



BARBARA MIERS



## STATE CONSERVATION REPORT

### CONSERVATION UPDATE

A diverse treasure of the northwest when it comes to waterfowl, the state of Idaho continues to play an important role in the process of migration along the Pacific Flyway. All of Ducks Unlimited's conservation programs within the state focus on providing areas for waterfowl migration, wintering and reproduction. DU projects rehabilitate degraded infrastructure on public lands, restore habitat on private lands and help keep Idaho's waterfowl habitat plentiful and in high quality. Ducks such as redheads, mallards, goldeneyes, northern

pintails and a few harlequins join Canada geese and trumpeter swans to make Idaho a major stopover during annual migrations and use its wetlands annually for breeding grounds. However, the state struggles with water in sufficient quantity for suitable waterfowl habitat. Sometimes scarce and always fluctuating, the availability of water affects many of DU's projects.

DU currently has a slate of ongoing projects throughout Idaho, including on two adjacent properties near the St. Joe River

where DU and partners are wrapping up restoration of a floodplain wetland complex spanning 124 acres. This project will provide important migration habitat for several species of dabbling ducks, as well as Canada geese and tundra swans. Along the Bruneau River and adjacent to the CJ Strike Wildlife Management Area, DU is also currently performing some conceptual design work to refurbish the flood irrigation to bring the area back into working condition.

### CLARK FORK RIVER DELTA

In early April 2015, the last piece of construction equipment rolled across the temporary bridge that provided access to the Clark Fork River Delta restoration site, signaling the end of the first phase of this extensive project. Heavy equipment and work

crews spent the entire winter of 2014/2015 working on the project under less than ideal conditions for construction. Despite these challenges, the earthmoving portion of the project was completed successfully. Nearly 300,000 cubic yards of earth and

rock were moved to raise and protect portions of two islands in the delta and construct rock weirs and breakwaters along exposed shoreline areas. Over 40,000 willow cuttings were planted within these rock structures to provide riparian shrub habitat for fish and wildlife. ►





Many thousands more herbaceous and woody plants will be installed across the project area over the coming months with invaluable help from local volunteers.

The main purpose of the project is to eliminate the severe bank erosion that has been ongoing in the delta for several decades following the construction of Albeni Falls Dam in 1955. The construction of the first phase follows several years of assessment and feasibility work to determine the scale of the erosion problems. Estimates generated during this phase put the loss of wetland and riparian habitat from erosion at 10-15 acres each year, or over 600 acres total since completion of the dam. Results of the assessment work were used to develop a restoration design that provides solutions to the widespread erosion in the delta. DU conservation staff worked in close coordination with regional staff from the Panhandle Office of Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the project design team to complete these important steps in the restoration process. The total cost of this phase of the project is over \$6 million with funds coming from Avista and Bonneville Power Administration. IDFG and DU provided significant in kind staff resources to the project.

The Clark Fork River Delta is a special place for wildlife and has been recognized by IDFG as one of the 10 most important wetland areas in Idaho. Despite the extensive loss of habitat that has occurred there over the last half century, the delta provides important resources for thousands of waterfowl during the fall and spring migrations. Bald eagle, osprey, great blue herons, shorebirds and songbirds are all regular visitors to the delta. The Delta is also a favorite recreation area for hunting, fishing, kayaking, canoeing and wildlife viewing and is used regularly by the local residents of nearby Sandpoint.



## **TAKE THE INITIATIVE- HELP DU CONSERVE HABITAT THROUGH THE WINGS AND WETLANDS INITIATIVE**

Water supply issues and habitat loss in the extensive marshes and floodplains of the upper Snake River basin of eastern Idaho, including Henry's Fork watershed, are also a focus of DU's Wings & Wetlands Initiative.

Ducks Unlimited is seeking charitable contributions of more than \$8.1 million in philanthropic funds from generous donors like you to achieve our conservation goals as part of the Wings & Wetlands Initiative. Every dollar you give to Ducks Unlimited is leveraged many times over to create a conservation impact far beyond your initial gift. And be assured, at least 80 cents of every dollar received is invested directly in our conservation mission. Start making a difference right now for waterfowl, outdoorsmen, and future generations of wildlife and people by making your gift to DU's Wings & Wetlands Initiative to help conserve key wetland habitats in Idaho, Washington, and Oregon.

*For more information on DU's Wings and Wetlands Initiative:*

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