

Sea Duck Joint Venture

Annual Project Summary for Endorsed Projects

FY 2008 – (October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008)

Project Title: Annual Survey of Moulting Black Scoters in James Bay
(SDJV Project # 82)

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Project Description: Black Scoters form major summer moulting concentrations offshore along the western James Bay coast of Ontario. These are thought to represent a large portion, possibly as much as two thirds, of the adult male component of the population breeding in northern Quebec and northern Ontario. Given the stability of these flocks during the flightless period, this situation provides an ideal opportunity for population monitoring.

Surveys of these flocks have been undertaken in 1977 and 1991, and an SDJV-sponsored study of survey methodology development was completed in 2006. Information from these was used to develop the present project which is an operational survey.

The plan for this presumes full coverage of all moulting flocks in the western James Bay survey area, and involves two observers who would survey the flocks from a light twin-engine aircraft, e.g. Cessna 337, (estimated 20 hours flying time including positioning). All flocks would be visually estimated from the air by one observer and digital photos taken of as many of these as is practical by the other. Larger flocks (>300) would be counted from the digital images, and a sample of the smaller flocks would also be counted for comparison with the estimates. Correction factors would be applied as required. An integrated GPS would provide locations on the images of flocks digitally recorded so that distribution could also be monitored over the years.

Surveys have been planned for one location (Longridge Point) in southern James Bay near Moosonee, and along a strip approximately 25 km wide, extending from southeastern Akimiski Island north as far as Hook Point near Cape Henrietta Maria.

Objective: To undertake a yearly count of moulting Black Scoters along the western shore of James Bay to provide an index suitable to monitor trend of the Atlantic population of this species.

Preliminary Results: The survey was attempted during the period of 27-31 July 2008 but was unsuccessful due to a series of logistical problems. The aircraft that we planned to use became unavailable at the required time. Arrangements were made to use a substitute aircraft which was on long-term lease to the provincial government. As a result of miscommunications about positioning and hourly rate, this aircraft proved to be much more costly than anticipated. Compounding this were the unusually humid conditions along

western James Bay which led to extensive fog over the moulting areas. The weather conditions, budget concerns, and ultimately personnel availability led to the survey being cancelled for this year after several flights were unsuccessful in reaching the scoters.

Project Status: This project has been reassessed in light of this year's experience and a revise proposal for future work has been submitted to the SDJV. It is proposed to do further methodology development work in western James Bay plus an extensive survey of all likely moulting areas along the James and Hudson Bay shores, including the Belcher Islands, and extending from the central Hudson Bay shore of Quebec west along James Bay to the Hudson Bay coast of Manitoba. Plans for future operational monitoring surveys would be based on the results of this.

Project Funding Sources (US\$). Complete only if funded by SDJV in FY08; this is used to document: 1) how SDJV-appropriated funds are matched, and 2) how much partner resources are going into sea duck work. Include approximate dollar value of in-kind contributions in costs. Add rows as needed for additional partners.

SDJV (USFWS) Contribution	Other U.S. federal contributions	U.S. non-federal contributions	Canadian federal contributions	Canadian non- federal contributions	Source of funding (agency or organization)
\$8000 est.					USFWS
			\$2500		CWS
				\$2000	OMNR

Total Expenditures by Category (SDJV plus all partner contributions; US\$). Complete only if project was funded by SDJV in FY08; total dollar amounts should match those in previous table.

ACTIVITY	BREEDING	MOLTING	MIGRATION	WINTERING	TOTAL
Banding (include only if this was a major element of study)					
Surveys (include only if this was a major element of study)		\$12500			
Research					