



2018 Snake River Float Trips Annual Report



PO Box 8042 | 25 S. Willow Street – Suite 10
Jackson, WY 83002 | jhwildlife.org

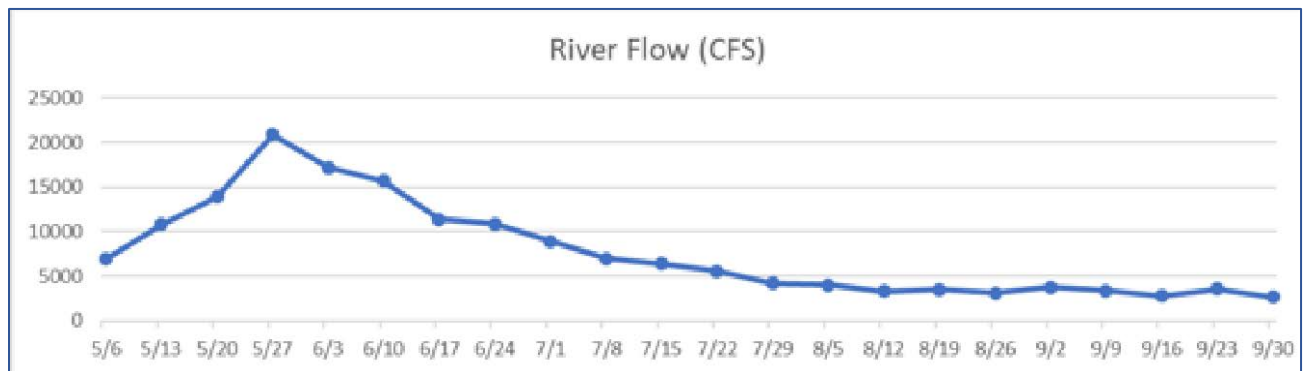
Overview

2018 was a great year to be on the river! The year started May 6 and ended September 30 with a total of 22 float trips throughout the summer months. This year we had 47 individuals participating in Nature Mapping Jackson Hole's Snake River Float Trips. We greatly appreciate everyone's contributions to this important project.

The year started cold and blustery and ended in the same fashion. In between, the river and weather cooperated nicely. River flows were again high, but not as high as during the summer of 2017. River flow rates ranged from 2,650 cubic feet per second to a high of 20,900 cubic feet per second (cfs). No float trips were cancelled in 2018, due to high water unlike in 2017, when two float trips had to be cancelled due to hazardous flow rates.

In 2018, we reduced the number of weekly float participants to a maximum of four per week. Out of this group of four, at least one individual was an experienced Nature Mapper and birder. This slightly decreased the total number of unique participants from a high of 52 individuals for 2016 and 2017, down to 47 individuals in 2018. Due to the decrease in weekly participants we were forced to increase the cost of the weekly trip from \$20.00 to \$30.00 per person; however, this fee increase did not seem to decrease the participation and level of interest amongst our Nature Mapping community.

Chart 1: River Flow Measurements between May 6 – September 30, 2019.



Individual species counts were again down from our high in 2016. This year only 87 distinct species of birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles were spotted on the river. Despite the lower number of species, many species had record high numbers of individuals including Bald Eagles, which set a record with 222 individuals sighted along the 7.5 mile stretch of river, with even more sighted from Jackson Hole Vintage Adventure's camp.

The biggest disappointment in 2018, was the average number of species seen each week. In 2018, we averaged only 28 species per week. Only 2015 and 2013, had a lower than average species counts and those years had very low number of float trips during the peak migration

periods. Mammal species continue to disappoint during the trips. Elk, moose and deer numbers were below average, and beaver and river otter sightings were few and far between.

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 2018 Nature Mapping Jackson Hole Snake River Float Trips a huge success.

2018 Highlights

- TOTAL NUMBER OF SPECIES COUNTED: 87
- BIRD SPECIES COUNTED: 79
- MAMMAL SPECIES COUNTED: 8
- AMPHIBIAN SPECIES COUNTED: 1
- TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS COUNTED: 7,829
- NEW PARTICIPANTS IN 2018: 23
- CERTIFIED NATURE MAPPERS PARTICIPATING: 29

Chart 2: Number of participants between 2013 - 2018.



Species Focus: Bald Eagle (BAEA)

- TOTAL BAEA COUNTED: 222
- HIGH BAEA COUNT: 18
- LOW BAEA COUNT: 3
- AVERAGE BAEA COUNT: 12

Chart 3: 2018 BAEA Counts by Week.

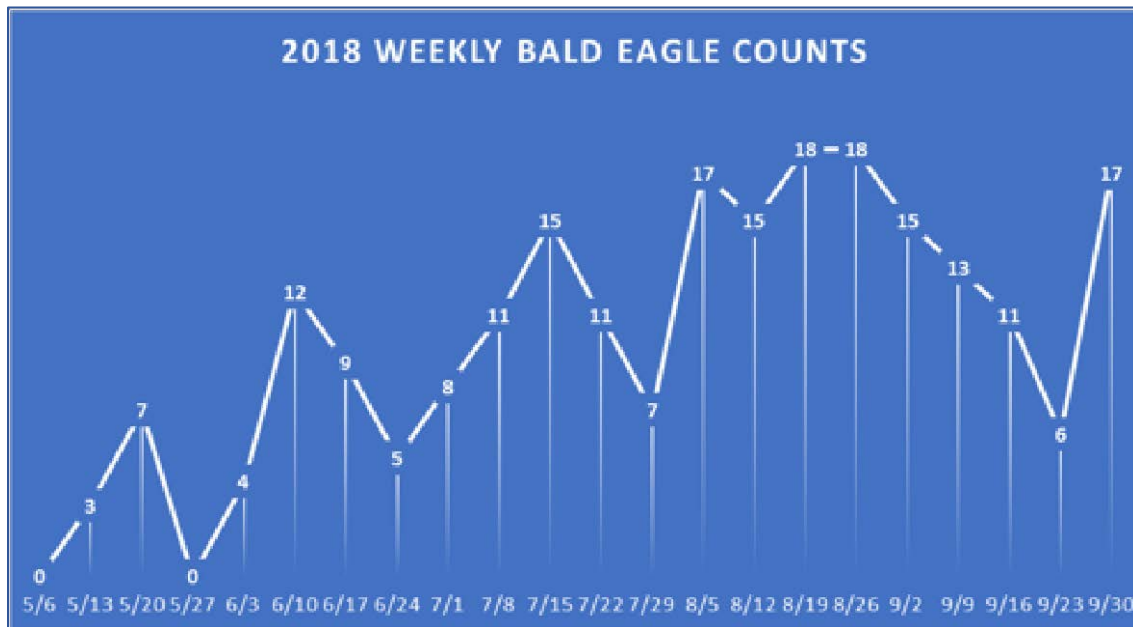
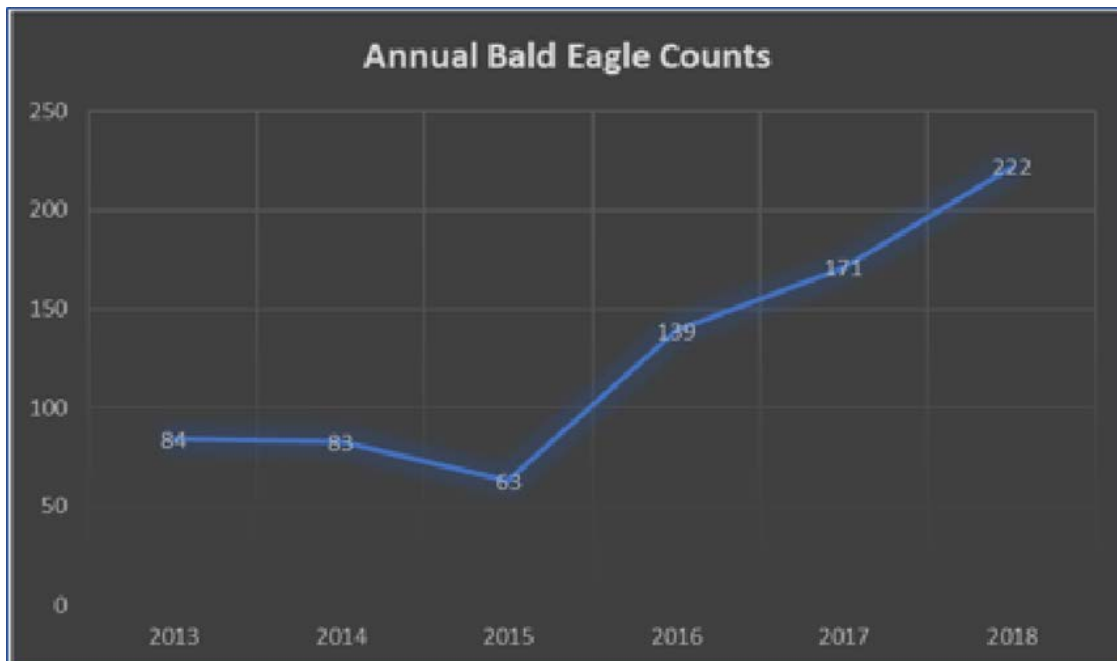


Chart 4: BAEA Counts by Year: 2013 – 2018.



Top 10 Species Counted in 2018

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. CANADA GOOSE: 1,422 | 6. YELLOW WARBLER: 440 |
| 2. CLIFF SWALLOW: 861 | 7. BANK SWALLOW: 401 |
| 3. SPOTTED SANDPIPER: 669 | 8. MALLARD: 336 |
| 4. COMMON MERGANSER: 641 | 9. SONG SPARROW: 306 |
| 5. TREE SWALLOW: 489 | 10. AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN: 2 |

Species Report

The following are graphs which show the average species counts over the life of the project for a few target species. As a whole, the individual species showed similar increases in species numbers. A quick review of the data suggests that the weekly float trips and improved participant identification skills has helped increase the number of individuals seen on an annual basis. The first year for weekly float trips was 2016. In 2013-2015 the float trips were held every other week, which resulted in fewer numbers recorded. For this review one, should look at the data sets from the past three float seasons for the best insights.

Chart 5: Three-year Average for Top 10 Species by Year and by Average.

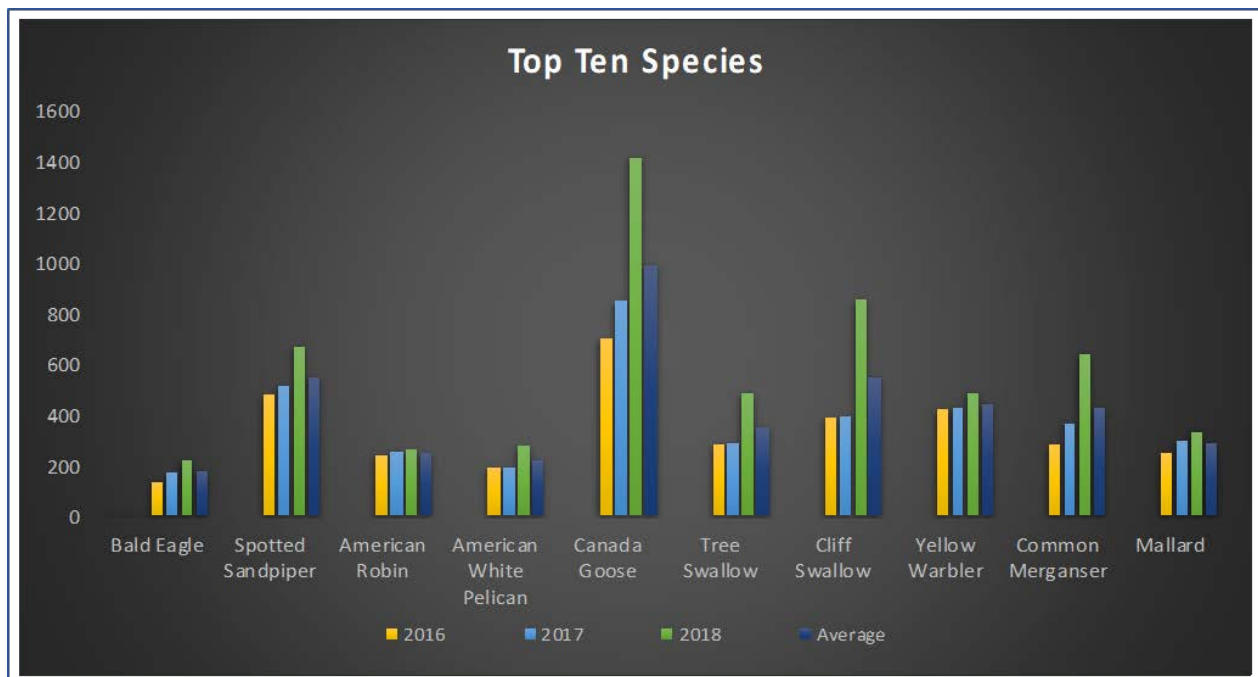


Chart 6: Average count of Spotted Sandpiper (SPSA) since 2013.

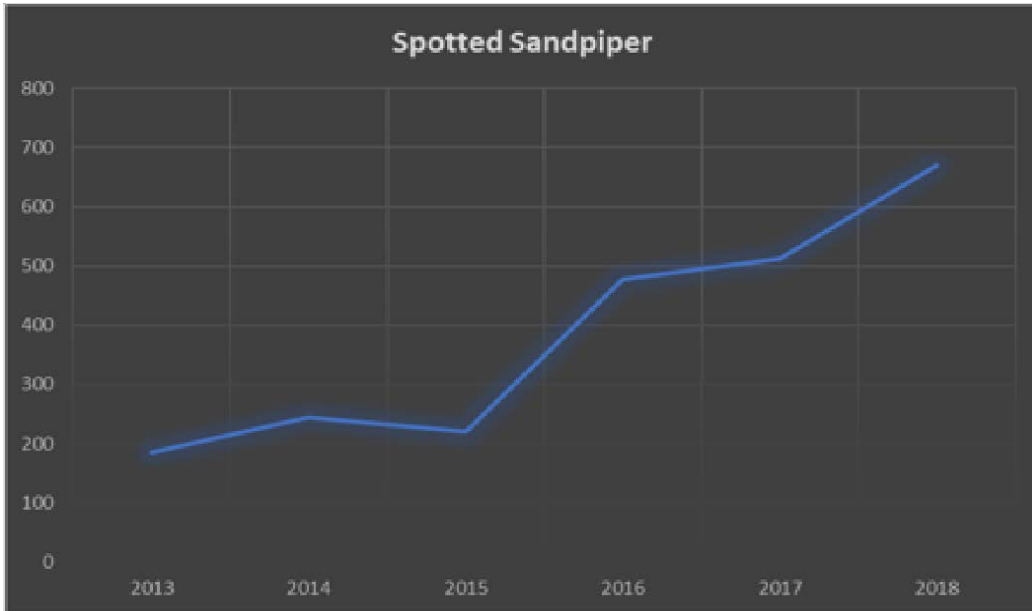


Chart 7: Average count of Mountain Bluebird (MOBL) since 2013.

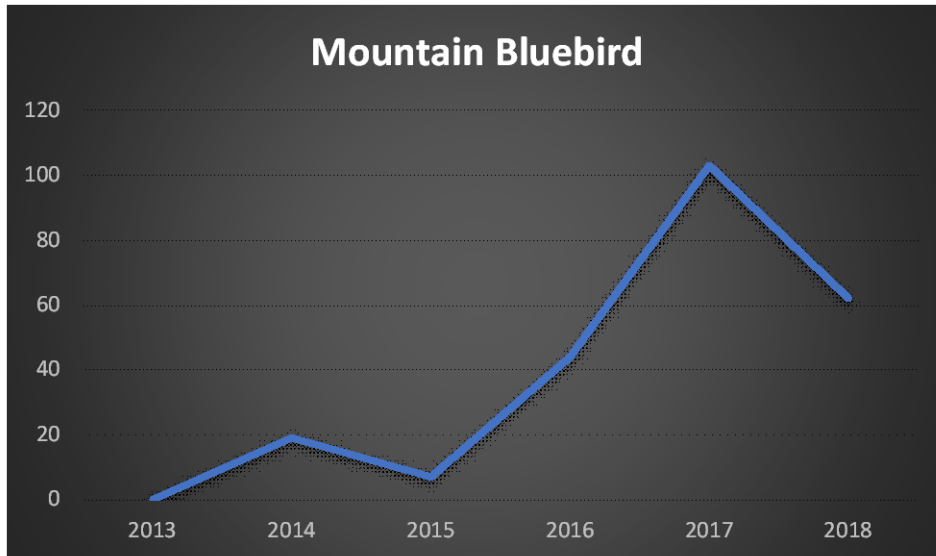
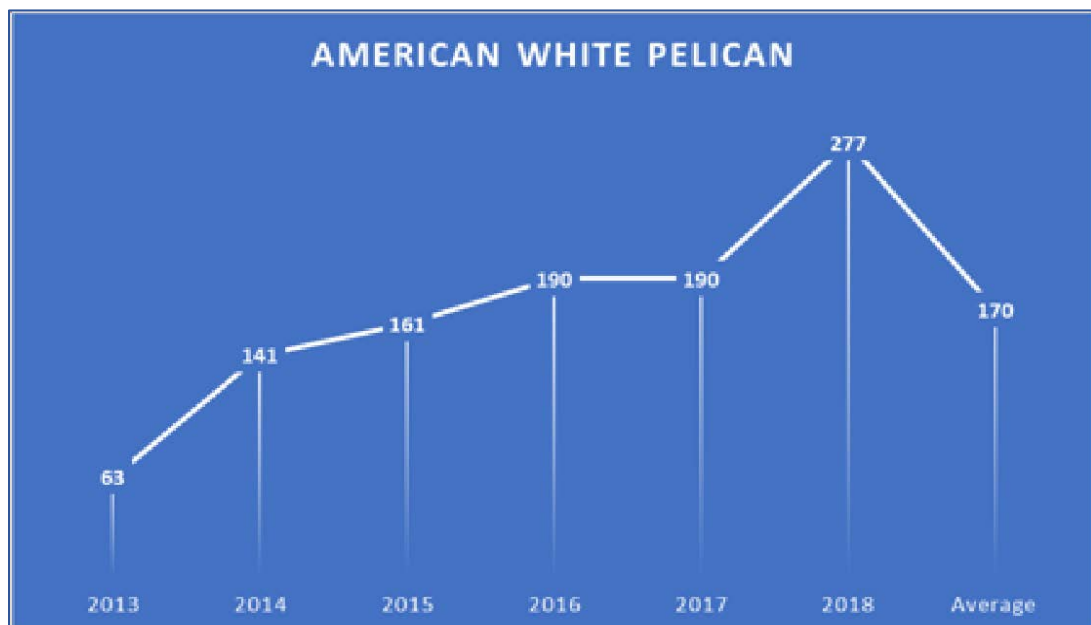


Chart 8: Average count of Common Merganser (COME) since 2013.



Chart 9: Average count of American White Pelican (AWPE) since 2013.



Sightings by Species 2013 - 2018

Species	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Bald Eagle	84	83	63	139	171	222
Spotted Sandpiper	185	244	221	478	513	669
American Robin	97	198	101	240	257	260
Mountain Bluebird	0	19	7	44	103	62
Cedar Waxwing	58	71	6	73	135	138
White Pelican	63	141	161	190	190	277
Canada Goose	98	194	399	708	856	1422
Tree Swallow	124	112	203	285	292	489
Cliff Swallow	39	66	72	387	396	861
Bank Swallow	20	48	10	15	126	401
Song Sparrow	53	63	73	246	252	306
Yellow Warbler	145	125	88	246	252	306
Western Wood Pewee	40	42	4	128	129	97
Common Merganser	168	197	115	287	369	641
Mallard	41	91	133	248	296	336
Osprey	28	12	17	29	31	24
Moose	0	1	0	0	1	5
Elk	0	0	0	113	15	3
Mule Deer	0	0	0	35	11	7
Yellow-bellied Marmot	0	2	0	40	38	70
Total # of Species	72	62	62	111	80	87
Average # of Species	23	14	19	40	26	28

Conclusions

The 2018 Nature Mapping Jackson Hole Snake River Float Trips continued to be popular and vital to the understanding of the fauna along the Snake River south of the Wilson Bridge. Total number of species sighted saw a small decrease from previous years due mainly to a prolonged period of high water. As in 2017, the total number of mammal species saw a decrease from previous years. The only mammal that seems to be increasing along the surveyed stretch of river is the Yellow-bellied Marmot.

The 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 2019. 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 from Jackson Hole Vintage Adventures 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.

