

Yellowtail Wildlife HMA

RESOURCE BRIEF

Importance

The Yellowtail Wildlife Habitat Management Area (YWHMA), located at the confluence of the Shoshone and Bighorn rivers, provides significant habitat for one of the richest concentrations of wildlife in Wyoming. Land was obtained in 1967 by the US Department of the Interior in relation to the construction of the Yellowtail Dam on the Bighorn River; more than half of the 19,400-acre area occurs in Bighorn Canyon National Recreational Area. The YWHMA has one of the largest remaining contiguous examples of old growth cottonwood riparian systems in the state and also includes sagebrush grassland, wetland, and edge habitats. Wetlands and adjacent areas provide important forage and resting areas for migrating waterfowl, crucial winter habitat for big game, and production and forage areas for birds of prey, small birds, small mammals, and fish. Recreational opportunities in the YWHMA, such as hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing, provide revenue to local economies. YWHMA is one of the premier upland game and pheasant hunting areas in Wyoming.

Invasive species, such as Russian knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*), tamarisk (salt cedar, *Tamarix chinensis*), and Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), are significant threats to the ecosystem. Integrated weed management practices include mechanical removal, herbicides, and grazing treatments with goats.



Pond in Yellowtail WHMA. Pryor Mountains in the distance.

Status and Trend in Bighorn Canyon

Numerous habitat improvements have been implemented to support YWHMA wildlife, especially waterfowl. Over 1,000 acres of wetland habitat have been created to support waterfowl since the area's inception. Nesting structures have been constructed to provide protection from predators. Approximately 850 acres are farmed through cooperative leases and provide food and cover to wildlife. YWHMA also includes extensive foraging habitat for bats and is probably the most productive area for bats in the Greater Yellowstone Area.



Discussion

YWHMA is managed by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department through a cooperative resource management approach. Cooperators include the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, local land owners, and stakeholders. Recreational use of YWHMA increased from 19,200 total use days in 2004 to 25,000 in 2006. Continued habitat improvements support wildlife and recreational opportunities and contribute to the local economy.

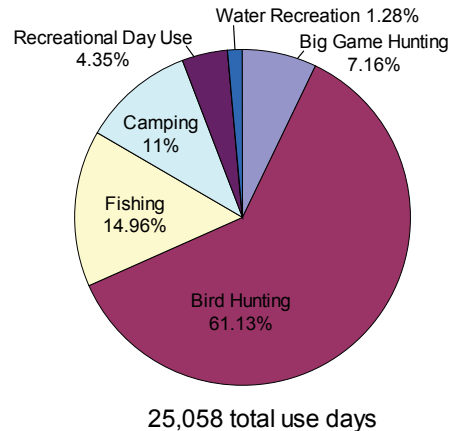


Figure 1. Yellowtail WHMA Recreational Use 2006

