

SOME OBSERVATIONS OF SPRING MIGRATING
WATERFOWL DURING 1982

By

Daniel Timm
Waterfowl Program Coordinator
Alaska Department of Fish & Game

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To help document concentration areas and timing of migration of cackling Canada geese, observers in California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Alaska were asked to record their observations during spring 1982. Other waterfowl were also recorded at some locations. The following highlights of observations are presented to: 1) help document the importance of specific areas for spring feeding/staging; 2) provide information for the current understanding of spring migration; and 3) help future investigators in their studies of migration.

There will be more detailed reports of cackler migration, (Raveling and Timm, in prep.) and of other species by other observers. For example, Dan Rosenberg, USFWS is spending much of the spring, summer and fall on the Stikine River Delta, and staff of the Clarence Rhode National Wildlife Refuge flew several surveys during May and had two coastal base camps on the Y-K Delta, to help document migration.

Phenology throughout Alaska during spring 1982 was two or more weeks retarded from 1981 and 1980; 1982 was considered to be a "late" year.

CAACKLERS

Klamath Basin NWR'S (J. Heinlein, USFWS)

Few seen before 4/28 when a minor migration into area occurred; 5,000 to 6,000 on refuges 4/29; major migration from refuges 5/5.

Malheur NWR

Rarely seen either spring or fall.

Willamette Valley (B. Bromley and B. Jarvis, Oreg. State U.)

First birds (~400) seen 4/18; four flocks overhead between 4/27 and 4/30.

Ketchikan (B. Wood, ADF&G)

4/22 - very large migration of small (unk. subsp.) Canada geese from 2 p.m. until midnight; largest single flock about 2,000 birds.

Admiralty Isl. in southeast Alaska (L. Johnson, ADF&G)

5/5-30 seen flying north.

Stikine River Delta (D. Rosenberg, FWS)

Rosenberg arrived on Delta - 4/25

4/28 - 13;

5/8 - 160;

5/9 - 45;

5/13 - ~ 500;

5/14 ~550;

5/15 ~500;

5/16 ~600;

5/17~250.

Point Whitedshed near Cordova (P. Mickelson, U. of AK)

From 3rd week of April thru 4 May only a few hundred seen

Northern Prince William Sound (P. Islieb)

None seen thru 4/18.

Near Forks of Yentna and Susitna Rivers, about 30 miles north of Susitna Flats, Cook Inlet (J. Sarvis, FWS)

From 4/25 thru 5/25 no cacklers seen or heard (John was in a tent or outside the entire time)

Cook Inlet Marshes (D. Timm, B. Campbell, J. Faro - ADF&G; M. Petersen, C. Handel, D. Derksen - FWS, D. Raveling - U. of CA.)

S = Susitna Flats (Theodore River area); TB = Trading Bay (McArthur River); RB = Redoubt Bay (Big River)-all observations were from the ground unless noted.

4/17 (aerial) S - 545; TB - 0; RB - 0; 100% ice and snow on TB and RB
4/23 S ~1,000
4/24 S ~875 + 1,000 flying north along inlet
4/25 (aerial) S~1,525, TB~600, RB - 0
4/26 S~2,135 + 1,000+ flying south along inlet; RB-0
4/27 S~1,800
4/28 S~1,700; RB~30
4/29 S~1,000+, RB - 50
4/30 S - 310, RB - 19
5/1 S - 330
5/2 S -1,600+, TB (aerial)~2,180, RB (aerial) - 590
5/4 S - 7,000+, TB - 5,000 (major migration observed, 25% of birds went on thru Lake Clark Pass - first seen going on West)
5/5 S~2,300
5/6 S~560 (aerial), TB~4,875 (aerial), RB~3,660 (aerial); from ground S - 750, TB - 3,060 (~1,000 went thru L.C. Pass)
5/7 S~1,500
5/8 S - 1,000+, RB - major departure (~2,700) went thru Lake Clark Pass
5/9 S - 1,250+, RB low fog - no counts
5/10 S - 200 (observers left 5/11), RB - migration thru Lake Clark Pass (~725 left in 2½ hours)
5/11 RB - about 500 in area (many left either overnight thru Lake Clark Pass or to the south)
5/12 RB - 300 in area + 250 thru Lake Clark Pass (observers left 5/13)
6/7 S~50, RB~175 went thru Lake Clark Pass
6/10 RB - 26 thru Lake Clark Pass

King Salmon - Naknek River (C. Dau, FWS and D. Sellers, ADF&G)

None seen from 26 April thru 3 May (only 20 other Canadas seen).

Dillingham (K. Taylor, ADF&G)

4/22 - 50 birds on tide flats (first of year).

5/15 - last date cacklers seen near town; only small flocks seen throughout spring.

Nakeen (reports from public to K. Taylor, ADF&G)

This location is ~20 miles NNW of King Salmon, at the NE corner of Bristol Bay.

4/25~4,000 reported on tide flats near town.

Conclusions

On 4/29 and 4/30, 1981 B. Jarvis (pers. comm.) reported 10,000+ cacklers migrating through the Willamette Valley. That year I observed a gradual build-up of cacklers in Redoubt Bay early in spring, to a rapid building of peak numbers on 5/2; on 5/4 I counted 14,900 cacklers in Redoubt and Trading Bays from the air. Nothing quite that dramatic (or coincidental?) happened in 1982.

The bulk of cacklers obviously passes along the Gulf Coast undetected, at least to Cook Inlet. However, the 4/22/82 observation at Ketchikan fits well with a rapid building of cacklers on Susitna Flats 4/24-25.

In 1982, cacklers were present in Cook Inlet 4/17 or earlier and as late as 6/10. Peak migrations into and from Cook Inlet occurred on 5/4, 5/6, 5/8 and 5/10. The geese "pushed" the snow melt line down Cook Inlet - north to south - and nearly all birds had left Cook Inlet by 5/11. Judging from observations this year, cacklers cross the AK Range over a broad front from Susitna Flats to perhaps Kamishak Bay. More will be known about this year's migration after CRNWR personnel summarize their aerial survey information.

Although it is impossible to determine the total number of birds using upper Cook Inlet, I estimate that 25,000 or more cacklers used Susitna Flats, Trading Bay and Redoubt Bay during the spring of 1982.

SNOW GEESE

Stikine River Delta

4/6 first arrival (report from public)
4/27 - peak numbers of spring (12,000) but observers arrived
4/25 and peak may have occurred earlier
5/1 - ~100 on Delta
5/2 - 385
5/5 - 2,300
5/11 - 3,000

Cook Inlet

4/17 S - 10, TB - 0, RB - 0
4/23 S - 50+
4/25 S - 45
4/28 S - 2,260; RB - 75
4/29 S - 2,900+, RB - 45
4/30 S - 1,510,
5/3 S - 6,800+, TB (aerial) 2,680, RB (aerial) 3,450
5/4 S - 6,600, TB - 10,000+ (migration into area and a few
left VIA L.C. Pass
5/5 S - 380

5/6 (aerial count) S - 775, TB - 2,145, RB - 15,240 (major migration into area this date)
5/7 S - 400
5/8 S - 160, RB - Major departure of ~12,000 thru Lake Clark Pass
5/9 S - 800+, RB - low ceilings & no migration
5/10 RB - migration thru Lake Clark Pass (~3,200)
5/11 RB - migration thru pass (~3,000)
5/12 RB - about 500 remaining in area
5/13 RB - observers left

30 miles up Susitna River (J. Sarvis)
none seen 4/25-5/25

King Salmon
less than 100 total seen all spring

Conclusions and Miscellaneous

Until 5/3/82 we saw no young snow geese at Redoubt or Trading Bays. Then, on the 3rd about 10% of the birds we looked at were young. An early migration of pure adults obviously occurred.

The first migration we observed from Cook Inlet was on 5/4; other major migration days coincided with cacklers. In relative numbers snow geese were at least twice as numerous as cacklers in Cook Inlet. However, they arrived in large numbers about 5 days later than cacklers. They, like cacklers, "pushed" the snow melt line down Cook Inlet. In consideration of the 18,000 birds counted on 5/6, and other factors, I believe that 40,000 to 50,000 snows migrated through and used the marshes of upper Cook Inlet during spring 1982.

PACIFIC WHITEFRONTS

Klamath Basin Refuges

Whitefronts moved into the Basin earlier than usual, but stayed later. By 4/19 there were still "many thousands" there.

Stikine Delta

5/7 - 48
5/11 ~ 250
5/12 ~ 750
5/13 ~ 500
5/14 ~ 225
5/15 ~ 315
5/17 ~ 250
5/25 - 91

Juneau Mendenhall Wetlands (Don McKnight, ADF&G)

5/19-5/21 - 25

5/28-5/31 - 10

Cook Inlet

4/24 S - no Pacifics;

4/25 - no Pacifics on S, TB or RB

4/26 S - 15

4/27 S - 26

4/28 S - 6, RB - 3

4/29 S - 100, RB - 57

4/30 S - 10, RB - 63

5/1 S - 30;

5/2 S - 40, RB - 138

5/3 S - 75, TB - 144

5/4 S - 30, TB~1,000

5/5 S - 30

5/6 (aerial survey) S - 10, TB - 55, RB - 345 (all areas include tules)

5/7 S - 170

5/8 S - 0, RB - a few 100's (minor migration thru Lake Clark Pass)

5/9 S - 115

5/10 S - 25, RB - a few 100's (minor migration thru Lake Clark Pass)

5/11 RB - a few 100's (minor migration thru Lake Clark Pass)

5/12 RB - 250 (50% went thru Lake Clark Pass & 50% landed)

30 Miles up Yentna

4/25-5/25 1 flock - 5/4, 33 on 5/9, 22 on 5/18, 75 on 5/22, plus occasional sightings of 1 or 2 birds

Naknek

4/30~500 on river; 5/2~2,000 on river.