



Pintail Action Group Annual Meeting
October 14, 2008
Room 140, Parktown Hotel
924 Spadina Crescent East, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
1:00PM – 4:00 P.M.
(Coffee provided by Ducks Unlimited Canada)

In attendance: Jim Devries (DUC, Chair, minutes), Robert Clark (CWS), Scott Boomer (USFWS), Dale Caswell (CWS), Mike Rabe (AZGFD), Kathy Dickson (CWS)
By speakerphone: Greg Yarris (CWA), Dan Yparraguirre (CDFG), Mike Miller (USGS)

Meeting Agenda

- *Chair report*
- *Review progress on action items from last meeting*
- *Task team updates*
- *Reports of on-going pintail research & management*
- *New business*
- *Set new action items*
- *Set next meeting date*

Chair Report (Devries)

- Worked with Bob Trost (USFWS), Joe Fleskes (USGS), John Eadie (UC Davis), and Bob Clark (CWS) to develop a proposal for linking NAWMP habitat influences to continental pintail demography and AHM. Solicited reviews from Mark Koneff (USFWS), Mike Runge (USGS), and Scott Boomer (USFWS).
- Attended joint NSST/NAWMP Plan Committee meeting, January 23-24, 2008, Memphis TN
 - Presented demographic modeling proposal to NSST and PC for endorsement
 - Plan Committee conditionally approved some USFWS funding for a PAG workshop to more fully develop a work plan for the modeling work
- Developed proposal for workshop funding with Trost, Fleskes, Eadie and Clark
- Organized Pintail Demographic Modeling Workshop held May 6-7, 2008, Minneapolis, MN
- Assisted Minneapolis team to draft a USGS Science Support Program proposal and work plan for demographic modeling
- Participated in NSST membership survey
- Received letter from GCJV regarding PAG consideration of GC wintering ground effects on pintails (see below)
- Various communication items
 - PAG newsletter in June
 - 2 NSST newsletter submissions (summer, fall)
 - A few web page updates

Previous Action Items

Develop Population Modeling Proposal (Devries, Trost, Eadie, Clark, Fleskes)

- See Chair report above and Task Team updates below
- **Action: Devries to help continue this moving forward**

Solicit pintail publications for website (Devries)

- Included a call for papers with the annual newsletter – no response.

Transfer Email List (Fleskes)

- Done

Mississippi Flyway PAG presentation (Eichholz)

- Done

PAG PPT notes (Devries)

- Done
- **Action: Devries to update PAG PPT and notes for recent developments**

Joint Venture Contacts (Devries)

- **Action: Devries to review and update**

July Survey data-Brood/Pair analysis to index production (Trost)

- **Action: Devries to check with Trost to see if any progress has been made on this**

Draft letter to USFWS (Blohm) emphasizing the need to improve pintail banding (PAG Chair)

- This action is pending the release of the final report of the pintail banding analysis
- **Action: PAG will draft a letter after having a chance to review the banding analysis report.**

Provide comments on draft USFWS Banding Needs document when available (PAG Chair)

- **Action: This action item will remain until Banding Needs document is released.**

Additional survival model exploring overflight hypothesis (Rice/Haukos)

- This analysis was included by Rice/Haukos and the results will be included in their final report

Task Team Updates

Task Team: Linking Habitat and Harvest Management for Pintails - Demographic Modeling (Boomer)

- Team members are Mike Anderson (DUC), Robert Clark (CWS), James Devries (DUC), John Eadie (UC Davis), Scott Boomer (USFWS), Mike Runge (USGS), Joseph Fleskes (USGS), David Koons (Utah State U), Todd Sanders (USFWS), Wayne Thogmartin (USGS)
- Workshop held May 6-7, 2008 in Minneapolis, MN
 - More fully specified the components of a continental habitat-linked demographic model for pintails
 - Developed and submitted a USGS Science Support Program proposal (including USFWS, DUC, CWS partner funding)
 - Developed and submitted a work plan to the NSST
 - Currently seeking a 2-year term post-doctoral position (January start) to begin the modeling work
- Work plan details (Devries) – work plan has 5 objectives:

1. Construct a model framework consisting of 2 breeding and 2 wintering areas with appropriate habitat-linked recruitment and survival parameters (Target date: Aug 2009)
2. Develop submodels linking habitat at regional scales to recruitment and survival parameters (Target date: Aug 2009)
3. Assemble existing pintail vital rate estimates from past and ongoing research in NA...estimate sensitivity/elasticity for various vital rates (Target date: Nov 2008)
4. Construct a simplified working prototype life-cycle model (Target date: Dec 2008)
5. Consultation with stakeholders (Target date: ongoing)

Action: Devries to circulate Pintail Demographic Modeling work plan to PAG membership and post on PAG website

Task Team: Pintail Band-Recovery Data Assessment - update provided by Devries (with information from Haukos)

1. Report has been completed, is undergoing internal review, and will be circulated to PAG shortly.
2. A manuscript (JWM) is in internal review
3. Preliminary findings indicate post-season banding does not appear to be a practical option for improving annual survival and recovery estimates
4. Top survival models have not changed from previous updates
5. Harvest distribution and derivation indicate that pintails have distinct regional distributions.
6. Survival not influenced by harvest regulations.
7. Survival does not appear higher in years of overflight.

Action: Haukos to circulate report when available.

Task Team: Update Research & Conservation Priorities (Devries)

- This was an effort to update the 2001 Sacramento Pintail Workshop report based on new information gathered since the 2003 release of the report (see “Sacramento Pintail Workshop 2001 Report at <http://www.siu.edu/~wildlife/PAG/About.asp>). This effort is currently stalled due to lack of time on the part of Devries who was tasked with pulling together the first draft. Following discussion of options including hiring a contractor to finish it up, it was suggested that the review be postponed pending initial findings of the current demographic modeling effort which may help highlight/prioritize new information needs.

Action: Devries will continue to try and make progress on a first draft that can be augmented with information from the modeling effort.

On-Going Pintail Research and Management

SONEC Studies - update provided by Devries (with information from Fleskes)

- The SONEC (southern Oregon-northeastern California) region has been identified as an extremely important area for wintering and migratory staging pintails. Approximately 85% of female pintails from the Central Valley use the region for up to 2-3 months on

their way to PPR and Alaska breeding areas. Flooded hay/pasture comprises the majority of use areas for loafing and feeding.

- This work began in the spring of 2008 and is examining core and water column samples in spring flooded hay/pasture to estimate food/energy availability. Collection of feeding waterfowl was conducted also for diet analysis.
- Core and water column sampling will continue in 2009. Contact Fleskes for further info.

Pintail Nesting Ecology - Evaluation of DUC Pintail Mgmt Program (Devries)

- Fieldwork (2005-2007) in AB, SK has been completed and data analysis currently underway.
- Study is designed to examine pintail nest site selection and nest survival in landscapes ranging from grass-dominated to cropland-dominated and including habitats of conservation focus (winter wheat, haylands, tame and native grasslands).
- We found 398 pintail nests over the 3 years. Pintails nested in croplands much more than other species. Pintail nest survival was ~12% overall, low (1-5%) in tame pasture, spring-seeded crops, and summerfallow, and high (15-20%) in haylands and winter wheat. Analysis of nest site selection is underway. Nest survival tends to be higher on grassland-dominated sites although further exploration of this pattern is required.
- Results will be used to clarify the influence of habitat and landscape factors on pintail productivity, refine conservation planning tools currently in use, and link habitat influences to continental pintail demography. Contact Devries for further info.

Pintail Breeding Ecology in Southern Alberta (Clark)

- Fieldwork (2004-2006) in southern AB completed and analysis nearing completion.
- Study has examined pintail nest survival across a landscape gradient from large, lightly grazed native prairie to cropland dominated including the ecotone between.
- This work is focused on nests in remnant non-cropland habitats
- Across years, pair density and nest survival have tended to be higher on the grassland-dominated sites, moderate on the ecotone, and lowest on the cropland-dominated sites.
- Also examining feather isotope signatures to explore wintering source of southern AB breeding females (CA vs TX) and possible reproductive consequences. Contact Clark or Kowalchuk for further info.

Proposal - PPR Pintail Duckling Survival (Devries)

- Devries presented a summary of current pintail duckling survival estimates from Alaska (4-14%; Grand and Flint 1996), and prairie Canada (42-65% in grassland landscape, Guyn and Clark 1999; 17-41% in cropland landscape, Peterson 1997) and suggested possible landscape composition impacts on duckling survival in prairie Canada. Given the possibility of lower duckling survival in cropland-dominated landscapes and evidence that pintails settle at higher density in cropland landscapes (Devries and Guyn, unpubl data), exploring variation in this vital rate with landscape composition may be important. Devries proposed that an opportunity exists to do this in conjunction with an ongoing DUC nesting study.
- Variance decomposition work previously conducted for PAG by Flint, Runge, Richkus, Arnold and Clark indicated that duckling survival accounted for ~27% of the variation in population growth rate (~38% for nest success). However, given the sparse data and

disparate estimates there remains much uncertainty. It was suggested that further work in Alaska on this vital rate may be warranted as well.

- We resolved to explore this further under the 'review of existing vital rates' component of the current pintail demographic modeling work plan.

New Business/Emerging Issues

1. 2009 North American Duck Symposium Special Session?

- Devries floated the idea of a special session on the pintail demographic modeling effort at the 2009 NADS. Clark pointed out that sessions have already been assigned; however, a workshop may be a possibility.

Action: Devries to explore the possibility of an associated workshop.

2. Gulf Coast Joint Venture letter to PAG

- Mike Brasher, Biological Team Leader of the Gulf Coast Joint Venture submitted a letter to the PAG in August highlighting pintail related work in the Gulf Coast region that indicates possible nutrient limitation for pintails in portions of this wintering area. Mike further indicated the need for research to quantify the importance of sanctuary in enabling ducks to access and exploit areas of high food abundance and to explore impacts of competition among ducks and geese (especially snow geese). The GCJV partners are pursuing actions to address the nutritional bottleneck and wanted to make sure the PAG is aware of the issue, especially within the context of current demographic modeling efforts. Mike offers GCJV collaboration in efforts to understand the role of GCJV habitats and pintail population processes in this area.
- This letter is timely given the intent to explicitly incorporate the effect of Gulf Coast wintering habitat (and Playa Lakes and Rainwater Basin wintering/staging habitat) into a continental pintail demographic model. As part of that effort, and as indicated in the demographic modeling work plan, we anticipate holding a GC regional workshop to use existing information to develop habitat-linked survival/body condition models. Identifying research needs will be a byproduct of this effort.

Action: Devries will draft a reply to the GCJV indicating our intent to more fully engage the partnership in linking GCJV habitats to demographic processes.

3. CWA indicated interest in supporting additional banding effort in Saskatchewan in 2009.

Action: Caswell to follow up on this next season.

4. Flyway presentations 2009

Action: Devries to contact Flyway reps to schedule a PAG presentation/update at their winter meetings

Next Meeting Location

A brief discussion of potential venues for the 2009 PAG annual meeting quickly settled on holding the meeting in association with the 5th North American Duck Symposium, August 17-21, 2009 in Toronto, Canada.

Action: Devries to contact NADS organizers to schedule a meeting specific date/time.

Action: Devries to contact Mike Eichholz to post meeting minutes on the PAG website

Meeting adjourned 4:00PM