

Western Channel (f09) - top hotspot

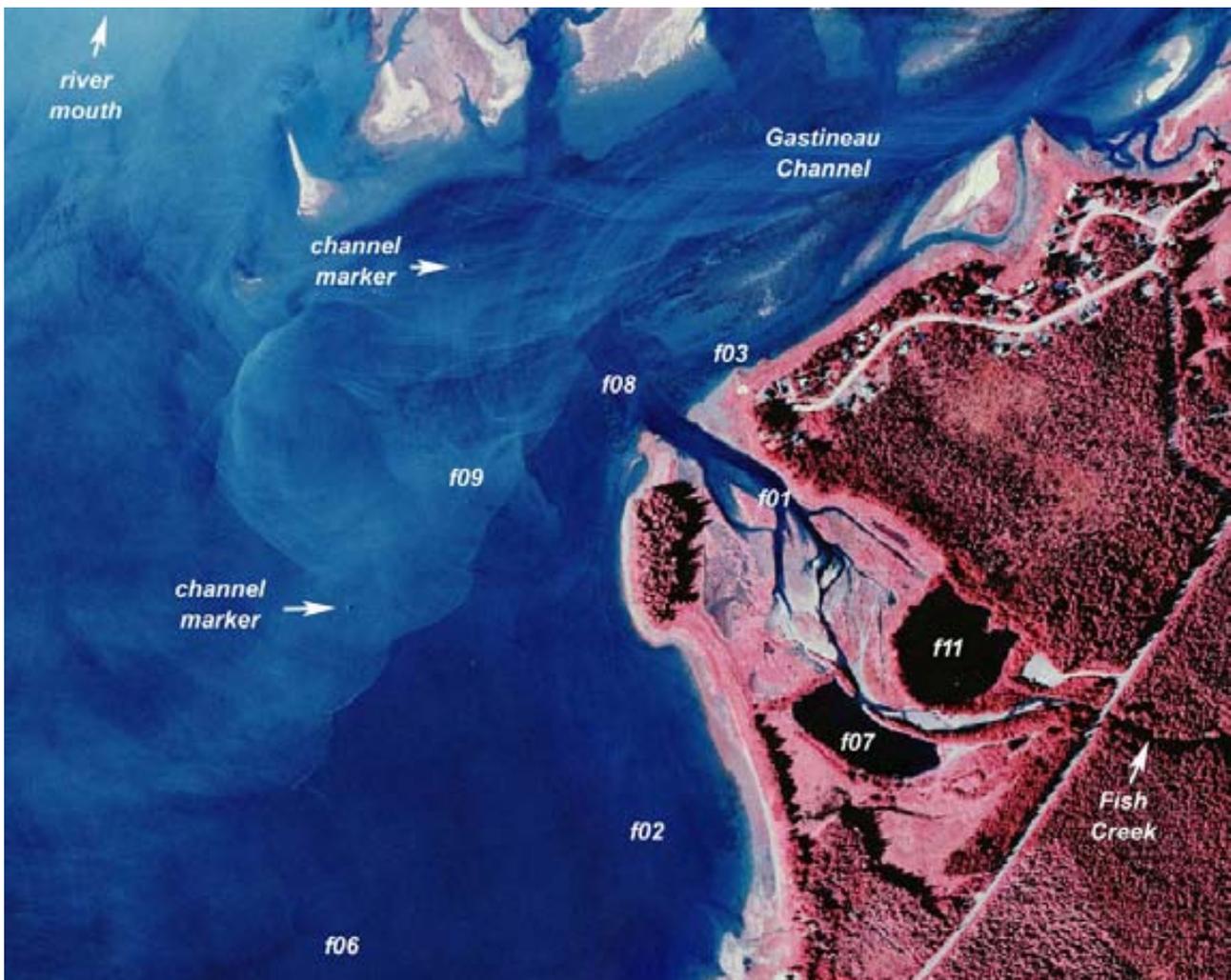


Fig 5.23 Western Channel, f09. From 2001 low elevation color infrared imagery commissioned by SWCA consultants and CBJ. At this fairly high tide the mudflats and barnacle/mussel/rockweed beds at f09 are covered. Near f03 these beds are more shallowly covered, and can be detected as patches of darker blue. At a low tide it is possible to walk out nearly to the channel markers. Westernmost spoil islands (from dredging of Gastineau Channel in the early 1960s) show at top.

- **Western Channel is an important feeding and resting area for a variety of waterfowl especially in late winter and spring.** We have counted up to 1,700 Surf Scoters (May 3, 2002), 160 scaup, 150 Mallards, 90 Red-breasted Mergansers, 80 American Wigeon, and 70 Green-winged Teal within this area. Also, we have observed up to 350 Bonaparte's Gulls and numerous Mew and Glaucous-winged Gulls using this area.

Upper Mendenhall River (r02, 13, 03, 07 and 04) – occasional hotspots

- **Middle reaches of the river are important for seaducks and dabblers, especially in spring.**

Most of our records here are for resting and preening rather than feeding. The northern banks opposite the barge at r03 are a favored duck assembling area - elsewhere the river cutbanks rise more steeply from the water, restricting views of approaching predators. Dabblers use this area throughout the summer as well.

- The confluence of Casa del Sol Creek and Mendenhall River at r07 is a spring resting area for Mallard, teal, Gadwall, Common and Barrow's Goldeneye, and a feeding area for Canada Geese.

- Large numbers of birds were rarely seen at r02 and r13.

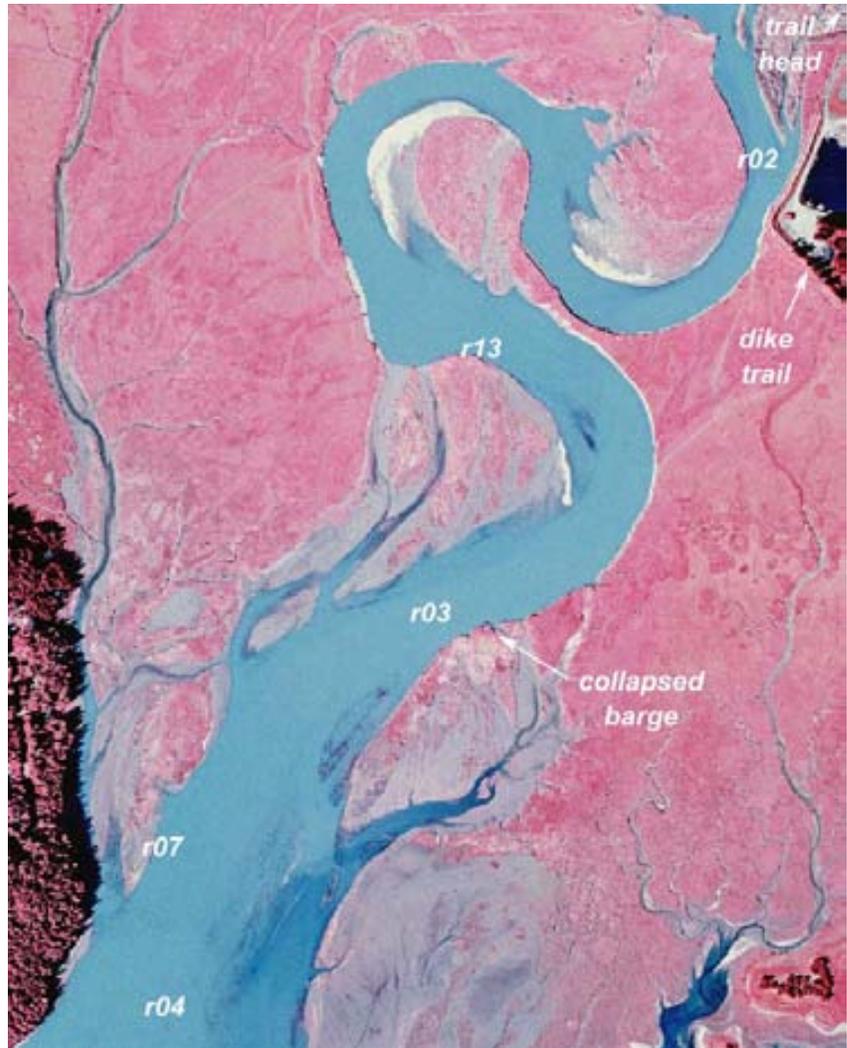


Fig 5.24 Middle reaches of Mendenhall River estuary, 2001, SWCA color infrared photo. Note the very narrow “stem” of the oxbow loop.



Fig 5.25 Collapsed barge at r03, May 5, 2003. According to Joe Smith, this barge once held his dredging equipment for operations in the floatplane basin. The towboat had difficulties exiting the river and cut him loose.



Fig 5.26 View southwest from Dike Trail. Uplift meadow in foreground grades to high marsh grasses on left. In middle distance is large, eroding oxbow that will soon be breached. At that time the loop at r13 may turn into a tidal lagoon. This could provide exceptional bird habitat, unfortunately at rather close proximity to the runway.

Wigeon Ponds (p02) – occasional hotspot



Fig 5.27 Wigeon Ponds on May 14, 2002 when we counted 140 Mallards (at last pond).

- **Wigeon Ponds appear to be an important resting area for Mallards**, especially in April and May when we have counted up to 500 (April 23, 2003).
- Wigeon Ponds are also an important feeding area for Canada Geese. We have counted over 100 geese here in June, feeding on Lyngbye sedges.
- The area offers nesting habitat for waterfowl. The only duck nest we found during our surveys of the wetlands was at Wigeon Ponds on May 20, 2003 (Fig 5.28).
- Wigeon Ponds support the only known breeding population of western toads - a severely declining species - for the entire Juneau mainland from Thane to Amalga. We have found toadlets and tadpoles in two slightly brackish ponds within the Wigeon Ponds area (Carstensen, Willson and Armstrong 2003).
- The area is somewhat protected from human disturbance by a steep access trail and deep muddy areas that make walking difficult. During our surveys we have observed deer and bear in the area. However, we have also observed, and others have reported, three large unattended dogs chasing birds in the area.



Fig 5.28 Mallard nest at wigeon ponds



Fig 5.29 View south along Mendenhall Peninsula and Casa del Sol Creek. Wigeon Ponds cluster at edge of forest on right. These ponds are uniformly about one foot deep, on firmly compacted silt, with marestail and water milfoil.

Phalarope Slough (a10) – occasional hotspot



Fig 5.30 Phalarope Slough on July 2, 2003 showing concentration of feeding Lesser Yellowlegs. For location of Phalarope Slough, see oblique air photo, Fig 5.32

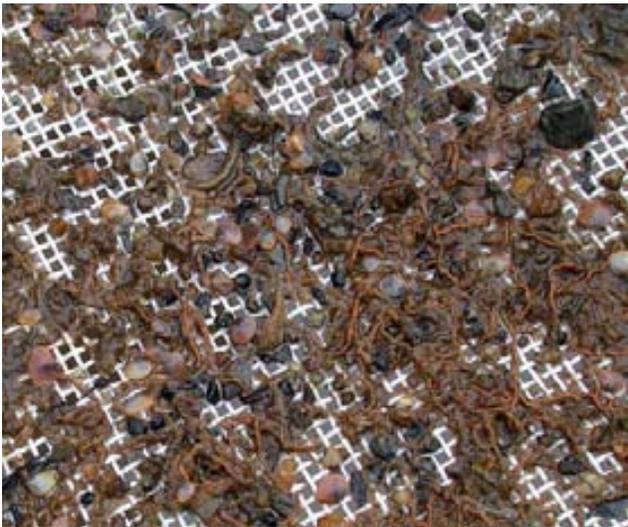


Fig 3.31 Juvenile macoma clams sieved from the mud in Phalarope Slough. These are an important food for probers like dowitchers. Corophium amphipods – key foods for migratory shorebirds – are also abundant in Phalarope and Junk Car Sloughs. See appendices in Willson and Baldwin (2003) for more on birds and invertebrates.

- **Phalarope Slough appears to be an important feeding area for Lesser Yellowlegs and dowitchers.** We have counted up to 120 Lesser Yellowlegs (July 2, 2003) and up to 40 dowitchers (Sept. 20, 2002) feeding here. The area is loaded with amphipods and baby macoma clams, which may be the main attractants for these shorebirds. Other species often seen feeding here include Greater Yellowlegs, Green-winged Teal and Northern Shovelers.
- Phalarope Slough is adjacent to the Dike Trail and a popular spot to watch birds. It received its name from the occasional Wilson's Phalarope seen here.
- Because of its nearness to the Dike Trail the birds are often disturbed by dogs chasing them.

Junk Car Slough (a02) – occasional hotspot



Fig 5.32 View south over floatplane woodland, April 29, 2002. Junk Car Slough (a02) in mid distance; Phalarope Slough (a10) on left; East Finger Pond (a09) in foreground; Otter Pond (a01) on right.

- **Junk Car Slough, just to the left (west) of the Gazebo usually has a small assemblage of feeding birds.** We have counted up to 33 Long-billed Dowitchers, 25 Lesser Yellowlegs, 40 Mallards, 47 Lesser Snow Geese, and 10 Golden-crowned Sparrows feeding in or immediately adjacent to this slough.

- This slough received its name from the number of junk cars that used to line its landward bank. Like other sloughs along the Dike Trail it is a popular spot to watch birds. As in other areas adjacent to the Dike Trail, dogs often disturb the feeding birds.



Fig 5.33 Junk Car slough showing a concentration of feeding dowitchers.

Miller-Honsinger Pond (a04) – occasional hotspot

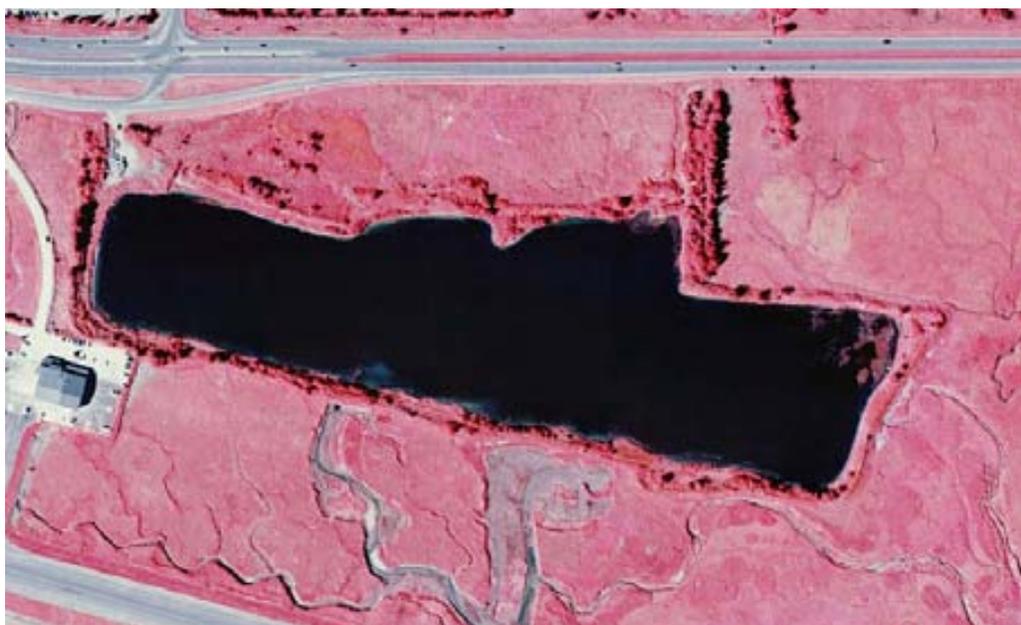


Fig 5.34 A pair of Tundra Swans with their cygnets on Miller-Honsinger pond

• **Miller-Honsinger Pond appears to be an important resting and feeding area for small groups of waterfowl.** On occasion we have counted up to 225 Greater-white Fronted Geese (May 5, 2002), 72 Canada Geese and 60 Mallard (Apr. 11, 2002). We have also occasionally seen pairs of both Trumpeter and Tundra Swans and small numbers (10-20) of American Wigeon, Bufflehead and Greater Scaup.

• The area adjacent to this pond is popular among local birders, especially as a place to look for raptors. We have observed American Kestrel, Merlin, Gyrfalcon, Northern Harrier and Rough-legged Hawk hunting in this area. The brush and small trees adjacent to this pond are also a good place to observe songbirds.

Fig 5.35 Miller-Honsinger Pond, 2001 SWCA color infrared photo. Temsco helipad on left. West end of this pond is extremely noisy. Waterfowl congregate especially at the shallows in the northeast corner. This pond is brackish and has ditch-grass along the margins, but probably less than in the floatplane basin finger ponds, judging from the relative amount of use by waterfowl. Purchase of this pond has been suggested as a possible mitigation measure.



Floatplane Basin Finger Ponds (a03 and a09) – occasional hotspots



Fig 5.36 Canada Geese and other waterfowl concentrate in West Finger Pond (a03) to feed on ditch-grass just as soon as the ice is out in spring.

- **East and West Finger Ponds are important feeding sites for Canada Geese and other waterfowl during April and May, when we have observed up to 230 geese and 160 Mallards.**

- The main attractant for these birds is ditch-grass (*Ruppia maritima*).

- The ponds are also used for feeding in the spring by a variety of other birds including American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Green-winged Teal, Greater Scaup, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Tundra and Trumpeter Swans and Greater White-fronted Geese.

- Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and dowitchers usually feed here in small numbers during spring. We counted 150 Western Sandpipers on May 2, 2002.

- The woodlands surrounding the Finger Ponds provide nesting habitat for a variety of songbirds. During point counts (for another project) we determined that 13 bird species nested in the area and estimated they consisted of 350 individuals (female and male). The most common species of nesting songbirds were Ruby-crowned Kinglets, American Robins, Hermit Thrushes, Wilson's Warblers, Yellow Warblers, and Yellow-rumped Warblers.



Fig 5.36 Ditch-grass



Fig 5.37 Goose feeding on ditch-grass