

JACKSON HOLE



WILDLIFE  
FOUNDATION



NATURE MAPPING  
JACKSON HOLE

## Snake River Float Trips 2017 Annual Report



Compiled by Tim E. Griffith  
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Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation  
330 N. Glenwood Street  
PO Box 8042  
Jackson, WY 83002

## OVERVIEW

2017 was a very challenging year for the Nature Mapping Jackson Hole (NMJH) Snake River Float Trips. A higher-than-normal snowfall during the winter led to two trips being cancelled due to high water levels. In addition, many of the early season trips were reduced to no more than four participants for safety reasons. The high-water flows, murky water colors, and flooded gravel bars also reduced the available food and nesting sites for many of the species found in previous years. Only three eagle nests found along the river in previous years were successful in 2017. Species counts were down and individuals were down as well. Mammal sightings were the lowest of the past five years.

On the positive side, we were able to increase the number of trips down the river by one over 2016. We were also able to add 27 new participants to our NMJH float trip rosters. The Wandering Garter Snake and Lincoln Sparrow, neither of which had been recorded in previous years, were added to the total species list.

Again, we express our deepest gratitude to A.J. DeRosa and the entire staff of [Jackson Hole Vintage Adventures](#) for their outstanding efforts in making the 2017 NMJH Snake River Float Trips a huge success.

## 2017 HIGHLIGHTS:

**Total number of species counted:** 91 species

- Bird species counted: 81 species
- Mammal species counted: 10 species
- Amphibian species: 1 species
- Reptile species counted: 1 species

**Total number of individuals counted:** 5,751 individuals

**Total number of observers:** 52 observers

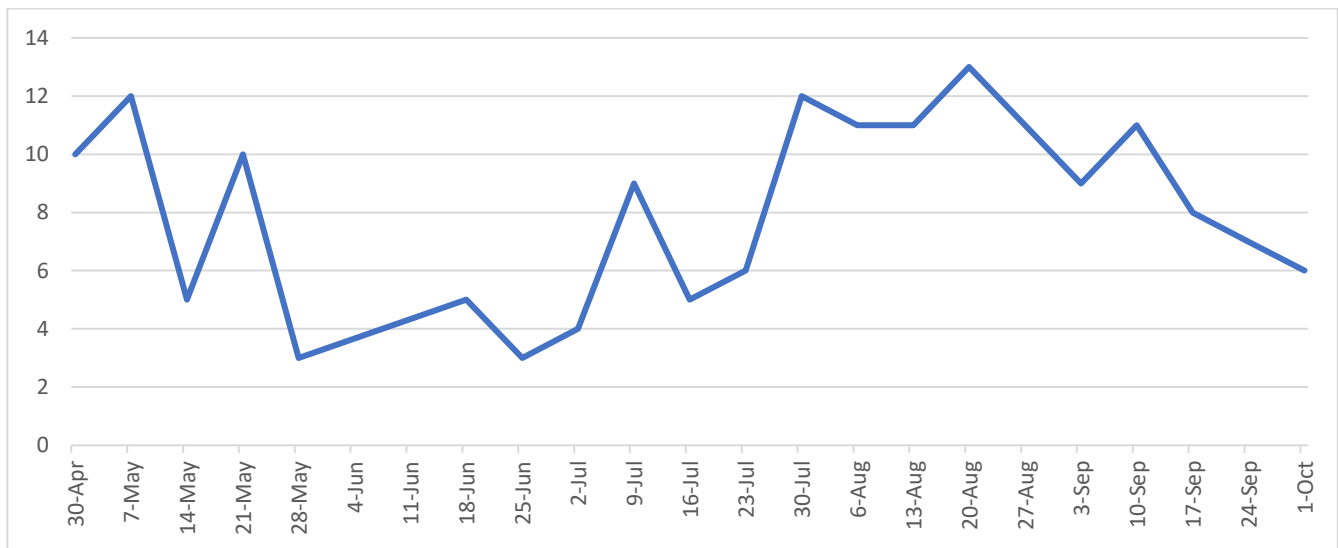
- New participants: 43 people
- Certified Nature Mappers participating: 31 people

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# BALD EAGLE INFORMATION

**Total Bald Eagles counted: 171 eagles**

- High eagle count: 13 eagles on August 20
- Low eagle count: 3 eagles on May 28 and June 25
- Average eagle count: 8 eagles



**Figure 1.** The number of Bald Eagles observed each week during the 2017 Nature Mapping float trip season.

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# ANNUAL SPECIES REPORT

## Top 10 species counted in 2017:

1. Canada Goose: **856**
2. Spotted Sandpiper: **513**
3. Yellow Warbler: **431**
4. Cliff Swallow: **396**
5. Common Merganser: **369**
6. Mallard: **296**
7. Tree Swallow: **292**
8. American Robin: **257**
9. Song Sparrow: **252**
10. American White Pelican: **190**



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## INTERESTING MIGRATION & USE PATTERNS



Over the past few years, program coordinators have desired to show how important the Snake River corridor is to migrating species. Because of the past few years' float trips, we are able to show a very detailed picture of the use patterns and migration timing of several important species along the eight miles of river habitat. The following table shows annual species observations by species of importance, beginning in 2013. Of particular interest are the frequency and movements of the Mountain Bluebird, Cedar Waxwings, and all of the swallow species.

Of note, many of the unique species found this year were detected during prime migration periods.

If we are able to continue the weekly float trips in the future, we will be able to compile detailed maps and graphs to show individual species' uses and movements.

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## SPECIES SIGHTINGS 2013 – 2017:

Species	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Bald Eagle	84	83	63	139	171
Spotted Sandpiper	185	244	221	478	513
American Robin	97	198	101	240	257
Mountain Bluebird	0	19	7	44	103
Cedar Waxwing	58	71	6	73	135
American White Pelican	63	141	161	190	190
Canada Goose	98	194	399	708	856
Tree Swallow	124	112	203	285	292
Cliff Swallow	39	66	72	387	396
Bank Swallow	20	48	10	125	126
Song Sparrow	53	63	73	246	252
Yellow Warbler	145	125	88	424	431
Western Wood-Pewee	40	42	4	128	129
Common Merganser	168	197	115	287	369
Mallard	41	91	133	248	296
Osprey	28	12	17	29	31
Moose	0	1	0	0	1
Elk	0	0	0	113	15
Mule Deer	0	0	0	35	11
Yellow-bellied Marmot	0	2	0	40	38

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## CONCLUSIONS

2017 was a very challenging year for the Nature Mapping Jackson Hole (NMJH) Snake River Float Trips. High water plagued the trips for most of the year, until later in the float season. The water levels were so high float trips scheduled in early June had to be cancelled. Other trips had to be reduced from six Nature Mappers to just four people per boat. Many of the trips were unable to explore the side channels because of fast currents. On a positive side, we were able to observe the impact channelization has on wildlife during periods of high runoff. Nesting Bald Eagles and Osprey numbers were down due to murky water conditions. Avian species such as Spotted Sandpiper, Common Merganser, and Killdeer saw a decline because of loss of nesting habitat along the gravel bars.

Continued access to the river on a weekly basis will allow us to compare wildlife numbers from week to week and year to year. This will also allow researchers to evaluate the migratory patterns of those species that use the waterway annually.

We will once again be floating on a weekly basis in 2018. Our plans continue to have at least one experienced birder and at least two Nature Mappers each week.

Again, we wish to offer praise and thanks to A.J. DeRosa and his fabulous staff for their dedication to this important program. Without their efforts and friendship, we would not be able to continue expanding and improving this vital wildlife monitoring program.

Questions or comments are encouraged.

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