

BI-WEEKLY UPDATE: PINNIPED ABUNDANCE AND SALMON PREDATION AT BONNEVILLE LOCK AND DAM

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This is the third status report for the 2018 pinniped monitoring season and summarizes the observed predation and deterrent activities at Bonneville Dam from 26 April through May 10, 2018. Observations will continue through May 31, 2018. A final report will be compiled soon thereafter.

Previous reports and related PMP information can be found at the link below:

<http://pweb.crohms.org/tmt/documents/FPOM/2010/Task%20Groups/Task%20Group%20Pinnipeds/>

PLEASE NOTE - All data presented here are preliminary as of the status report date. Predation numbers and abundance estimates are unexpanded and will change as data are proofed and analyzed. Final predation estimate data will be expanded to adjust for hours and days not observed as well as “unknown” prey species consumed for the final report. The final report summarizing the results of the 2018 Pinniped Monitoring Program will be available in the fall of this year.

PINNIPED ABUNDANCE

We present abundance data using the maximum number of individuals counted during a comprehensive tailrace point count and interpolated for days not observed. For inter and intra-year comparison of abundance estimates, we report average daily abundance with standard deviation as measures of variance.

Abundance: 26 April – 10 May, 2018

Since April 11, 2018, the number of California sea lions (CSL; *Zalophus californianus*) at Bonneville Dam is below the ten year average, whereas the number of Steller sea lions (SSL; *Eumetopias jubatus*) is above the ten year average (Figure 1). The numerically dominate species in the tailrace continues to be the SSL with an average daily abundance of $51.5 \pm SD 8.7$, whereas CSL had an average daily abundance of $10.1 \pm SD 3.2$ (Table 1). No harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*) have been observed since January 24, 2018.

The recent increase in SSL set new all time high record. Last season we documented 62 SSL on one day, which established a new record. On 7 May, 2018 we recorded 66 SSL.

To date, we have documented 27 SSL and 37 CSL as uniquely identifiable individuals. All uniquely identifiable sea lions have been documented near Bonneville Dam in previous years, except one CSL which was branded 9 May, 2018. The low number of individually identifiable SSL is due to the limited branding effort for the species.

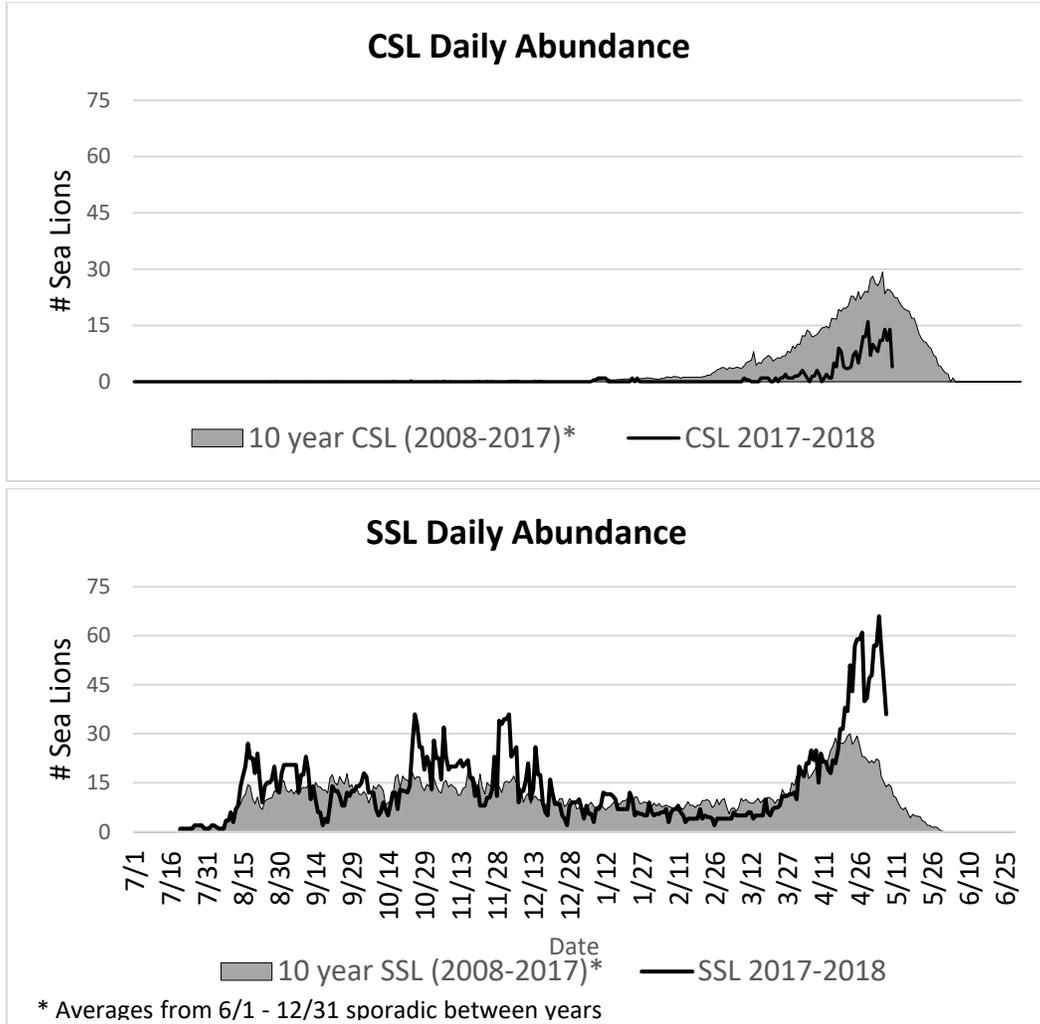


Figure 1. Comparison of estimated abundance of each pinniped species at Bonneville Dam between the 10 year running average and the current year.

Species	$\bar{x} \pm S.D.$	Range	$n = 0$
SSL	51.5 ± 8.7	36 - 66	0
CSL	10.1 ± 3.2	4 - 16	0

Table 1. Interpolated daily minimum counts of pinnipeds at Bonneville Dam tailraces between 1 January and 10 May, 2018.

PREDATION DATA

A review of the combined salmonid passage during the focal sampling period to date shows that the run was late, but is now tracking the 10 year average (Figure 2). The arrival of

spring Chinook (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) corresponded to an increase in the number of predatory sea lions.

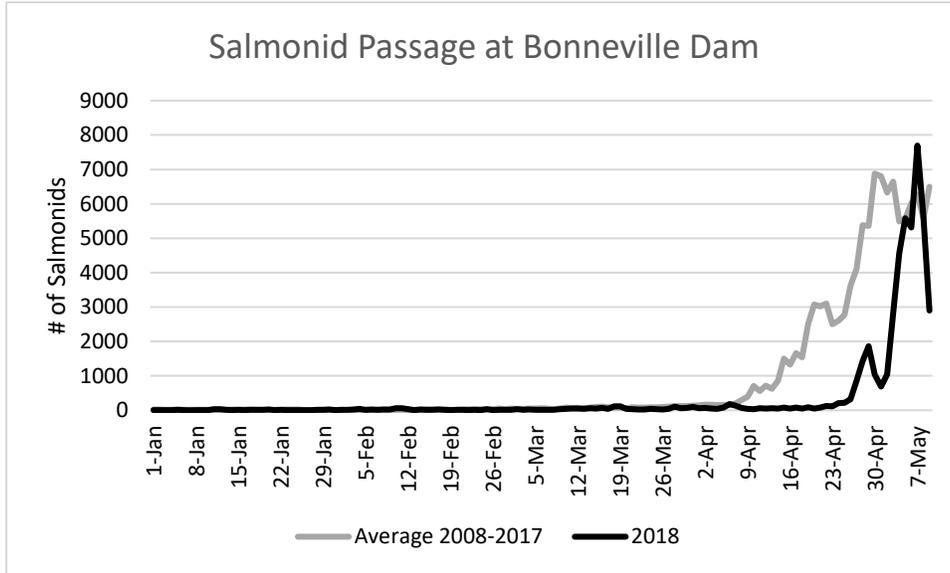


Figure 2. Comparison of the ten year average and current passage of all salmonids over Bonneville Dam.

We present only the raw (unexpanded and unadjusted) predation data. That is, we present only the accounts of fish predation events we have observed and do not account for the number of unidentifiable catches made by each species. Expansion to account for unidentifiable fish catches and adjustment for un-observed hours will be conducted at the end of the season using the same protocols employed in last year’s report.

From 26 April to 10 May, 2018, a total of 611 Chinook salmon, 26 Steelhead and five White Sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*) have been documented being killed by pinnipeds (Table 2). Of the 718 recorded predation events, SSL account for 82% of them.

Fish Predation: 26 April – 10 May, 2018

Species	Chinook	Steelhead	Sturgeon	Lamprey	Other	Unknown
SSL	515	21	5	1	8	54
CSL	96	5	0	0	0	13
Total	611	26	5	0	10	67

Table 2. Observed fish consumption by both species of pinniped at Bonneville Dam from 26 April – 10 May, 2018.