

Birds—Species Occurrence and Use Areas

Two hundred forty-two species of birds, all of which are protected, are known to inhabit the biogeographic area in which the mine plan and adjacent areas are located. It is probable that one hundred thirty-six of these species inhabit the project area (Reference the Division Publication No. 78-16). Twenty-five species of the birds inhabiting the project area have been determined to be of high interest to the State of Utah (Appendix A).

Migratory birds protected by Executive Order # 13186 may inhabit the area. Research from the Utah Chapter of Partners in Flight shows that approximately 75% of these birds are dependent upon corridors of trees and shrubs that grow along our streams and rivers. Due to the lack of vegetation along both Bear Creek and the left fork of Fish Creek it is unlikely many of these species would use these areas. In contrast both the right fork of Fish Creek and Cedar Creek are well vegetated and could provide quality habitat for many species.

Ducks commonly known as water flow are not known to utilize the project area, but may on occasion or during different seasons of the year make limited use of the riparian area. All of these species are of high interest to the State of Utah. Generally speaking, the riparian and wetland habitats encompassed by the project and adjacent areas provided substantial valued habitats for waterfowl. Each species has different life requirements and makes various uses of the riparian and wetland habitats.

For those waterfowl that nest locally, the period March 15 through July 15 is ranked as being of crucial value to maintenance of the population. Following incubation, which dependent upon the species may vary between 20 and 28 days and extend up until mid-August, the riparian and wetland habitats represent a high-priority brooding area. Additionally, the wetland habitat (large open water areas or dense marshland, none of which exists on the project area) is of high-priority for seclusion and protection of adult waterfowl during their flightless period when they moult. Males may begin the moult in early June and both sexes and the young are capable of flight by mid-August.

There is no known historic evidence of the northern bald eagle nesting on the mine plan or adjacent areas.

The American peregrine falcon (relative abundance is endangered) and the prairie falcon (relative abundance in common) are yearlong residence of the mine plan adjacent areas. Each of these species utilizes cliff nesting sites. ~~To date there are no known aerie sites for cliff nesting falcons on the project area. However, suitable nesting habitat for the prairie falcon is widespread. Suitable nesting habitat for the American peregrine falcon cannot be found on the mine plan and adjacent areas. Since existing on the area by prairie falcons would not be unlikely, the project area has been ranked as being of substantial value to this cliff nesting falcon. However, the project area only is ranked as being of limited value to peregrine falcons.~~

For each falcon their aerie site while being utilized and a one-half kilometer radius would be ranked as being of critical value to maintenance of their populations. The falcon's period of use at the aerie site spans the spring and early summer period—prairie falcon, April 15 to June 30; peregrine falcon, March 1 to June 30.

The level of data relative to site specific use of the project area by cliff nesting falcons (not including the kestrel) is unsatisfactory and there could be aeries that have not been identified. Therefore, it is recommended that intensive surveys be initiated on the area for determination of locations for cliff falcon aerie sites.