



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



Batch and Cow Lakes

BCS number: 48-8

Site description author(s)

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Site location (UTM)

Batch Lake: Datum: NAD83, Zone: 11, Easting: 469629, Northing: 4769071
Cow Lakes: Datum: NAD83, Zone: 11, Easting: 526846, Northing: 4771598

General description

Batch and Cow Lakes are located “approximately 15 miles west-northwest of Jordan Valley, east-central Malheur County. These are flat, playa lakes, that were formed when the Jordan Craters lava flow blocked stream flows. The area contains large areas of open water and emergent vegetation. Exposed mudflats are present in late summer. Large numbers of moist soil dependent plants are present.” (National Audubon Society 2008) Batch and Cow Lakes area is approximately 287 ha (National Audubon Society 2008). See Figure 1 for map of Batch and Cow Lakes (Google Earth 2009).

Boundaries and ownership

Boundaries: Batch Lake is approximately 14 miles north east of Jordan Valley, Oregon. Batch Lake is entirely surrounded by lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Upper and Lower Cow Lake is approximately 14 miles north east of Jordan Valley, Oregon.

Ownership: Bureau of Land Management. The south and west side of Cow Lakes are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the north side is managed by the State, and the east side of the lake is privately owned. See Figure 2 for BLM Vale District ownership map, and Figure 3 for Jordan Resource area map.

Water levels

Batch Lake is a small, permanent water source, entirely surrounded by cattails, created by lava flows, and spring fed. The lake has a lava 'shore.' Batch Lake doesn't usually freeze, and may have thermal inputs. Overall the lake is very deep, but contains shallow areas.

Upper and Lower Cow lakes are fed by several creeks and fluctuate greatly throughout the year. This is a desert reservoir, with minimal riparian vegetation due to high water fluctuation, and typically dry 1 in 5 years.

Focal species use and timing

"This cluster of lakes and marshes regularly has several thousand waterfowl and over 100 shorebirds in season (Marty St. Louis pers. comm.). In addition, several dozen pairs of Black-crowned Night-Herons breed in dense marshes in the Batch Lake complex near Cow Lakes (Contreras and Kindschy 1996). The Cow Lakes area is also considered important as a Shrub-Steppe Bird Conservation Area (Altman and Holmes 2000)." (National Audubon Society 2008)

Focal species use and timing for Batch Lake

Focal Guild/Species	Wintering	Breeding	Migration
Secretive Marsh Birds*	Present	Present	Present
Colonial Nesting Waterbirds	Probably but not ideal habitat	Probably	Probably
Ground-based Aquatic Birds	Probably	Probably	Probably
Migrating Shorebirds	Probably large numbers	Present	Present
American White Pelican	Present	Present	Present
Barrow's Goldeneye	Absent	Uncommon	Present
Black-necked Stilt	Uncommon	Uncommon	Uncommon
Bufflehead	Absent	Present (one report)	Present
Dusky Canada Goose	Absent	Absent	Absent
Franklin's Gull	Uncommon /infreq		
Greater Sandhill Crane	Uncommon	Infrequent visitor	Infrequent visitor
Long-billed Curlew	Absent	Present	Absent
Snowy Egret	Uncommon	Uncommon	Present
Red-Necked Grebe	Uncommon	Present	Uncommon
Upland Sandpiper	Uncommon	Uncommon	Uncommon
Virginia Rail	Present	Present	Present
Western Snowy Plover	Uncommon	Uncommon	Present (one report)
Yellow Rail	Uncommon	Uncommon	Uncommon

*The focal species for Oregon's secretive marsh bird monitoring are PBGR, LEBI, AMBI, VIRA, SORA, YERA.

In general focal species above are present from late March through November. Other species present include: Bald Eagle, Clapper Rail, Flammulated Owl, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Sage-grouse, and Western Bluebird.

Focal species use and timing for Cow Lakes

Focal Guild/Species	Wintering	Breeding	Migration
Secretive Marsh Birds	Improbable/rare	Improbable/rare	Improbable/rare
Colonial Nesting Waterbirds	Improbable/rare	Improbable/rare	Improbable/rare
Ground-based Aquatic Birds	Probably	Probably	Probably
Migrating Shorebirds	Some present	Some present	Present
American White Pelican	Present when water is present	Present (non breeding)	Present
Barrow’s Goldeneye	Absent	Uncommon	Present
Black-necked Stilt	Uncommon	Uncommon	Uncommon
Bufflehead	Absent	Absent	Present
Dusky Canada Goose	Absent	Absent	Absent
Franklin’s Gull	Uncommon/infrequent	Absent	Absent
Greater Sandhill Crane	Uncommon	Infreq visitor	Infreq visitor
Long-billed Curlew	Absent	Present	Absent
Snowy Egret	Uncommon	Uncommon	Present
Red-Necked Grebe	Uncommon	Present	Uncommon
Upland Sandpiper	Uncommon	Uncommon	Uncommon
Western Snowy Plover	Uncommon	Uncommon	Uncommon
Yellow Rail	Uncommon	Uncommon	Uncommon

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

Location of Type 1 and 2 habitat within the site for Batch Lake

Functional Group	Type 1 habitat	Type 2 habitat
Secretive Marsh Birds	Cattails on edge	None
Colonial Nesting Waterbirds	Shorelines	Private agricultural fields
Ground-based Aquatic Birds	Unknown	Private agricultural fields
Migrating Shorebirds	Open lake	Open lake, Private agricultural fields, surrounding ditches & sloughs

**See Figure 2 for USFWS National Wetlands Inventory (2009) layer in Google Earth (2009).*

Location of Type 1 and 2 habitat within the site for Cow Lakes

Functional Group	Type 1 habitat	Type 2 habitat
Secretive Marsh Birds	Unknown if at all	
Colonial Nesting Waterbirds	Shorelines	Private agricultural fields
Ground-based Aquatic Birds	Unknown	Private agricultural fields
Migrating Shorebirds	Open lake	Private agricultural fields

*See Figure 2 for USFWS National Wetlands Inventory (2009) layer in Google Earth (2009).

Access to the Type 1 and 2 habitat and visibility/audibility of the birds

Batch Lake is a wetland with thick stands of cattails surrounding it. There are no designated boat ramps at this site. Generally, it is not very open, with limited visibility from the edges, but there are no audibility issues.

Cow Lakes are accessible by county and BLM roads. The entire area is accessible by boat, ATV, or hiking. Snow, flooding, and dirt roads limit accessibility. Visibility at Cow Lakes is very good, and there are no audibility issues.

See Figure 4 for general road access of Batch and Cow Lakes (Google Map 2009). The entire area can be surveyed by boat.

Past and current surveys

No known formal surveys have been conducted at Batch or Cow Lakes.

Conservation issues

At Batch Lake there are some noxious weeds. The cattle grazing nearby is buffered by fence and lava fields. At Cow Lakes there are noxious weeds and water is scarce, especially in dry years. Cattle grazing is present, but grazing is light.

Conservation measures taken, in progress, or proposed

None.

Potential survey methods

Manning and Hartley (2006) suggest that a ground-based survey for all aquatic birds, as well as a migrating shorebird survey, would be valuable, and might be able to be conducted by volunteers. A survey of breeding colonies would also be valuable, and would probably need to be conducted by staff. It also needs to be determined whether aerial surveys for waterfowl would be beneficial.

Potential pilot studies

Literature cited

- Altman, B. and A. Holmes. 2000. Conservation strategy for landbirds in the Columbia Plateau of eastern Oregon and Washington. Final Report Version 1.0. Oregon-Washington Partners in Flight.
- Bureau of Land Management, Vale District ownership map.
<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/vale/images/ValeDetailedMap.jpg> . Accessed March 20, 2009.
- Contreras, A. and R. Kindschy. 1996. Birds of Malheur County, Oregon. *Oreg. Field Ornith. Spec. Public. No. 8*
- Google Earth version 4.3. Image: Batch and Cow Lakes, Oregon. Accessed December 2, 2008.
- Google Map. 2009. Map of Batch and Cow Lakes, Oregon.
<http://maps.google.com/maps?ll=42.275305,-122.01225&z=13&t=h&hl=en>.
Accessed March 20, 2009.
- Manning, Ann and Laura Hartley. March 2006. Important sites for aquatic birds in Eastern Oregon. Version 2.0.
- National Audubon Society. 2008. Important Bird Areas in the U.S.
<http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba>. Accessed December 2, 2008.

Figure 1: Google Earth (2009) map of Batch and Cow Lakes.

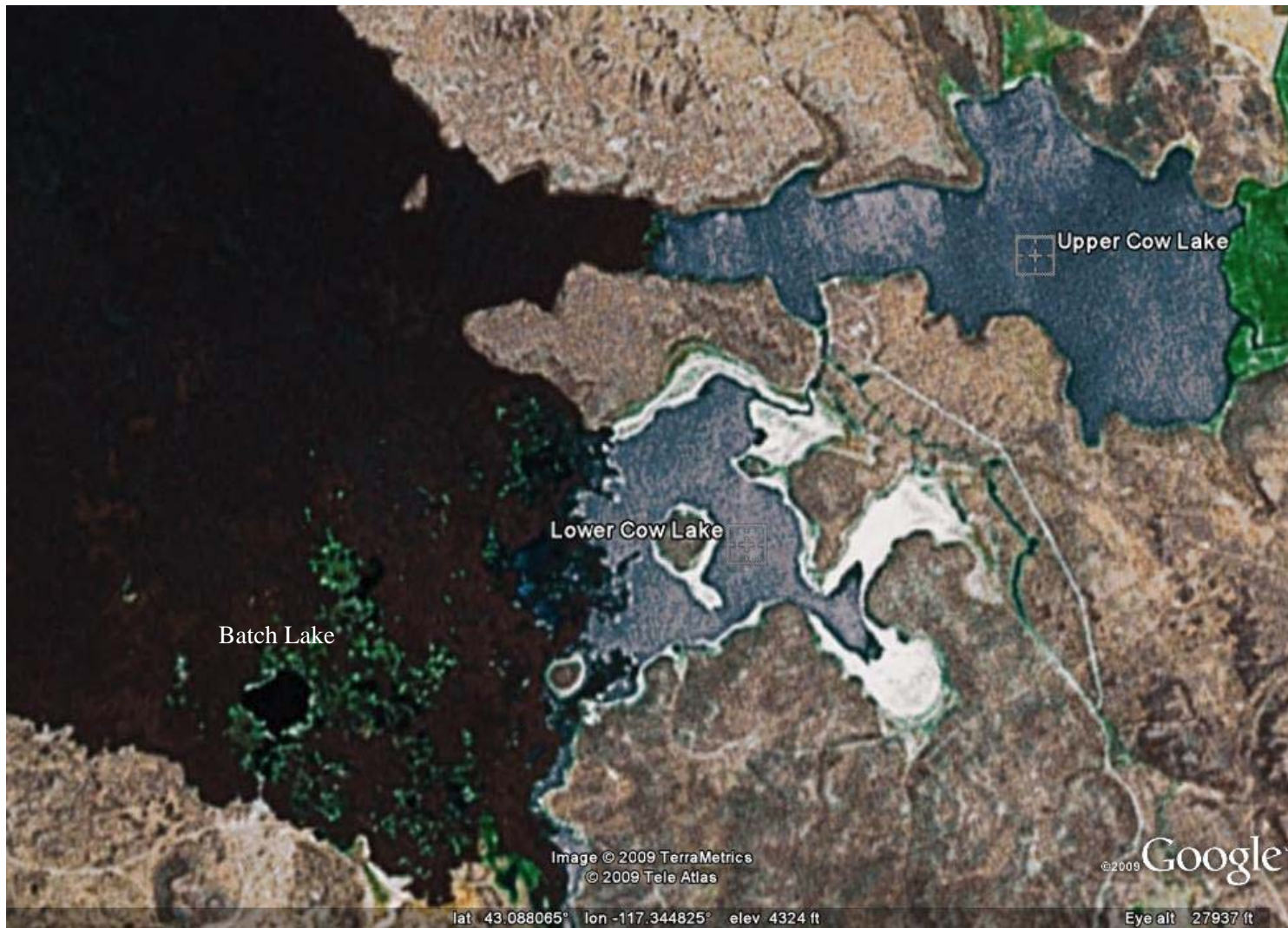


Figure 2: BLM Vale District ownership map. The red box indicates Batch and Cow Lakes.

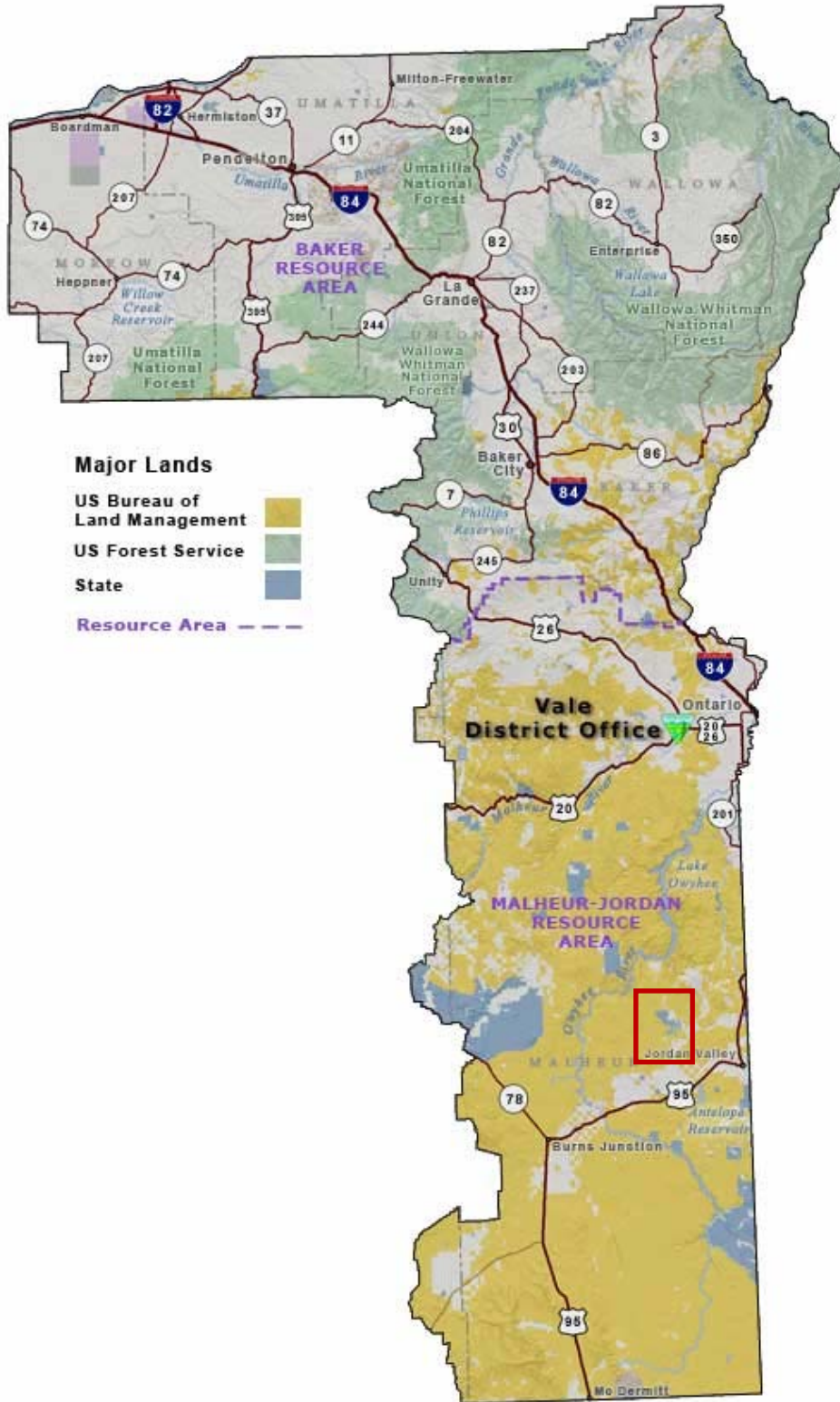


Figure 3: Jordan Resource Area Map provided by Garth Ross.

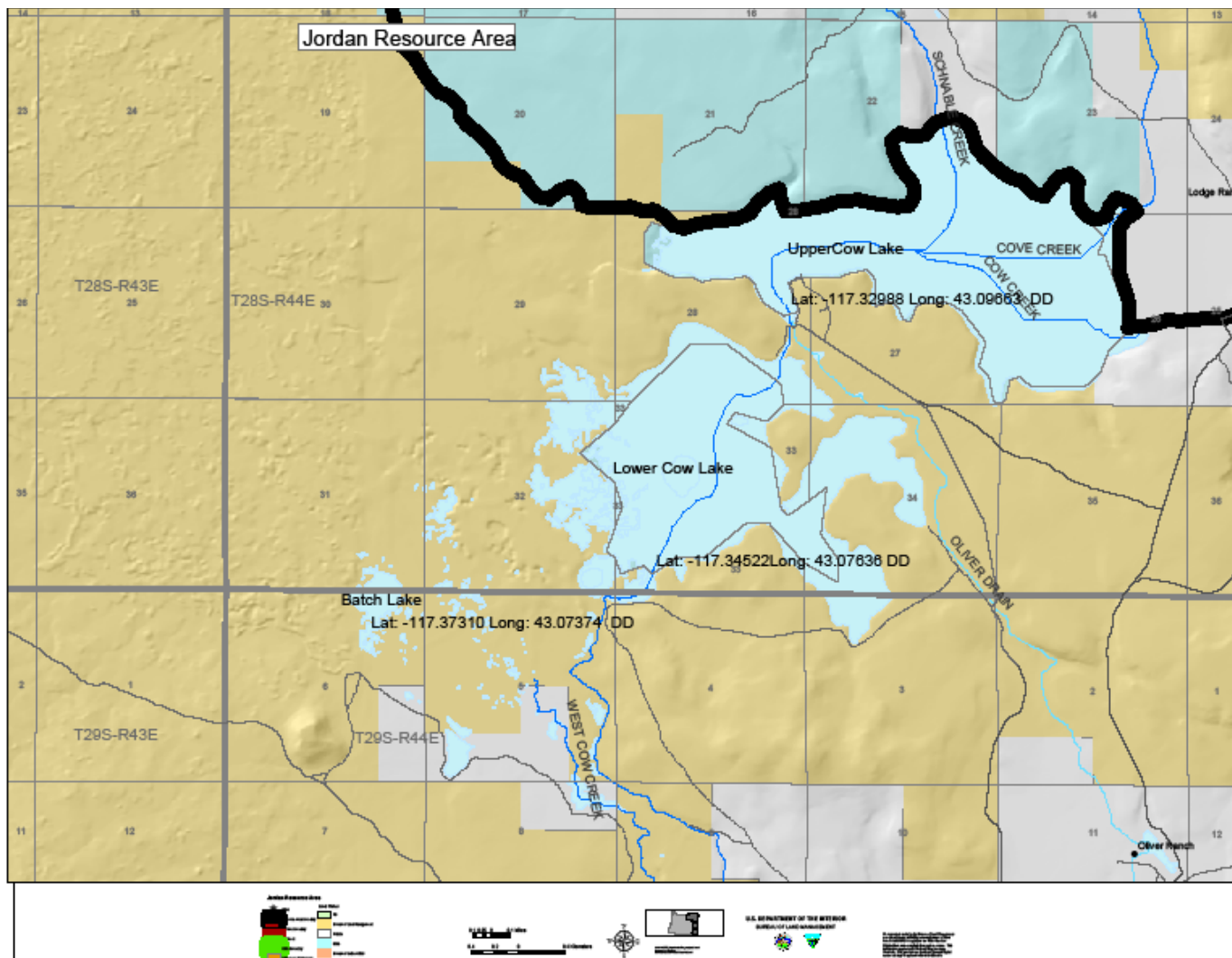


Figure 4: Google Map (2009) road view of Batch and Cow Lakes.

