

Preface

The Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) List is a catalog of those species and habitat types identified by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) as priorities for management and preservation. Because information on fish, wildlife, and their habitats is dynamic, the PHS List is updated periodically. All information in this list has gone through an extensive expert peer-review process.

The following section titled "PHS Definitions" explains and defines the terms used throughout this document. It also outlines criteria for including habitat types and animal species in the PHS system.

Fact sheets are included to provide descriptive information about each priority habitat and species (Figure 1). Each fact sheet summarizes:

- priority area for each species and habitat (i.e., area that can be mapped into the PHS Database)
- criteria by which each species is considered to be a priority
- a distribution map showing where each priority species and habitat is expected to occur
- status of state or federally listed priority species (i.e., whether the species is endangered, threatened, sensitive, or a candidate for one of these classifications)

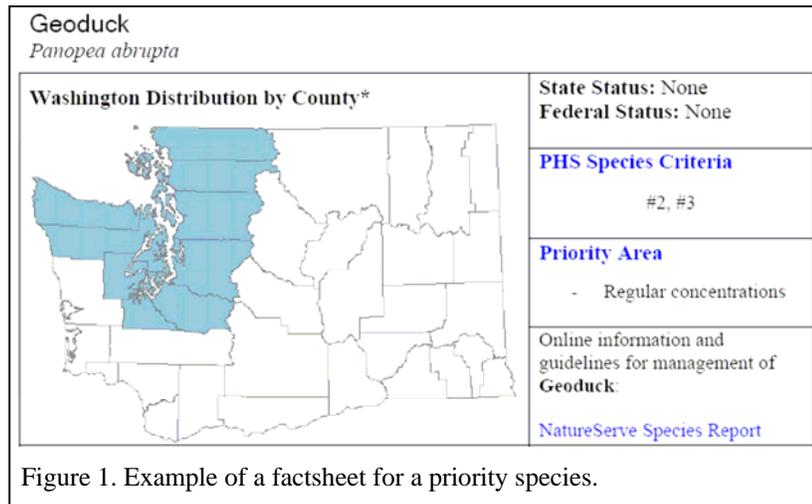


Figure 1. Example of a factsheet for a priority species.

Because the PHS List often is used to determine what species or habitats are management priorities, links to published information that may aid in developing management strategies (e.g., [PHS Guidelines](#)) are included with the descriptions when such information is available.

The PHS List can be used:

- for reviewing which habitats and species are considered priorities and by which criteria;
- to determine what priority species and priority habitats may occur within a specific planning area (e.g., county);
- in conjunction with management recommendations developed for priority habitats and species.

Mapping

Mapping of priority habitats and species was initiated in 1990. Mapping consists of recording locational and descriptive data in a Geographic Information System (GIS). These GIS databases represent WDFW's best knowledge of fish and wildlife resources and occurrences. It is important to note, however, that priority species or priority habitats may occur in areas not currently known to WDFW biologists or in areas for which comprehensive surveys have not been conducted. Site-specific surveys may be necessary to rule out the presence of priority habitats or species on individual sites that do not appear on PHS maps.

Data for priority habitats and species are located in more than one database. Databases that have information on the location of priority habitats and priority species include the following:

- Priority Habitat and Species Database:
 - ❖ This database provides the locations of priority species or habitats that can be mapped as a geographic area (i.e., polygonal dataset). This database does not include point data.
- Wildlife Survey Data Management Database:
 - ❖ Locational information for most terrestrial priority species and habitats. All non-game freshwater fish data also are located in this database.
- Washington Lakes Rivers Information System:
 - ❖ Salmon spawning, rearing, and distribution data.
- Spotted Owl Database:
 - ❖ Database specific to Spotted Owls.
- Bald Eagle Database:
 - ❖ Database specific to Bald Eagles.
- Other information sources include the Department of Natural Resources' Aquatic Lands Division database for kelp beds, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) for wetlands.

Because fish and wildlife are mobile, and because priority habitats and species data are subject to change, project reviews for fish and wildlife should not rest solely on mapped information. PHS data can only show that a species or habitat type may be present. These data do not show that a species or habitat type is not present.

Sites identified as priority habitats or locations where a priority species is known to occur often are represented on a map as a point or a polygon. Although the exact mapped locations are undoubtedly important, the area surrounding these locations may also need to be evaluated to determine what land uses are compatible or incompatible with the requirements of species using an area. For example, Great Blue Heron colonies are often identified as a single point on a map. When considering changes in land use practices near a heron colony, it makes sense to look beyond the location of the mapped point since herons may be sensitive to disturbance at some distance away from that point.

To Receive Mapped Information:

Personnel at WDFW regional offices and headquarters maintain GIS-based maps and accompanying tabular data. Both hard copy and digital data are available by calling (360) 902-2543 or by writing the address below. Please go to http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/maps_data/ to obtain more detailed information about accessing PHS Data. Those asking for data for a location of interest should request all PHS data to ensure that all relevant databases are reviewed to obtain all known occurrences of priority habitats and species.

Management Recommendations

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife develops management recommendations to assist landowners, managers, and others in conducting land use activities in a manner that incorporates the needs of fish and wildlife. Management recommendations are developed through a comprehensive review and synthesis of the best scientific information available. Management Recommendations for Washington's Priority Habitats and Species should be used in conjunction with the mapped locations of respective priority habitats and species. All published management recommendations can be accessed at http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/mgmt_recommendations/.

Questions and requests for additional PHS information may be directed to:

*Priority Habitats and Species
WDFW Habitat Program
600 Capitol Way North
Olympia WA 98501-1091*

Internet Access

The PHS Internet Home Page can be accessed at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/>

For information on rare plants and plant communities, contact:

*Washington Department of Natural Resources
Natural Heritage Program
P.O. Box 47016
Olympia, WA 98504-7016
(360) 902-1667
<http://www1.dnr.wa.gov/nhp/refdesk/gis/wnhpgis.html>*