



AQUATIC LANDS HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN — Species Spotlight

Black Tern — *Chlidonias niger*

Protection status: *State monitored in Washington State*

(Status and distribution watched to prevent need of further protections)

Black terns are migratory birds whose Washington breeding grounds include the eastern slope of the Cascade Mountains within the Okanogan and Columbia Plateau eco-regions.

Life history



Black tern. Photo: Mike Yip.

Black terns lay their eggs between May and June, with a clutch of two to three eggs. The young *fledge* (take their first flight) within two to three weeks of hatching.

Black terns winter in Central and South America. During their spring and fall migration—between their wintering habitats and breeding grounds in North America—black terns spend time near freshwater lakes, rivers, and interior wetlands in the United States.

Habitat use

The eastern Washington lowlands provide the kind of nesting habitat these small birds prefer: where emergent plants, such as cattails and bulrushes, grow in and along shallow prairie sloughs, rivers, lakes, wet meadows, and marshes. Sometimes, you'll find these birds making their nests on mats of floating vegetation or wood.

Why are black terns included in the Aquatic Lands HCP?

The Aquatic Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) addresses 29 species of animals that depend on submerged or intertidal lands for either all or a significant portion of their life history. Specific threats that warrant protection of the black tern include:

- **Altered or degraded nearshore habitat** for breeding or migration from activities such as construction or maintenance.

Construction activities often remove native vegetation that provides critical nesting habitat for black terns. These activities also may create shading which can kill off native vegetation. Often, when native vegetation is removed, invasive species—such as purple loosestrife—take over and outcompete native plants. In addition, shoreline “armoring”—such as bulkheads—can disrupt important habitat.

- **Poor water and sediment quality from stormwater runoff.**

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Washington State Department of Natural Resources • Aquatic Resources Division

- **Recreational activities**, which can disturb habitat or cause harm and harassment to this species.

The Aquatic Lands Habitat Conservation Plan

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is the steward of more than 2.6 million acres of state-owned aquatic lands beneath Washington's navigable lakes, rivers, marine waters, and estuaries. DNR sustainably manages these aquatic lands on behalf of the people of the state—to protect fish and wildlife and to provide opportunities for commerce, navigation, and public access.

The increased demand for the use of aquatic lands can be harmful to aquatic habitats and species. To encourage a balanced approach to managing and protecting these lands, DNR is developing an Aquatic Lands **Habitat Conservation Plan** (HCP). The HCP will provide a framework for managing the aquatic lands under DNR's stewardship to ensure the continued health of our state's marine and fresh waters and the species that inhabit them..

Learn more

For more information about DNR's Aquatic Lands HCP and the other species that are covered in the plan, visit: www.dnr.wa.gov/aquaticHCP.

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