

PROJECT

George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary



BC COASTAL Westham Island, Delta, 30 km south of Vancouver.



Lesser Snow Goose

COMMON WILDLIFE

- Lesser Snow Goose
- Trumpeter Swan
- Mallard
- Sandhill Crane
- American Wigeon
- Western Sandpiper
- Great Horned Owl
- River Otter
- Bald Eagle
- Black-Capped Chickadee
- Dowitcher
- Pied-Billed Grebe
- Muskrat

Highlights

The George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary overlaps with the Alaksen National Wildlife Area (NWA). Together these areas make one project consisting of 613 hectares of managed ponds, treed dykes, meadows and intertidal marshes of the Fraser River estuary.

Millions of visitors from around the world have visited this wetland project, one of the top ten bird-watching areas in Canada. Its value to Pacific Flyway migratory birds has been recognized through its designation as a RAMSAR site (wetland of international significance), the establishment of the Sanctuary and NWA status, and by the public in the form of over 60,000 visitors annually.

This site was the first Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) conservation project in BC, and represents an enduring coastal partnership between DUC, Federal and Provincial governments, the British Columbia Waterfowl Society (BCWS), and the Reifel family.

At the Sanctuary, DUC has growing opportunities for interpretive signs and education programs to promote public understanding of coastal habitat issues in the Fraser River estuary, the top priority BC coastal habitat conservation goal.



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Ducks Unlimited Canada conserves, restores and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

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Background

The George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary dates back to 1963, when the late George H. Reifel agreed to lease a portion of his farm property to the British Columbia Waterfowl Society (BCWS) to develop a bird sanctuary in the Fraser River estuary. In 1969, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) was brought in to assist with the development of managed ponds and islands and has continued this partnership effort through conservation agreements between DUC, the BCWS and the landowners. The Sanctuary lies at the junction of the main channel of the Fraser River and the Strait of Georgia, and includes much of the natural intertidal marshes of the estuary in addition to managed wetlands. The natural marshes are critical feeding areas for the wintering flock of Lesser Snow Geese, swans and thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds. The remainder of the Reifel family holdings on Westham Island consisted of farm fields and sloughs. In 1972, when the Sanctuary land and the farm were acquired through a combination of sale and donation to the Federal crown, all of these areas were provided with long-term habitat security.

Over the years, DUC has maintained water control structures and optimized the management of upland and wetland habitats on these federal lands to meet space and food requirements of the millions of wintering waterbirds, shorebirds and other wildlife using the Fraser River estuary.

In 2000, DUC and the BCWS entered into a partnership to develop and deliver education programs from the site. With additional funding from the BC Habitat Conservation Fund and the Vancouver Foundation, these programs are being introduced to schools in the Greater Vancouver area.



THIS PROJECT IS THE RESULT OF COOPERATIVE EFFORTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:

- Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service)
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- BC Ministry of Water, Land & Air Protection
- BC Habitat Conservation Trust Fund
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- The British Columbia Waterfowl Society
- Vancouver Foundation



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Ducks Unlimited Canada, founded in 1938, is a private nonprofit charitable organization dedicated to the conservation of wetlands for the benefit of North America's waterfowl, wildlife and people.