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# NuisanceNews

A bimonthly publication from the Ada County Weed, Pest and Mosquito Abatement Department

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## Hammer Flats Restoration Project



In October 2013 Ada County Weed Control participated in a rehabilitation project in the area of northeast Ada County known as Hammer Flats. The 700-acre piece of land was bought by the City of Boise in 2010, and then sold to Idaho Department of Fish & Game in December of 2011. On June 14th 2013, around 50 acres of Hammer Flats burned as the result of a brush fire started along Idaho State Highway 21.

Idaho Department of Fish & Game Wildlife Technician Krista Muller contacted Ada County Weed Control to help combat the subsequent invasion of Downy Brome (cheat grass). Cheat grass is a very prolific invader of Idaho rangeland, and thrives in areas where soil and existing ground cover have been disturbed. Some typical types of disturbances include: construction, floods, excess grazing, and fire. When cheat grass is released in areas with very little competition (due to fire), it becomes almost impossible to control and the native landscape can be permanently altered.

To help combat the spread of cheat grass and prevent future fires Ada County Weed Control sprayed 170 acres of the Hammer Flat area. Some areas were sprayed as experimental plots, and others were sprayed as fire breaks to protect Idaho Fish & Game's re-seeding efforts (scheduled for the spring of 2014). The herbicide Plateau (Imazapic) was sprayed at 6 oz. per acre with a Methylated Seed Oil surfactant at one quart per acre. Plateau was used specifically to reduce the amount of Cheat Grass germinating in winter and early spring.

Muller plans to rehabilitate the Hammer Flat area to help provide forage and cover for deer and antelope whose populations have steadily declined in recent years.



# The Importance of County Weed Departments



A County Weed Department gives counties the authority to assist private land owners with controlling noxious weeds, address high priority weed issues, hire weed inspectors, enforce weed laws, and levy taxes to pay for programs. A weed department monitors surveillance activities that can detect and contain an invasive species before it overwhelms an ecosystem. County based weed programs are essential for effective weed management and Idaho state law requires all counties to have a functioning weed department.

Not all states have such laws. Currently Western Oregon does not have established weed departments. In a recent article in the Capital Press, Executive Director of the Western Invasive Plant Alliance, Jon Pampush, details the financial toll noxious weeds have taken on Western Oregon's valuable agricultural industry. It is estimated by the Oregon Department of Agriculture that noxious weeds cost the state \$83 million annually. In the timber industry alone the noxious weed Scotch Broom costs Oregon \$47 million annually in lost timber production. The lack of weed departments in Western Oregon makes it impossible to monitor and treat land that is threatened by noxious weeds. Western Oregon's valuable farms, forests, and conservation investments are increasingly threatened by noxious weeds, and new weeds are arriving in the region every year. Weed departments are vital to the survival of native species of plants and animals in that region.

The Ada County weed department works to prevent the spread of noxious weeds in Boise, Meridian, Eagle, Kuna, Star and Garden City.

## Introducing Idaho's Newest Noxious Weed



### Water Hyacinth

Idaho recently added another member to its noxious weed list. Water hyacinth is a free-floating perennial aquatic plant native to tropical and sub-tropical South America. It rises above the surface of the water as much as one meter in height. The leaves are 10 to 20 cm across and float above the water surface. An erect stalk supports a single spike of 8 to 15 lavender to pink flowers.

Water hyacinth reproduces rapidly by way of runners (rhizomes) which eventually form daughter plants. Each plant produces thousands of seeds every year that remain viable for up to twenty eight years. A small outbreak can double its population in two weeks.

When not controlled, Water hyacinth will cover lakes and ponds entirely. This dramatically impacts water flow, blocks sunlight from reaching native aquatic plants, and starves the water of oxygen, often killing fish and other invertebrates. These plants also help create prime habitat for mosquitoes.

# West Nile virus blamed for death of dozens of Bald Eagles in Utah



Dec 31 (Reuters) - An unprecedented winter-time outbreak of West Nile virus has killed more than two dozen bald eagles in Utah and thousands of water birds around the Great Salt Lake,

At least 27 bald eagles died in December in the northern and central parts of Utah from the blood-borne virus, and state biologists reported that five more ailing eagles were responding to treatment at rehabilitation centers.

The eagles, whose symptoms included leg paralysis and tremors, are believed to have contracted the disease by preying on sick or dead water birds called eared grebes that were infected by the West Nile virus, said Leslie McFarlane, Utah wildlife disease coordinator.

Some 20,000 of the water birds have died in and around the Great Salt Lake since November in an outbreak that may be a record in North America, McFarlane said. Initial testing suggested an infectious bacterial disease such as avian cholera caused the deaths, but findings released on Tuesday showed West Nile virus was the culprit, McFarlane said.

Utah wildlife specialists said bird deaths tied to West Nile virus were unusual in wintertime in Utah since mosquitoes - the primary vector - are not usually active during colder months.

McFarlane said Utah had an unusually warm fall that extended the breeding season for mosquitoes to late October. But scientists may ultimately be unable to determine if grebes infected by West Nile virus migrated to Utah or if they contracted it there, she said.

“This is really kind of undocumented. Eagles have been known to feed on birds infected with West Nile virus but the transmission hasn’t happened on this large of a scale. And the total number of birds we’re talking about is on a grand scale that may not have been seen before,” she said.

Additional testing of grebes and eagles is underway to shed more light on the mix of factors that converged to trigger the extensive die-off and to determine how much of a risk it might pose to other types of birds.

More than 2 million eared grebes stage at the Great Salt Lake amid a yearly winter migration from Canada and U.S. states west of the Mississippi River, according to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York.

750 to 1,200 bald eagles migrate to wintering grounds in Utah each year.

*By Laura Zuckerman / The Huffington Post*

# January is not too early to start thinking spring

Get an early start to noxious weed control on your property! Spring residual herbicide applications will begin in March. Noxious weeds are most vulnerable during their spring rosette stage so it's important to treat them as early as possible.

We will begin taking work orders for gopher and rock chuck control beginning the first week in February. Our crews will begin work in early March just as gophers become more active and rock chucks begin to wake from hibernation.

Mosquito abatement services will begin the first week of April when our larvicide crews begin looking for and treating bodies of standing water. If mosquitoes were a problem in your area last summer, give us a call and we can inspect your property. If we find the mosquito breeding areas near you we can help significantly reduce mosquito numbers through the summer.

Call our office at 208-577-4646 to get a head start on all your pest control needs this spring. Early treatment is key to controlling weeds, pests and mosquitoes. Control efforts this spring will help make it a more enjoyable summer!

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