapping season. Multiple adjustments were made to traps throughout the season due to loss of water and to prevent predation. We opened and closed traps at various times to deter predation and also ran one trap at night until the wetland dried up.

Results

A total of 2501 ducks were banded in 479 trap nights. We also had 27 foreign recaptures throughout the trapping season. One drake mallard recapture was banded as an adult in 2006. A total of 9 species were banded that included blue winged teal, mallard, redhead, green-winged teal, wood duck, wigeon, northern pintail, gadwall, and mallard/black duck hybrid cross. Blue-winged teal were the predominant species banded followed by mallards. Sex and age composition data of the banded birds are summarized in the appendix. (Table 3)

The original Leech Bait Pad site was dry so we moved farther into the lake. This proved to be beneficial as it was the most productive site. This area has been productive for the last four years, although habitat conditions and species vary from year to year. Refer to Table 4 in the appendix for a breakdown of species banded by location.

Discussion

The 2019 trapping season was challenging due to the weather and drying wetlands. Warm weather and lack of precipitation had us moving traps often. We finally settled on 27 traps at 6 locations on August 16th. The majority of the trapping season was conducted with pleasant weather conditions; minimal rain and comfortable temperatures between 50°F and 82°F. The other challenges this trapping season: lots and lots of mud, loss of access, and predation from raccoons and mink.

Bird response to traps varied by site, possibly due to the drying conditions. Upon arrival and over the first few scouting days, concentrations of ducks were hard to find. Bait pads were placed at the traditional sites from 2018. Aerial reconnaissance with Mark Koneff from the Fish and Wildlife Service on August 7th confirmed there were no significant concentration of ducks in the area and we were trapping the best locations. Trapping success started slowly and peaked on August 16th through the 19th. Only one extremely good day of trapping blue-winged teal occurred this year on August 17th. Mallard trapping started slowly peaking August 21st – 23rd, with catches of near 100 three straight days.

This was the second year in a row that the Yorkton crew has exceeded 1000 mallards banded. This may be correlated to the smaller wetlands drying up and forcing mallard populations to concentrate on the more permanent wetlands. Yorkton has always been a hotbed for banding blue-wing teal, but with the shrinking wetlands, the lack of teal was surprising. Considering the conditions and receding waterlines on the permanent wetlands, we had great success this banding season!



Appendix

Table 1. Species totals and composition.

Species	Total	Composition (%)
BWTE	1422	56.7
MALL	1038	41.6
REDH	18	0.72
AGWT	8	0.32
GADW	5	0.2
NOPI	5	0.2
WODU	3	0.12
AMWI	1	0.04
MBDH	1	0.04
Grand Total	2501	100

Table 2. Species, sex, and age breakdown of newly banded birds.

Species	Female				Male				Grand Total
	L	HY	AHY	Total	L	HY	AHY	Total	
BWTE	4	330	133	467	5	474	476	955	1422
MALL	19	199	139	357	20	247	414	681	1038
REDH	0	4	5	9	1	0	8	9	18
AGWT	0	2	3	5	0	2	1	3	8
GADW	0	3	2	5	0	0	0	0	5
NOPI	0	3	1	4	0	1	0	1	5
WODU	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	3
MBDH	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
AMWI	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Grand Total	23	542	285	850	27	724	900	1651	2501

Table 3. Number of birds banded of each species by location.

Species	Location								Grand Total
	BBP	CLN	CLS	FUL	HSL	LBP	LLN	URL	
BWTE	54	159	172	6	8	592	296	126	1413
MALL	0	54	70	1	86	446	101	289	1047
REDH	0	7	3	0	8	0	0	0	18
AGWT	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	8
GADW	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	2	5
NOPI	0	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	5
WODU	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
MBDH	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
AMWI	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Grand Total	57	225	247	7	102	1044	401	418	2501