



**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

Idaho

# Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey

National Conservation Area

## Annual Manager's Report—Fiscal Year 2014



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# 1 Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey Profile

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## Designating Authority

**Designating Authority:** Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area

**Date of Designation:** August 4, 1993

## Acreage

**Total Acres in Unit** 531,300

**BLM Acres** 483,700

**Other Federal Acres** 1,600

**State and Private Acres\*** 46,000

\*State and Private acres are not part of the total of the unit acres

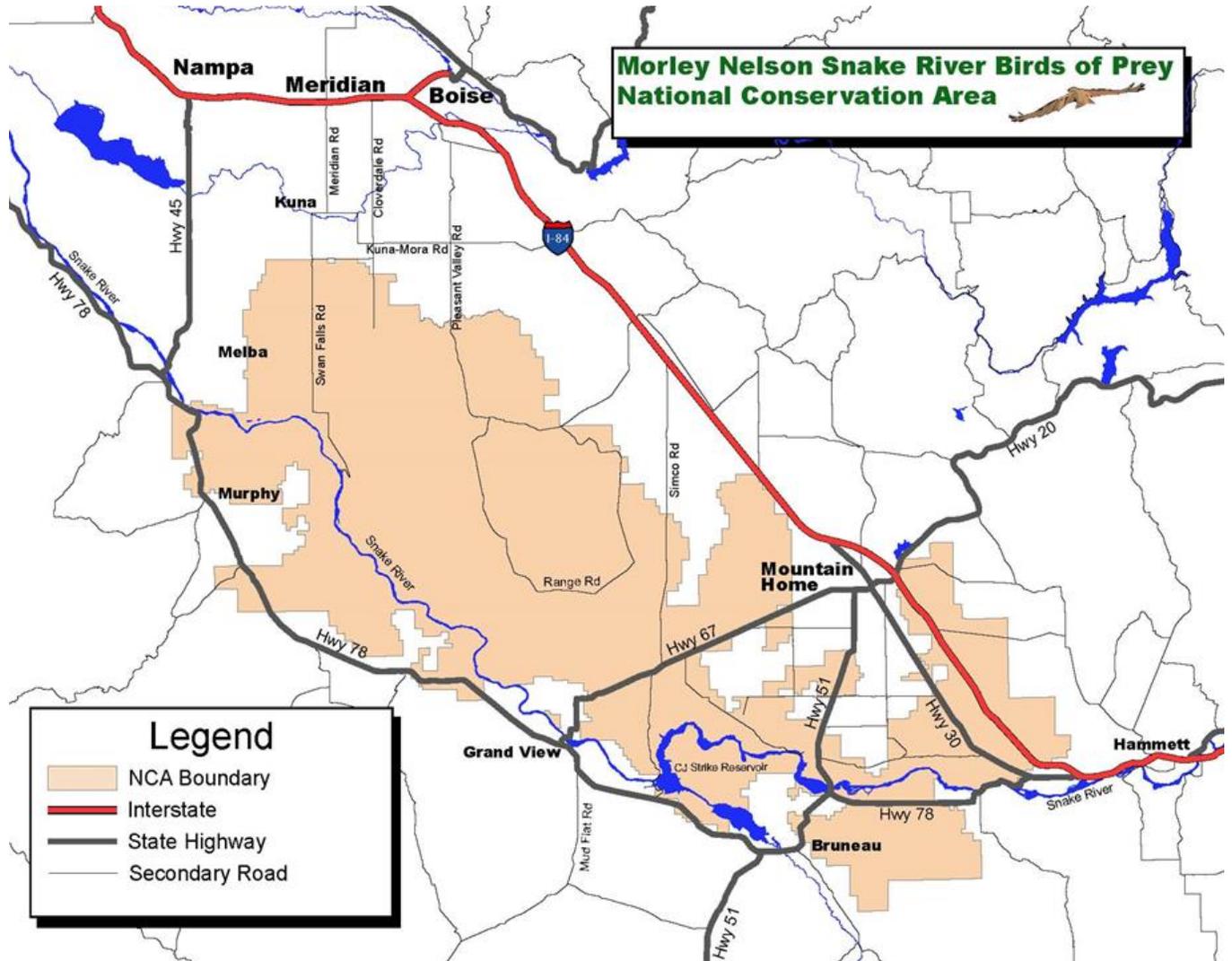
## Contact Information

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**Field Office Name** Four Rivers Field Office  
**District Office Name** Boise  
**State Office Name** Idaho

## Budget

**Total Fiscal Year 2014 Budget** \$1,307,800  
**Subactivity 1711** \$1,231,000  
**Other Subactivities' Contributions** \$31,000  
**Other Funding** \$45,000

## Map of Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area



### Managing Partners

The Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA) does not currently have established partnerships to assist with the management of the unit.

### Staffing

A total of 3 permanent Bureau of Land Management (BLM) staff to include a manager, outdoor recreation specialist, environmental education specialist and one seasonal biological technician are dedicated to the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA). Additionally, a wildlife biologist, ecologist, archaeologist, range conservationist, and range technician are shared between the NCA and rest of the Four

Rivers Field Office and the Idaho State Office. Other support staff such as: GIS, Planning, Fuels, and Section 7 Consultation are shared across all of Boise District including the NCA.



Snake River Birds of Prey NCA/Four Rivers Staff and Volunteers at Dedication Point Seedling Planting Field Day

## 2 Planning and NEPA

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### Status of the Resource Management Plan

The current land use plan for the NCA is the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Resource Management Plan (RMP) with a Record of Decision finalized in September 2008. An implementation strategy was developed for the NCA's RMP in September 2009 and again reviewed in 2011.

### Status of Activity Plans

A travel management route inventory has been completed for the NCA and the southern portion is planned to undergo travel management planning in 2015. An interpretative sign plan for the NCA was finished in 2011 and BLM staff will replace old signs at Dedication Point and other locations this next year. The Boise District has a sign management plan that includes the NCA needs. Recreation plans have been completed for two general areas within the Snake River Canyon that receive high volume recreational use. In 2008a Wild and Scenic River inventory was completed for the eighty one miles of the Snake River in the NCA.

### Status of the RMP Implementation Strategy

The implementation strategy was completed in 2009 and reviewed in 2012 to increase workload focus on raptor and restoration research, fire and fuels management, travel management, and law enforcement patrol. To broaden youth outreach our environmental education program needs to build relationships with new programs focused more on rural schools and organizations in Southwest Idaho closer to the NCA such as the Cities of Kuna, Melba, Mountain Home, Nampa and Grand View, Idaho. We recognize and have been focusing youth engagement more in the Boise area and need to broaden our positive influence. Many of the restoration and raptor research goals were funded through cooperative initiatives with partner agencies and volunteer groups to leverage funds, capacities and foster future opportunities

### Key National Environmental Policy Act Actions and/or Project Authorizations

The Gateway West 500 Kilo-watt Transmission Line proposed route and alternatives crosses a mosaic of land ownerships (Federal, State, and private), with independent and sometimes conflicting impacts, requirements and objectives among the various levels of government. The BLM's right of way authority extends only to public lands under its jurisdiction. The BLM worked closely with cooperating agencies and other authorizing entities to find complementary siting decisions for all parties for the Gateway West Transmission line proposal. However, for some segments of the project, the authorizing

entities have not been able to agree on an acceptable route. One of these areas involves Segments 8 and 9 and siting in or around the NCA. The Environmental Impact Statement analyzes routes located in the NCA and routes that generally avoid the NCA. The principal siting issue involves a requirement in the enabling legislation (Public Law 103-64) that the NCA be managed “to provide for the conservation, protection and enhancement of raptor populations and habitats and the natural and environmental resources and values associated therewith, and of the scientific, cultural, and educational resources and values of the public lands in the conservation area.” This requirement conflicts with State and local government objectives to avoid private lands and site the project on public land in the NCA.

The Proponents’ proposal, including environmental protection measures, and BLM standard requirements for surface-disturbing activities for routes in the NCA would reduce some impacts of the proposal. However, enhancement components were lacking for routes in the NCA that were analyzed in the Final EIS. As part of their Final EIS comments, the Proponents submitted an “Enhancement Portfolio” for routes located in the NCA. While the Portfolio has merit and moves the proposals closer to the enhancement requirement in the enabling legislation, the BLM needs more time to collaboratively work with stakeholders to evaluate and refine routing options and the Portfolio for future NEPA analysis. In 2014 subcommittees of the Boise Resource Advisory Council formed and meet 11 times over a 4 month period to identify and provide analyses for routes and review and provide input on the companies Enhancement Portfolio for routes that pass through the NCA. The RAC subcommittee for Gateway evaluated impacts to people and resources for 25 different routes and provided a wide array of recommendations that would strengthen the company’s portfolio.

Most other NEPA analysis was tied to restoration research, fuels reduction and raptor research projects for implementation in 2014 across relatively small areas of the NCA.

# 3 Year's Projects and Accomplishments

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## General Accomplishments

The NCA hosted its annual National Public Lands Day event to engage the local Treasure Valley communities in on-going efforts to restore native shrub communities that support raptor prey base species. Volunteers of all different ages assisted NCA staff in planting locally collected and grown native plant material within one of the riparian woodland communities. Over 900 containerized native shrubs and grasses were planted, and soil erosion protection structures were installed to minimize soil inputs into the Snake River.



General restoration-focused projects have continued to focus on re-establishing shrub structure to the NCA. In 2014, over 3,000 locally collected and grown native plant materials were planted using over 100 volunteers. The NCA Research Working Group was formalized this year as they initiated work to develop a charter with a set of coordinating and collaboration bylaws. This group also presented all of the NCA partnership research at a full day long session at the Great Basin Society for Ecological Restoration.

## Raptor Habitat

NCA partners have completed seed collection for target restoration forb, grass and shrub species including: Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *wyomingensis*), 4-wing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), rabbitbrush (*Ericameria* spp.), winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), and Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*). Seed is cleaned for plant propagation via an Interagency Agreement with USFS Lucky Peak Nursery. In 2014 the Northwest Lineman College which consisted of just over 100 students associated with this electrical line worker training program who are required to contribute core hours to community outreach planted 4,000 seedlings at Dedication Point and Kuna Butte on the NCA. Seed increase for winterfat NCA ecotypes is in progress using the Great Basin Native Plant Project via Oregon State University's Malheur Experiment Station.

For wildlife, NCA volunteer partners have completed annual maintenance of ferruginous nesting platforms, and screech owl nesting boxes. Volunteers also assisted with monitoring screech owl, golden eagle, and ferruginous hawk nesting success. Yearly maintenance, banding and nest site success is conducted by a number of volunteers. The annual Christmas bird count routes mainly falling with the NCA boundaries occurred with over 40 participants this year.



## Recreation

Cove Recreation Site is a managed fee recreation campground within the NCA. It received a recorded 1280 visitors in FY 2014. The primary activities associated with this site are camping, fishing, boating, relaxation, and wildlife viewing. A camp host is on site providing information and light maintenance. Fees are used to perform maintenance and provide additional improvements. A Federal Register Notice was nearly completed to address campground rules for Cove Recreation Site which were proposed many years ago and needed to be finalized for enforcement purposes. Collaboration with Boise District Engineering, Weeds, and Force Account staff successfully ensured that all recreation sites and facilities were maintained in good operational condition including the implementation of unique noxious weed treatment for Russian olive along the Snake River. Idaho Power and NCA staff used an Idaho Power motorized boat to navigate to the site as it was the only access to treat the area.



## Cultural

The NCA continued to implement the National Programmatic Agreement for Cultural Resources in FY2014. The NCA and Four Rivers Field Office (FRFO) continued the Native American Consultation forum called “*Wings and Roots Native American Campfire*” consultation sessions with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes. Seven monthly meetings were attended by the NCA Manager and one meeting specific for the Gateway West proposal.

### Resource protection projects activities

#### Identification

- The NCA/FRFO Archaeologist and Idaho Army National Guard Archaeology crew identified 47 new cultural resource sites this year.

#### Recordation

- The archaeologists recorded the 47 new sites.

## Monitoring

- Idaho Power Company Archaeologists monitored 94 cultural resource sites along C. J. Strike Reservoir. The FRFO Archaeologist and Idaho Army National Guard monitored 51 existing sites on the NCA in 2014.

## Protection

Bookmarkers printed by the BLM with a cultural resource site protection message were handed out at most presentations associated with the NCA. Three additional signs, one road access closure and 8 protective barriers were installed on the Orchard Combat Training Center (OCTC) to protect cultural resources on the NCA.



## Education, Outreach, and Interpretation

### Cultural

BLM staff displayed artifact replicas and talked about primitive technology to the public gathered at Celebration Park in the NCA on three days in May as part of the Idaho Archaeology and Historic Preservation Month 2014 lectures and outreach events. In addition, staff participated in the Archaeology Fair and presented on the grounds of the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office and Archaeology Day's at Celebration Park.

## Natural Resources and Great Outdoors

National Public Lands Day event of 2014 consisted of planting native shrubs at Kuna Butte in an old fire scarred area with a live raptor presentation with two of our NCA birds at lunch time. A second event held that same day on the north end of the NCA where substantial “trigger trash” had accumulated as the area is used often for target shooting and other dumping. A private business group named “Underground Guns” sponsored the entire event and over 100 people participated in a pancake breakfast and trash clean up event. We also held a live raptor presentation and outdoor education session during their breakfast. This year three “trash cleanup” projects were successfully executed with volunteer assistance from Idaho Army National Guard, Mountain Home Air force Base and the BLM Idaho State Office. Another cleanup was performed as a mitigation measure by Verizon.

A total of 68 school visits with live raptors were made in 2014 reaching 5184 children and adults. Another 3,219 children and adults were reached through various other outdoor education venues such as libraries, senior facilities, Head Start programs, Celebration Park, Kuna City Park Raptor Camp, Desert Discovery Days, Migratory Bird Day, and Deer Flat BioBlitz.



2014 City of Kuna Raptor Camp with Merlin the Great Horned Owl

This year we held the first science float events (i.e. raft trips) where staff took students from Reed Elementary, City of Kuna and Rimrock High School, Grandview Idaho down the Snake River to learn about river ecology, raptors, botany, geology and cultural resources. Lastly, staff facilitated six teacher Wild About Raptor workshops and reached 83 teachers with raptor information and activities.

Reaching Out to 8403 Youth in 2014.



**Partnerships**

Partnerships are an integral part of project implementation in the NCA and engage a diverse suite of private, state, federal and non-profit groups. Working in a with these partners in cooperative efforts to seek common goals, leverage funds and build additional capacities in implementing science based conservation and resource management on the NCA. Utilizing this strategy will also be available to provide science based approaches for raptor conservation and habitat management in other in sage brush steppe habitats across the Great Basin.

**Partners with the Morley Nelson Snake River Bird of Prey National Conservation Area**

Idaho Fish and Game	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Idaho Army National Guard
Mountain Home Air Force Base	Peregrine Fund	Golden Eagle Audubon
Agricultural Research Station	Rocky Mountain Research Station	U.S. Geological Service

Idaho Native Plant Society	Idaho Botanical Gardens	College of Idaho
Boise State Raptor Research Center	University of Idaho	City of Kuna
Lucky Peak Nursery	Conservation Land Foundation	Celebration Park

## Volunteers

Volunteer projects in 2014 were focused on recreation and biological resources and utilized 6,415 hours of volunteer hours of work. Most of the recreation hours (1,602) were provided by the two camp hosts at Cove Recreation Site. The remainder (4,813 hours) was generated through trash clean up days, wildlife monitoring efforts, native seed collections and seedling plantings, and other habitat improvement projects. Compared to the last several years of reports, these volunteer efforts have more than tripled the capacity of proactive work efforts occurring on the NCA in 2014. This text is only a placeholder. Select this text and start typing the information for the NLCS unit. This text is only a placeholder. Select this text and start typing the information for the NLCS unit.



Native Seedling Planting Prior to Pre-emergent herbicide for cheatgrass with Ruby the dog pitching in

## Land (or Interests in Land) Acquisitions

There were no land acquisitions or interests in lands activities for the NCA completed in fiscal year 2014.

# 4 Science

## Science

This was another pivotal year for fostering sound science and informed decisions on NCA. The Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey NCA Science Working Group (NCA Science Working Group) was formalized this year as they initiated work on a charter with the intent to solidify developing and implementing raptor and restoration science. This group also presented all of the NCA partnership research at a full day long session at the Great Basin Society for Ecological Restoration.

The NCA Science Working group which consists of multiple state, federal and university partners is also coordinating with other local and regional science and management programs such as the Boise State Raptor Research Center, Great Basin Landscape Conservation Cooperative (GB-LCC), Great Basin Fire Science Delivery Project (GB-FSD), Great Basin Reynolds Critical Zone Observatory (GB-CZO), Great Basin Long-Term Agro-Ecosystem Research Program (GB-LTAR), Sagebrush-Steppe Treatment Evaluation Project (SageSTEP), Great Basin Native Plant Project (GBNPP), and other DOI, USDA and NSF-sponsored projects in wildlife biology, and rangeland restoration and management.

This research partnership is expanding the NCA's capacity to promote collaborative science and management via technology transfer to agencies and organizations responsible for rangeland restoration and raptor management throughout the northern Great Basin. The following tables demonstrate the partner participants and list of ongoing science projects occurring on the NCA.

Table 1. NCA Science Working Group Participants

<b>Bureau of Land Management:</b> Anne Halford, Patricia Roller, Robin Fehlau, Thomas McGinnis, Joe Weldon	<b>Boise State University:</b> Nancy Glenn, Alejandro Flores, Lucas Spaete, Jennifer Forbey, Julie Heath, Marie-Anne De Graaff, Marcelo Serpe, Jim Beltoff, Jesse Barber	<b>Boise State Univ. Raptor:</b> Research Karen Steenhof, Michael Kochert, Marc Bechard, Mark Fuller, Kirk Bates, Jesse Barber, Jim Belthoff, Jennifer Forbey, Julie Heath
<b>College of Idaho</b> Eric Yensen, Teresa Tarifa	<b>Boise District RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE</b> Dr. Neil Rimbey (Co-chair) Karen Steenhof (Co-chair) Gene Gray Donna Bennett Rick Raymondi Greg Nelson, Mayor of Kuna	<b>Golden Eagle Audobon Society:</b> Sean Finn

	John Chatburn, Idaho Office of Energy Resources Betsy Buffington John Robison, Idaho Conservation League (substitute for Betsy Buffington)	
<b>Idaho Military Division:</b> Charlie Baun, Kevin Warner, Nick Nydegger	<b>Idaho Power:</b> Brett Dumas	<b>Northwest Nazarene University:</b> Dale Hamilton
<b>Oregon State University:</b> Clint Schock, Lea Condon	<b>Paiute –Shoshone Tribe:</b> Ted Howard	<b>Peregrine Fund -</b> Erin Katzner – community development
<b>Proposed SRP Birds of Prey Friends Group</b>	<b>University of Idaho:</b> John Abatzoglou	<b>USDA ARS:</b> Stuart Hardegree, Alex Boehm, Beth Newingham, Pat Clark
<b>USDA NRCS:</b> Aberdeen Plant Materials Center – Derek Tilley	<b>USFS RMRS:</b> Jeff Ott, Francis Kilkenny, Jeanne Chambers, Nancy Shaw	<b>USFWS:</b> Matt Stuber
<b>USGS FRESC:</b> Matt Germino, David Pyke, Robert Arkle, Michael Kochert, David Pilliod, Douglas Shinneman, Todd Katzner, Tom Zariello	<b>Utah State University</b> Mark Brunson	

Table 2: Demonstration Science Projects

<b>Agencies Collaborating</b>	<b>Project Title</b>
USGS, BLM, Boise State	Quantifying and predicting fuels and the effects of reduction treatments along successional and invasion gradients in sagebrush habitats, JFSP, 11-1-2-30
USGS, BLM, USFS RMRS	Fire Rehabilitation Effectiveness: A Chronosequence Approach for the Great Basin, JFSP, 09-S-02-1
USGS, BLM	Climate Response and Early Demographics
ARS, BLM, Grazing Permittee	High intensity low frequency grazing study to test the reduction of cheatgrass fuel loadings while meeting Rangeland Health Standards

<b>Agencies Collaborating</b>	<b>Project Title</b>
USGS, BLM	Effects of herbicide applications for shrubland habitat restoration on ground dwelling and pollinator insect communities on the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area
Boise State, BLM	Establishment of Artemisia tridentata seedlings following AMF inoculation
Boise State, BLM, USGS	Snake River Birds of Prey Remote Sensing Project, BLM, L14AC00371
Boise State, BLM	Herbicide impacts on forb performance in degraded sagebrush steppe ecosystems.
Boise State, Idaho Military Division	OCTC Remote Sensing of Vegetation and Impacts Mapping, Idaho Military Division, PO 3463
Boise State, Idaho Military Division	Population Trends and Ecosystem Services of Piute Ground Squirrels, Idaho Military Division NGBID-12-D-0003
USGS, BLM, OSU	An examination of factors promoting the establishment of the desert moss, Tortula papillosissima (Copp.) Broth. (synonymous with Syntrichia papillosissima )
USDA ARS, UI, USU, USGS	Weather Data and Forecasting Applications for Management of Ecologic Site Transitions, GCA 2052-13610-011-03
USDA ARS, BLM	Cooperative Science & Management Program Between the BLM Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area & the USDA ARS, MOU 2052-13610-011-08
USGS, BLM	Plant responses to rainfall and microsite in sagebrush communities: Keys to restoration success in the Great Basin.
USDA ARS, USU, UNR, UCD, BLM	A systems approach to seedling establishment on degraded rangeland: Managing ecological processes driving recruitment bottlenecks (I am not sure what the BLM project/agreement number is)
USGS, BLM	Long-term territory occupancy and productivity of Golden Eagles in relation to habitat changes.
USGS, Boise State, USFWS, BLM	Golden Eagle dietary responses to habitat alteration and climate change
Boise State, USFWS, USGS	The role of trichomoniasis and ectoparasites in Golden Eagle ecology
USGS, BLM, Boise State	Home range and habitat use of nesting Golden Eagles in relation to diet.

# 5 Resources, Objects, Values, and Stressors

## Raptors

One of the primary missions for the NCA is to conserve, protect and enhance raptor populations. The NCA strategy to monitor raptor population trend is to focus on four indicator raptor species which are Golden Eagles, Prairie Falcons, Ferruginous Hawks and Burrowing Owls to serve as representatives for a wider variety of types occupying the NCA.

### Golden Eagle Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Fair	Stable

### Golden Eagle Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
23 nests in 2014	23 nests	23 nests	23% reproduced to fledge young in 2013; 48% reproduced to fledge young in 2014

### Prairie Falcon Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

### Prairie Falcon Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
200+ nests	Inventoried every 10 years due to complexity	Unknown	Numerous siting observations of paired male and female falcons and young while monitoring other raptors

### Ferruginous Hawk Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Good	Stable

### Ferruginous Hawk Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
55 nesting platforms	55 nests	55 nests	44 nest with young in 2014

### Burrowing Owl Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Fair	Downward

### Burrowing Owl Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
25 identified sites	25 sites	25 sites	13 sites produced young in 2014



Burrowing Owl Predation & Resource Interference Study: Raven scavenges Burrowing Owl prey at nest site

### Sage Steppe Habitat (Prey-base habitat) Status and Trend Table

Status of Resource, Object, or Value	Trend
Poor	Downward

## Sage Steppe Habitat (Prey-base habitat) Inventory, Assessment, Monitoring Table

Acres in Unit	Acres Inventoried	Acres Possessing Object	Acres Monitored in FY14
375,200 BLM & Non-Military Tank Maneuvering Acres	10,000	130,200	3200

### Stressors Affecting Raptors

Currently, invasive cheatgrass and associated increased wildfire disturbance is one of the primary stressors to raptor prey base habitat. Approximately, 65% of the prey habitat has declined with increased cheatgrass and disturbance regimes. Nesting, perching/hunting habitat and opportunities are not currently limited. Due to the proximity of urban/rural interface SW of Boise, ID, off-road vehicle activity, garbage dumping, vandalism, and development all cumulatively interact negatively to impact the resources, objectives and values for which the NCA was established.



Golden Eagle returns to the nest with a snake while the mate incubates the egg

# 6 Summary of Performance Measure

In general, representative raptor species monitored in recent years appear to be in fair condition and are stable after earlier declines associated with habitat degradation resulting from significant disturbances associated with cheatgrass invasions, increased wildfire return intervals and impacts associated with urban/rural interface such as off-road vehicle use and dumping. Sixty five percent, roughly 245,000 acres of upland prey base habitat is overall in poor condition; however, recent research has been initiated with numerous partners to further enhance restoration efforts.

<b>Resources, Objects, and Values Status Summary Table</b>		
<b>Resource, Object, or Value</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Trend</b>
Golden Eagles	Fair	Stable
Prairie Falcons	Good	Stable with Fluctuations
Ferruginous Hawks	Good	Stable need to pay attention to shooting impacts
Burrowing Owls	Fair	Slight downward trend with increased raven populations
Upland Vegetation	Poor	Declining with pockets of resiliency and function

# 7 Manager's Letter

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This year staff members worked diligently to seek out partners, leverage available funds and build capacity to increase youth outreach, foster responsible recreation, and integrate science into raptor and restoration management.

This allowed staffs to initiate research focused on what keystone raptor species are preying upon where they are utilizing prey base, and on effective habitat restoration and wildland fire fuel reduction practices. In the past, our youth outreach and environmental education program has been very successful in reaching out to schools and programs in greater Boise and nearby suburban areas. This year staff continued to initiate new partnerships with community leaders and educators in nearby communities of Kuna, Melba, and Grandview, Idaho to engage and educate youth from more rural areas in birds of prey conservation, the Snake River Canyon and the NCA as a whole.

The Gateway West Transmission Line proposal continued to present numerous opportunities for the BLM to consider routing alternatives for the proposed project and was also tasked with how best to adhere to the NCA Enabling Legislation as it relates to this proposal.

A highlight for 2014 was that the NCA Science Working Group initiated the charter, increased additional partners and continued to further inform BLM in regards to relevant and important management decisions by developing a future Scientific Strategy. With this group and other partners we will strive to ensure the continued protection, conservation and enhancement of raptor populations and habitats, and of the scientific, cultural and educational resources across the NCA for future generations.





Functioning winter fat and sagebrush prey base habitat areas in the NCA. Photo by Bob Wick, BLM



**NATIONAL  
CONSERVATION  
LANDS**

## **Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area**

Bureau of Land Management  
Four Rivers Field Office  
3948 Development Ave.  
Boise, ID 837054  
Phone: 661-391-6000

(Insert date of report here)

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