

**From:** [Thomas, Sue](#)  
**To:** [Spragens, Kyle A \(DFW\)](#)  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Aquaculture permit on Dungeness NWR - ? W High Arctic Brant  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 28, 2018 3:34:17 PM

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Now that is astonishing! Thanks for the clarification. Think I'll not mention that part of the Brant status in our comments.

But, thank you for the cheatsheet. I always appreciate the challenge - like pulling the Eurasian from the American Wigeons.

Best,  
Sue

Sue Thomas  
Wildlife Biologist  
Washington Maritime NWRC  
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On Wed, Mar 28, 2018 at 2:33 PM, Spragens, Kyle A (DFW) <[Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov)> wrote:

Sorry to have missed you during my excursion up to Dungeness... what a fantastic backdrop for a refuge!

It would appear the presence of "Western High Arctic Brant stock" is limited; however from flock scans in that paper approximately 13% were classified as "intermediate belly coloration"; that paired with 33% coming from high Arctic breeding origins (based on live band encounters) would indicate to me that some level of presence can occur in Dungeness... but low, perhaps  $\sim 4\%$  ( $0.13 \times 0.33 = 0.0429$ ).

Seeing a grey-belly is certainly a test of patience; you'll question yourself relentlessly until you see it, and when you see it, you can't believe you ever questioned yourself! I created a cheatsheet for the bag checks that shows the stark contrast (see attachment). It would be nice to have a discussion with you, Anita and Shelly as one of the criteria that has to be considered is whether we call the brant hunting opportunity a WHA-zone or not; and Kraege's criteria that has carried into the plan is if a bay is  $>25\%$  WHA in flock composition or harvest bag checks.

I am fairly certain that Clallam is nowhere near that composition; and out of 48 (I think) brant checked over the 3 hunt days there were only 2 questionable birds (funny enough = 4.2%).

Hope this helps.

Kyle

**From:** Thomas, Sue [mailto:[sue\\_thomas@fws.gov](mailto:sue_thomas@fws.gov)]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 28, 2018 11:33 AM  
**To:** Spragens, Kyle A (DFW) <[Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov)>  
**Cc:** Hamer, Matthew D (DFW) <[Matthew.Hamer@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Matthew.Hamer@dfw.wa.gov)>; Evenson, Joseph R (DFW) <[Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Aquaculture permit on Dungeness NWR - ? W High Arctic Brant

Thank you Kyle! That helps quite a bit.

So would the 33% from High Arctic Br grounds fall within the Western High Arctic Brant stock listed in the 2015 State Wildlife AP? I'd love a copy of the Pac Fly Plan when its final, but unfortunately, I just have today to pull together comments on this. Thus the shout out for any superlatives off the top of your head.

I've looked for grey-bellies occasionally when the survey schedule allowed time, but never saw any obvious differences. Is there an easy way to pick them out or are they like hybrid gulls & impossible to distinguish? Is there any benefit to keep trying and if so, do you have any tips for id?

Best,

Sue

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On Wed, Mar 28, 2018 at 10:55 AM, Spragens, Kyle A (DFW)  
<[Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov)> wrote:

Hi Sue,

I apologize for not responding sooner... finally back with my files... I have found the paper that references and provides a little insight towards breeding origin...

Please look at page 28 (Dungeness area section), Figure 4 and Table 4.

While no light-bellied (gray-bellies) were observed during this study; through band resighting efforts Eric Reed was able to show that the Dungeness area serves a large cross section of breeding origin; with 33% from High Arctic breeding areas (this does not mean color, but where they were marked on the breeding grounds), 54% low Canadian Arctic, and 13% from Alaska. This is in vast contrast to Padilla Bay or the rest of the Puget Sound/Hood Canal (see Table 4), suggesting that the Dungeness regions serves as a migration nexus for a much broader spectrum of the Pacific Brant population (black and gray-bellies).

I am going to guess that our isotope feather sampling (which is being analyzed) will produce a similar composition.

Additionally, from my visit during the brant opening weekend, and in talking with Shelly and Anita, the availability of both eelgrass and Ulva sp. Makes the range of foraging opportunities a much broader tidal range than many other brant estuaries along the Pacific Flyway.

If it would be helpful, an updated Pacific Flyway Management Plan was just approved yesterday by the Pacific Flyway Council, but I would have to provide you with an interim-draft for viewing; just let me know.

Hope this helps.

Respectfully,

Kyle

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**Kyle A. Spragens**

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[Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov)

**From:** Thomas, Sue [mailto:[sue\\_thomas@fws.gov](mailto:sue_thomas@fws.gov)]

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 28, 2018 9:14 AM

**To:** Hamer, Matthew D (DFW) <[Matthew.Hamer@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Matthew.Hamer@dfw.wa.gov)>

**Cc:** Evenson, Joseph R (DFW) <[Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov)>; Spragens, Kyle A (DFW) <[Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov)>

**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Aquaculture permit on Dungeness NWR - ? W High Arctic Brant

Thank you Matt,

That is fantastic! Just so it is not lost, do you have a summary of survey methods (distance from plane), time of year, etc? Perhaps a summary of methods from a report? Also, if you all are amenable, I'd like to use the scoter and Brant data. If so, who would I attribute all of that work to? And lastly, is the fall molt of scoters flightless and therefore a time when they are most vulnerable to disturbance?

My apologies for all of these questions!

Sue

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On Tue, Mar 27, 2018 at 5:27 PM, Hamer, Matthew D (DFW) <[Matthew.Hamer@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Matthew.Hamer@dfw.wa.gov)> wrote:

Hi Sue,

This is the first of two emails.

I have compiled some observational data for you from our 2010 to 2016 PSAMP surveys.

In the attached Excel file you'll find survey count data within the Three Crabs and Grays Marsh areas you specified. I also included the area surveyed and the total available area within the boundaries.

I also attached a few map exports showing the observation locations of brant, dabbling ducks, marbled murrelets, and scoters. As well as a map showing the total area surveyed between 2010 and 2016 and a typical single year's (2013) transect coverage. The attachments will come through in two emails due to attachment size limits.

Hope this helps,

Matt Hamer

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**From:** Evenson, Joseph R (DFW)

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 27, 2018 3:24 PM

**To:** Thomas, Sue <[sue\\_thomas@fws.gov](mailto:sue_thomas@fws.gov)>

**Cc:** Spragens, Kyle A (DFW) <[Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov)>; Hamer, Matthew D (DFW) <[Matthew.Hamer@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Matthew.Hamer@dfw.wa.gov)>

**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Aquaculture permit on Dungeness NWR - ? W High Arctic Brant

Scoters would be Nov-May 20th for Winter and Spring staging. The molt period would be late July through early October with peaks in August and September.

**From:** Thomas, Sue [[mailto:sue\\_thomas@fws.gov](mailto:sue_thomas@fws.gov)]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 27, 2018 3:01 PM  
**To:** Evenson, Joseph R (DFW) <[Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov)>  
**Cc:** Spragens, Kyle A (DFW) <[Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov)>; Hamer, Matthew D (DFW) <[Matthew.Hamer@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Matthew.Hamer@dfw.wa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Aquaculture permit on Dungeness NWR - ? W High Arctic Brant

Perfect. I'm building a chart to show which months are most critical to wildlife and therefor times to minimize disturbance. What would you recommend for scoters? I had Nov through May for Brant and dabblers.

Sue Thomas

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On Tue, Mar 27, 2018 at 2:49 PM, Evenson, Joseph R (DFW) <[Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov)> wrote:

Thanks – Matt is working on something for you. The area between three crabs and Grays Marsh hosts one of the largest concentrations of molting scoters in Fall as well. -Joe

**From:** Thomas, Sue [[mailto:sue\\_thomas@fws.gov](mailto:sue_thomas@fws.gov)]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 27, 2018 2:47 PM  
**To:** Evenson, Joseph R (DFW) <[Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov)>  
**Cc:** Spragens, Kyle A (DFW) <[Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov)>; Hamer, Matthew D (DFW) <[Matthew.Hamer@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Matthew.Hamer@dfw.wa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Aquaculture permit on Dungeness NWR - ? W High Arctic Brant

It would be Pacific Oyster in bags and on bottom. The area is actually on state land managed by DNR that we hold under a perpetual lease/easement. All we can do is comment. I'm pretty sure it will go through since it is a commercial request by a tribe, so I'm just trying to recommend conservation measures to lessen the impact. I don't want to ask you to spend any additional time, just looking for anything you had readily to hand, like that info on the haul out. Never knew. Is there any way I can qualify that? Say one of top 5 in state or? Attached is my Mid-winter data summary if it helps to have concrete #s for the smaller area. The proposed project area falls between mm (mile marker 2 & 3). MM 3 and Graveyard Lagoon are the areas of highest use on the refuge by the dabblers and Brant.

Thanks again,

Sue

Sue Thomas

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On Tue, Mar 27, 2018 at 2:16 PM, Evenson, Joseph R (DFW)  
<[Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov)> wrote:

Thanks Sue-

What type of aquaculture is it? It seems the parcel buffer overlaps one of the big Brant haul-out areas. Brant can be selective on where they haul out and I would think that increased vessel activity there could affect their use of that haul out site, or at least be a source of disturbance. Regarding Scoters, it will take me some time to put together observations within the spit. I doubt I have time to map them over the next day.

I have CC'd Matt Hamer to this email – Matt would you have time to quantify scoter

observations from within the spit at Dungeness? Perhaps a map of scoter observations and if we have counts over the past 5-10 years. If you don't have time that is OK too.

I would think that creating a conflict within a NWR that would result in depredation permits would be counter to the mission of the NWR's.

Thanks,

-Joe

**From:** Thomas, Sue [mailto:[sue\\_thomas@fws.gov](mailto:sue_thomas@fws.gov)]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 27, 2018 2:04 PM  
**To:** Evenson, Joseph R (DFW) <[Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov)>  
**Cc:** Spragens, Kyle A (DFW) <[Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Kyle.Spragens@dfw.wa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: [EXTERNAL] RE: Aquaculture permit on Dungeness NWR - ? W High Arctic Brant

Hi Joe and Kyle,

The aquaculture area is in the attached map - 75-150,000 bags in 34 ac. The larger area would extend to either Three Crabs or Grays Marsh in the second clip. Anita and I spoke about 3 Crabs, but Ulrich used the Gray's Marsh extent in his paper on Brant abundance. I thought midwinter totals from your flights would sum it up best, but if you are short on time, I really need any info you can give on the Western High Arctic stock. I remember seeing somewhere that a small portion of Brant on the refuge were from that stock, but there is just no way I'll be able to track that down in a day... I'm also addressing scoters because I'm concerned that they will be hazed or shot for depredation and are on the SWAP as SGCN. I usually see ~20-100 on any given Mid-Winter survey, but if you have info that I can use to justify not granting a depredation permit, that would help.

Thanks!

Sue

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On Tue, Mar 27, 2018 at 12:57 PM, Evenson, Joseph R (DFW)  
<[Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov)> wrote:

Hi Sue-

Do you have a map of the location? I don't have any reports documenting Brant use of the refuge or surrounding area myself. We do have data though from the PSEMP winter flights as well as they aerial survey conducted this year of the area for Brant. Were you interested in data for other species as well? I have CC'd Kyle to this so he could chime in.

Thanks,

-Joe

*Joe Evenson*

**Waterfowl Survey and Sea Duck Specialist**

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[Joseph.evenson@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Joseph.evenson@dfw.wa.gov)

**From:** Thomas, Sue [mailto:[sue\\_thomas@fws.gov](mailto:sue_thomas@fws.gov)]  
**Sent:** Monday, March 26, 2018 4:44 PM  
**To:** Evenson, Joseph R (DFW) <[Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Joseph.Evenson@dfw.wa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Aquaculture permit on Dungeness NWR - ? W High Arctic Brant

Hi Joe,

We are responding to an aquaculture permit managed by Clallam Co and the State (DNR) on ~34 acres within the highest Brant foraging area on the refuge. Since 2010, I've only counted up to 3,000 Brant on the refuge, but that was all that I could really see with a scope from the spit. Do you have any reports that could help document use of the larger area? Also, I have not tried to sort out the proportion of Western High Arctic Brant in Dungeness Bay. Have you?

Sorry, if I had time, I could try to ferret this out for myself, but I have two days to compile info for all sp and I know that you are a good go-to guy for this type of info if you are around. .. Anything you might have would help (e.g. a report already submitted?)...

Thanks for anything you can share,

Sue

Sue Thomas

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