

POSTER PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

NESTING ECOLOGY OF TULE GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GEESE

Bollinger, Karen S., Craig R. Ely (Alaska Biological Science Center, USGS-BRD, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK, 99503), Tom Rothe (ADF&G, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK, 99502), and John Sarvis (USFWS, 1011 E. Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK, 99503).

We studied the nesting ecology of Tule Greater White-fronted Geese at a newly located nesting area in the Susitna River Valley of Southcentral Alaska from 1994 to 1997. Little research has been conducted on boreal forest nesting geese and the only previous information on nesting Tule geese is from Redoubt Bay, located approximately 120 km southwest of the mouth of the Susitna River on the west side of Cook Inlet. We located 31 nests by tracking radio-marked geese that had been captured and marked prior to spring migration. The entire known breeding range was systematically searched for radioed birds; and thus, determination of nesting habitat was unbiased relative to study area location/boundaries. Nest initiation occurred in mid-May, which is similar to dates reported for Tule geese found nesting at Redoubt Bay in the late 70's and early 80's. Clutch size averaged 4.23 eggs/nest. Nesting success was poor during all years of the study, likely due to the high density of furbearers and Bald Eagles in the study area. The habitat of the upper Susitna River Valley is generally described as a black spruce and birch boreal forest interspersed with wetlands, as compared to that of Redoubt Bay, which is more characteristic of a high flood plain coastal wetland. Sites selected by geese for nesting were generally in association with these interspersed wetlands.

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Contributors:

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service — Brad Andres (Chair), Diana Brann, Paul Cotter, Tony DeGange, Heather Johnson, Kathy Kuletz, Bob Leedy, Vivian Mendenhall, Bill Ostrand, Phil Schempf, Laura Shawback, Shawn Stephensen, Rob Suryan, and Kent Wohl

Alaska Biological Science Center — Dirk Derksen, Bob Gill, Colleen Handel, Jerry Hupp, Rick Lanctot, Steve Matsuoka, John Pearce, Margaret Petersen, and Joel Schmutz

Alaska Department of Fish and Game — John Wright

Exxon Valdez Restoration Office — Stan Senner

TERA, Inc. — Declan Troy

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