



Oregon Coordinated Aquatic Bird Monitoring:  
Description of Important Aquatic Bird Site



## **River's End Ranch**

BCS number: 48-21

### **Site description author(s)**

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### **Site location (UTM)**

Datum: NAD 83, Zone: 10, Easting: 725035, Northing: 4712263

### **General description**

“The Rivers End Project is a large historic wetland system along the lower reaches of the Chewaucan River above Lake Abert which was enhanced and restored through a partnership with a private land owner in the mid-1990s. A dam was enhanced and other dikes constructed that now form a large reservoir over the former lower flood plain of the Chewaucan River before it enters Abert Lake. As water levels recede during summer, sloughs and oxbows in the upstream reaches are exposed. This area provides excellent breeding and migration staging habitat to many species of waterbirds as well as supporting colonies of double-crested cormorants, great and snowy egrets, and black-crowned night-herons” (Ivey 2000). See Figure 1 for map of Rivers End Ranch area (Google Earth 2009).

### **Boundaries and ownership**

*Boundaries:* A triangular shaped floodplain bounded generally by Chewaucan River on the north, Oregon Highway 31 on the west and US Highway 395 on the east and Rivers End Ranch dam on the at the northeast corner.

*Ownership:* Non-industry private landowners (River's End Ranch LLC.), see Figure 2 for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lakeview District ownership map.

## Water levels

Historically water flowed through Chewaucan Marsh into the Rivers End Ranch area before emptying into Abert Lake. Water level management in the Chewaucan Marshes since the early 1900's has been dictated primarily by spring run-off from the Chewaucan River watershed and secondarily by irrigation diversion. Run-off from this use flows towards Abert Lake and Rivers End Ranch. Water impounded by the dam is pumped to supply sprinkler irrigation on several agricultural fields. Water levels generally recede during late summer when the Chewaucan River flows are at a minimum and as water is removed for irrigation and evapotranspiration loss.

## Focal Species Use and Timing

<b>Focal Guild/Species</b>	<b>Wintering</b>	<b>Breeding</b>	<b>Migration</b>
Secretive Marsh Birds*		Present	Present
Colonial Nesting Waterbirds		Present	Present
Ground-based Aquatic Birds		Present	Present
Migrating Shorebirds		Present	Present
American White Pelican		Present	Present
Barrow's Goldeneye			
Black-necked Stilt		Present	Present
Bufflehead			
Dusky Canada Goose			
Franklin's Gull			
Greater Sandhill Crane		Present	Present
Long-billed Curlew		Present	Present
Snowy Egret		Present	Present
Red-Necked Grebe			
Upland Sandpiper			
Western Snowy Plover		Present	Present
Yellow Rail		Present	Present

\*The focal species for Oregon's aquatic secretive marsh bird monitoring are PBGR, LEBI, AMBI, VIRA, SORA, YERA. In general focal species above are present from late March through November.

Breeding and migrating (especially spring) waterfowl:

American Wigeon  
Blue-winged Teal  
Canada Goose  
Canvasback  
Cinnamon Teal  
Gadwall  
Greater White-fronted Goose (esp. Tule sub-species) - *occurring predominantly during spring.*  
Green-winged Teal  
Lesser Scaup  
Lesser Snow Goose, Wrangel Is. Russia pop  
Mallard  
Northern Pintail  
Northern Shoveler  
Redhead  
Ring-necked Duck  
Ruddy Duck

Breeding and migrating secretive marsh birds:

American Bittern  
Pied-billed Grebe  
Sora  
Virginia Rail  
Yellow Rail

Breeding and migrating colonial nesting water birds

Black-crowned Night Heron  
California Gull  
Clark's Grebe  
Caspian Tern  
Double-crested Cormorant  
Eared Grebe  
Forester's Tern  
Great Egret  
Ring-billed Gull  
Western Grebe  
White-faced Ibis

Breeding and migrating ground based aquatic birds

American Avocet  
American Coot  
Common Snipe  
Common Yellowthroat  
Killdeer  
Marsh Wren  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Tricolored Blackbird  
Willet  
Wilson's Phalarope  
Yellow-headed Blackbird

Migrating (esp. spring) shorebirds:

Dunlin  
Black-bellied Plover  
Greater Yellowlegs  
Least Sandpiper  
Lesser Yellowlegs  
Long-billed Dowitcher  
Marbled Godwit  
Pectoral Sandpiper  
Short-billed Dowitcher  
Sprague's Pipit  
Western Sandpiper

## Location of Type 1 and 2 habitat within the site

Functional Group	Type 1 Habitat	Type 2 Habitat
Breeding waterfowl	Emergent, seasonally flooded and wet meadow wetlands for most species. Open water with tall emergent fringe important for diving ducks.	Open water areas
Colonial nesting waterbirds	Emergent and seasonally flooded wetlands.	Open water area
Secretive waterbirds	Emergent and seasonally flooded wetlands	Wet meadows
Ground based aquatic birds	Emergent, seasonally flooded and wet meadow wetlands.	Open water areas

### Access to Type 1 and Type 2 habitats

Access will be entirely at the discretion of private landowners. Most habitat is accessible primarily by boat. See Figure 3 for general road map (Google Map 2009).

### Audibility/visibility of focal species

Audibility/visibility should not be an issue.

### Conservation issues

- Fee fishing occurs spring through summer potentially causing breeding season disturbance.
- Fee hunting occurs fall through winter potentially causing migration staging and wintering disturbance.
- Privately owned land of this type can be drained at the landowner's discretion. Periodic draining occurs now; change of current land use is a much greater threat. If land management moves away from agricultural uses to other uses, wetland habitat loss would result.
- Non habitat-oriented landowners may not be educated in the full impact of their decisions. Land managing landowners are driven by economic and agricultural production decisions.
- Expanded irrigation water use for sprinkler irrigation could diminish wetland and waterbird values through lowered water levels.

### Conservation measures taken, in progress, or proposed

Management associated with fee hunting and fishing and agricultural use of water provides conservation measures to many waterbird guilds and species.

### Past and current surveys

Colonial nesting water birds have been surveyed in important wetland basins across Lake County annually since 1990.

## **Potential survey methods**

### *a. Description:*

- Nest searches for grebes and other waterbirds nesting in the emergent vegetation in small colonies. Canoe will be necessary for access.
- Colony counts for nesting cormorants, egrets, herons and terns. Aerial surveys will likely be necessary to at least determine location and size of any colonies in the area.
- Census for waterfowl on the open water using aerial surveys or canoe.
- Area searches for migrating shorebirds from observation points near Type 1 habitat.
- Census for gulls and terns during waterfowl counts

### *b. Selection bias:*

### *c. Measurement error and bias*

*\*\*\*Note: all of these would be pending landowner approval except for any surveys completed along highways or other public roads.\*\*\**

## **Potential pilot studies**

- Systematic sampling, probably including the use of playback calls, for secretive marshbirds from the road and from a canoe along channels.

## Literature cited

Bureau of Land Management, Lakeview District ownership map.

<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/lakeview/images/LakeviewDetailedMap.jpg> .

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Google Earth version 5.0. 2009. Image: Rivers End Ranch, Oregon. Accessed March 20, 2009.

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<http://maps.google.com/maps?ll=42.529169,-120.25849&z=13&t=h&hl=en>

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Ivey, GL. 2000. Oregon Closed Basin: Joint Venture Implementation Plans for Eastern Oregon", Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Ducks Unlimited Inc., Lake Oswego , Oregon, 28 September 2000.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2009. National Wetlands Inventory website.

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**Figure 1:** Google Earth (2009) map of Rivers End Ranch



Description updated 4/29/2010





**Figure 3:** Google Map (2009) road view of Rivers End Ranch.

