

Observing ducks and geese at Coats Marsh, Gabriola Island.

Coats Marsh is used by year-round residents, winter residents, and transients in the fall and spring. Because of the small size of the lake, they are very susceptible to human and canine disturbance. This disturbance potentially impacts not only ducks and geese attempting to breed there, some of which used tree cavities for nesting, but it also impacts transients who are using the lake for two or three days during their arduous migrations.

Following is the current list of species that have been observed using the lake at one time or another (Jul.2015-Jul.2017).

| SWANS, GEESE, DUCKS | List 16 | Version 3.2 |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Wood duck | Aix sponsa | |
| American widgeon | Anas americana | |
| Northern shoveler | Anas clypeata | |
| Blue-winged teal | Anas discors | Breeding pair |
| Mallard | Anas platyrhynchos | Breeding pair |
| Gadwall | Anas strepera | |
| Ring-necked duck | Aythya collaris | |
| Canada goose | Branta canadensis | |
| Bufflehead | Bucephala albeola | |
| Common goldeneye | Bucephala clangula | |
| Trumpeter swan | Cygnus buccinator | |
| American coot | Fulica americana | |
| Hooded merganser | Lophodytes cucullatus | Breeding pair |
| Pied-billed grebe | Podilymbus podiceps | Breeding pair? |

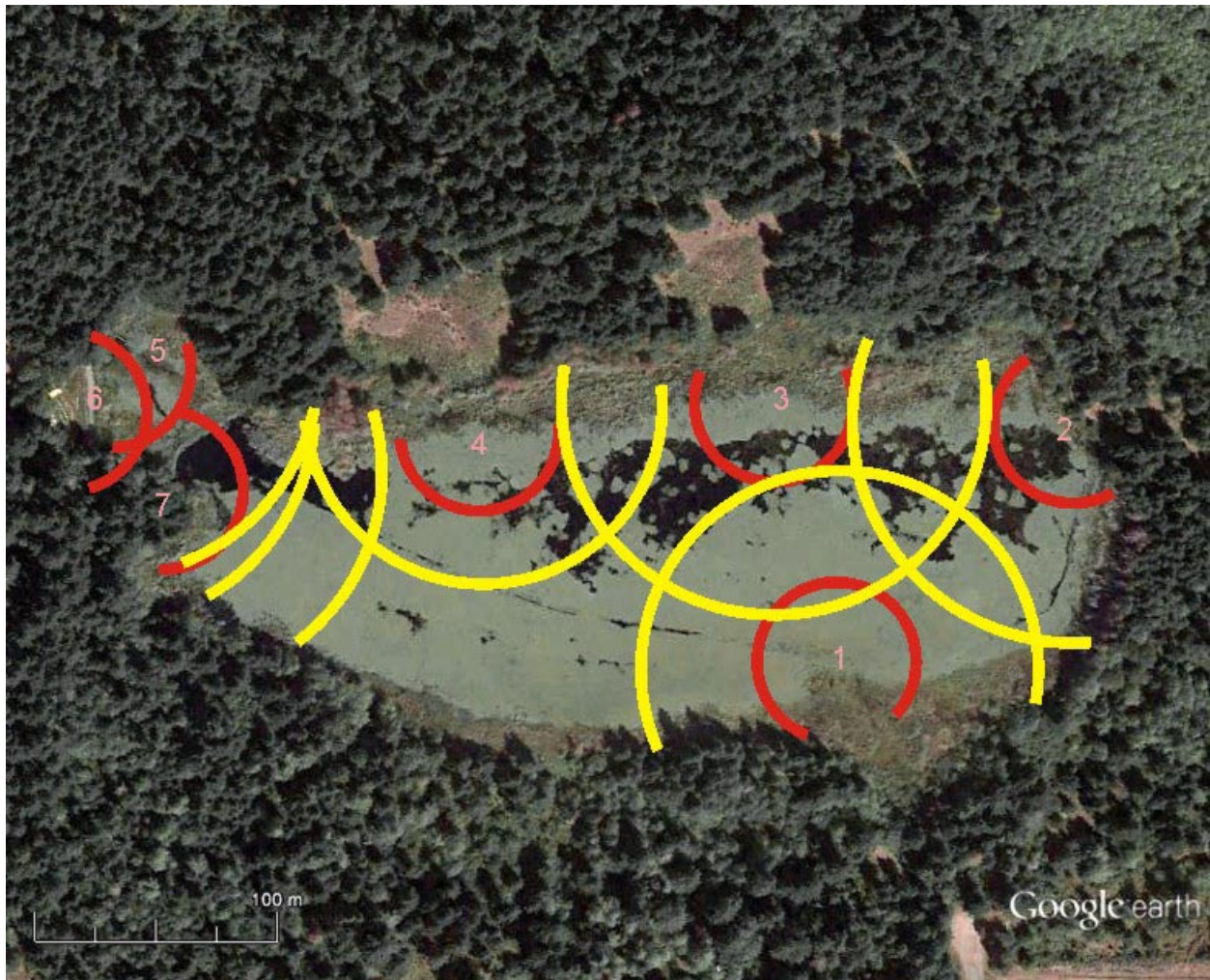
Of these only mallards are year-round residents.

Ducks that have been observed with ducklings are mallards and hooded mergansers. With nests, pied-billed grebes and blue-winged teals.

Ducks and geese that are present in couples during the breeding season, but have not been observed nesting or with young, are buffleheads and Canada geese.

Most common winter residents are ring-neckeds, buffleheads, and widgeons.

Many of the remainder are transients, usually present for only a few days at a time. Transient Canada geese and mallards, sometimes in large numbers, are seen in addition to those that spend more time there.



The above map of the lake shows the areas where disturbance by human presence is most likely. The arcs are based on my observations as a fairly cautious observer taking advantage of any cover, and not moving swiftly within sight of the ducks, but not using a blind of any sort.

The red arcs (55m range) indicate areas where the birds will take flight immediately when one or more of the flocks see you. When this happens, some transients leave the lake never to be seen again, but the residents and those that spend more time there will fly off into a distant part of the lake.

The yellow arcs (90m range) indicate areas where the birds will obviously be alarmed at your presence. They will either paddle away at great speed, or they may take flight depending on how much cover is available for the viewer. Transients particularly are usually very nervous.

The viewing areas are: 1. Stanley Road entrance; 2. Popular spot off of the East Path on private property (extensive view of the lake); 3. North shore east clearing (this spot has some cover afforded by trees at the water's edge); 4. North shore west clearing (this spot also has some

cover); 5. The weir; 6. The berm; 7. The south end of the beaver dam with a view over most of the western portion of the lake.

It's clear that keeping the south shore a disturbance free zone is important not just during the breeding season, but during the spring and fall migrations.