

# American Bittern

## *Botaurus lentiginosus*

Prepared by Chris Gill, MSc, RPBio  
Kestrel Consulting  
Phone: (250) 835-8256  
Email: cgill@gmail.com  
Date: October 23, 2007

### Conservation Status

- Included in Section 7 Notice: No
- Designated as Identified Wildlife: No
- Federally Designated (COSEWIC): No
- Species identified in Kamloops, Lillooet or Merritt SFMP: **Yes (Lillooet)**

### Description

- Brownish streaked medium sized bird (length: 70cm, wingspan: 105cm).
- Usually found in fresh water marshes.
- Large and heavy bodied with relatively long neck, tapering to a pointed bill.
- Bold stripes down neck to chest.
- Often freezes when startled with neck and bill pointing upward.
- Most often seen flying low over marshes or walking along the water's edge.
- Solitary and secretive (heard more often than seen).



Photo: Nick Kontonicolas

### **Vocalization**

Deep gulping sound “Pump-perlunk” usually repeated 3-5 times. [Click here](#) to be linked to a website featuring a recording of its vocalization.

### **Forest Districts**

Arrow Boundary  
Central Cariboo  
Chilcotin Forest  
Columbia

### **Cascades**

### **Headwaters**

### **Kamloops**

Kootenay Lake

### **100 Mile House**

Okanagan Shuswap  
Rocky Mountain

### **BEC Zones**

- BG
- BWBS
- CDF
- CWH
- ICH
- IDF
- PP
- SBPS
- SBS

### **Important Habitat Features**

- Primarily large freshwater marshes including lake and pond edges where cattails, sedges, or bulrushes are plentiful.
- Marshes where there are patches of open water and aquatic-bed vegetation.
- Also occurs in areas with dense herbaceous cover such as shrubby marshes, bogs and wet meadows.
- Nests primarily in inland freshwater wetlands.
- Sparsely vegetated wetlands and dry grassy uplands are sometimes used.

### **Management Recommendations**

Consult with a Registered Professional Biologist prior to implementing the following management recommendations because certain situations may require custom solutions based on specific site characteristics.

- Budget permitting, develop a habitat model to help identify high value habitat found within your areas of interest. The complexity of the model, and therefore its accuracy, will be dependent on budgetary constraints.
- Identify locations where this species is known to occur: if available, obtain occurrence data from the Conservation Data Centre (<http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/cdc/>) and if necessary conduct surveys to confirm presence or absence of this species.

Where this species is found:

- Establish a 30 m restricted zone around the wetland. No forestry activities are permitted within the restricted zone.
- A management zone should be established around the restricted zone to maintain seclusion of the wetland and minimize disturbance. The size of the management zone will be dependent upon site conditions (for example, the size of the wetland) and should be determined by a Registered Professional Biologist. 200-350 m is recommended for other species such as the Sandhill Crane that utilize wetlands for breeding.
- Do not enter the restricted zone during the breeding season (March 1 to September 1) in order to prevent disturbing nesting birds.
- Do not conduct forestry activities (including harvest, salvage, hauling, and road construction) within the management zone during the breeding season (March 1 to September 1).
- Maintain vegetated screening in the management zone around the wetland to minimize disturbance to breeding birds.
- Maintain the structural integrity of emergent vegetation in the management zone to provide cover and nesting habitat.
- Planting areas adjacent to the restricted zone should occur as late as possible during the summer in order to minimize disturbance to nesting birds during the incubation period (which generally occurs between April 5 and July 10).
- Erosion and sediment controls should be implemented, maintained and monitored in the management zone.
- Do not construct roads near the wetland unless no other option exists. If roads must be constructed, ensure that they do not impact wetland integrity, water levels, sedimentation, and cover.
- Do not use pesticides or herbicides.
- Do not remove beaver (*Castor canadensis*) dams where dams flood areas being used by American Bitterns.

## References

B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. 1999. *Botaurus lentiginosus* in Rare Birds of British Columbia.

B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. 2004. Sandhill Crane in Accounts and Measures for Managing Identified Wildlife – Accounts V. 2004. B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Victoria, B.C. 11pp.

B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. 2004. Great Blue Heron, *herodias* subspecies in Accounts and Measures for Managing Identified Wildlife – Accounts V. 2004. B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, Victoria, B.C. 12pp.

Campbell, R.W. et al. 1990. The Birds of British Columbia. Volume 1. p234-235.

Forrex. 2004. Species Summaries and Procedures for Managing Priority Wildlife in the Omineca Region. 86pp.

Missouri Department of Conservation. 2000. Best Management Practices for American Bittern. 1p.