

DRAFT REPORT TO: Oregon Division of State Lands

Application of Links Wildlife Habitat Importance Index Classification and Assessment at the Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank

BY

John L. Marshall April 2, 1993

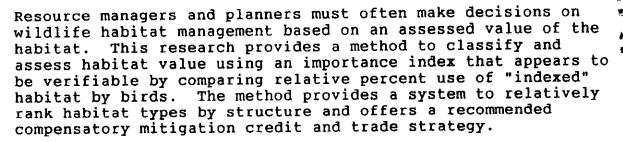
APPLICATION OF

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LINKS WILDLIFE HABITAT IMPORTANCE INDEX CLASSIFICATION

ASSESSMENT AT ASTORIA AIRPORT MITIGATION BANK



The method is applied to a 31 acre parcel at the west shore of the mouth of the Lewis and Clark River (T.8N R.10W. W.M.) where it enters into Youngs Bay on the Columbia River. The site is in the city limits of Warrenton, Oregon and is currently owned and managed by Oregon Division of State Lands (figure 1).

In 1987 the portion of the Warrenton dike bordering the Lewis and Clark River and north of old Highway 101 was moved about 800 feet west of its historical position (the original dike was installed in the early 1900's and substantially improved by the Corps of Engineers in 1938). The old dike was then largely removed in an effort to restore tidal influence to about 31 acres of land. The restored tidelands are to be used as a mitigation bank for compensation of future anticipated wetland conversions in other areas in the general vicinity. "Credits" from the restored tidal wetland are to be sold by the state of Oregon to future developers as mitigation needs arise. Credit allocation and sale are to be administered by Oregon Division of State Lands, the current owner and manager of the site (referred to here as the Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank).

Two separate monitoring projects, vegetation (Jackson et al 1989) and bird use (Patterson and Bruner 1989), are used to obtain data for use in a modified (Larson 1976) classification strategy established by Marshall (1985). The classification method is further modified here to provide a method for habitat assessment for use by wildlife. A 1:2400 scale color infrared air photograph (Corps of Engineers 1989) is used for mapping and computing areal coverage of wetland habitat at the site.

Vegetation species composition and cover class data were obtained from eighteen samples in the 1989 Field Analysis of Estuarine Restoration at the Astoria Mitigation Bank (Jackson et al 1989). Height class data were inferred by the author based on field experience in the area and other similar areas. Bird use by habitat type was provided in unpublished data forms as part of a volunteer bird monitoring project implemented by Howard Bruner and Mike Patterson.

All data were entered and tabulated using the Marshall 1985 Importance Index method (referred to here as the Links System) on Microsoft Excel Windows Spreadsheets. An attempt was made, within the limits of the software and the knowledge of the operator, to create a semi-relational data base (Patton 1992). While this system was marginally adequate for application to the eighteen samples collected at the Astoria Mitigation Bank site, it is unsuitable for larger applications. Conversion and restructuring of the system is recommended using either Paradox, Fox Pro or other similar data base systems.



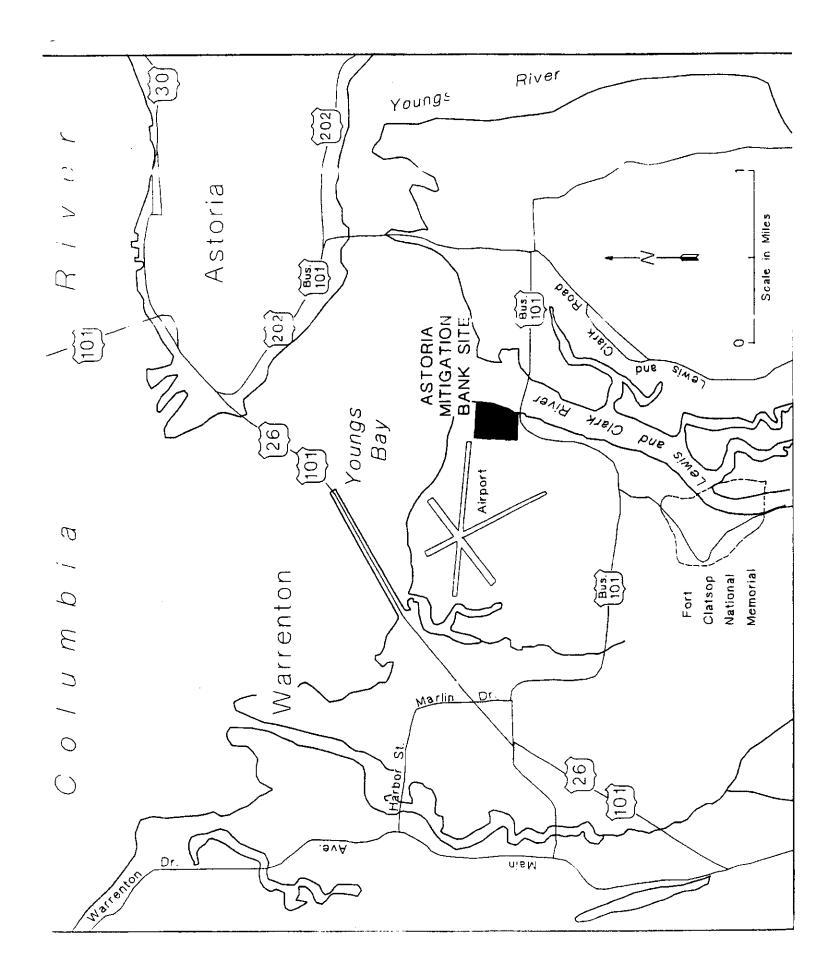


Figure 1. Astoria Airport Mitigation Site location.

SAMPLING

Ideally, sampling would progress from a stratified random sample site selection process, using a large scale air photograph, to subsequent field sampling and a plant community verification procedure. This was not possible for this research. Time constraints precluded the opportunity for field sampling. Further, bird monitoring data was for one year (1988-1989). Since the structure of the vegetation at the site has changed in the past three years due to high tree mortality, current site conditions are not suitable for comparison with bird use in 1989.

Wetland habitat type (class) stratification was done after-the-fact using existing sampling and air photo documentation. To the degree possible, vegetation samples (figure 2) were overlayed on the air photograph (Corps of Engineers 1989). Vegetation "image units" were provisionally delineated using photo signatures of tone, color, texture and shape. While vegetation data was useful in defining species composition and structure of sample sites, the position of the samples was very difficult to register on the air photo. Therefore, the actual mapping of habitat types was accomplished almost solely through air photo interpretation.

While all data was derived from existing documentation, it was organized in the Links system using parameters often applied during field data collection. Seven categories were used to organize the data:

- 1. Plant species moisture tolerance (Reed 1988);
- 2. Plant species life form and modifiers (Larson 1976);
- 3. Plant species cover class (Kuchler 1966);
- 4. Plant species height class (Kuchler 1966);
- 5. Hydrologic and substrate cover class (Marshall 1985);
- 6. Hydrologic and substrate significance coefficients (Marshall 1985); and
- 7. Hydrologic regime modifiers (Cowardin et al 1979).

Sample Habitat Importance Index

Data from eighteen vegetation samples (Jackson et al 1989) were used to derive a habitat classification and importance value for each habitat type at the Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank. The habitat classification and importance value were derived by computing an importance index for each sample. The importance index was derived using six steps:

- 1. Group plant species by life form and moisture tolerance;
- 2. Sum percent cover class mid-points for each life form, hydrologic trait, and substrate type;

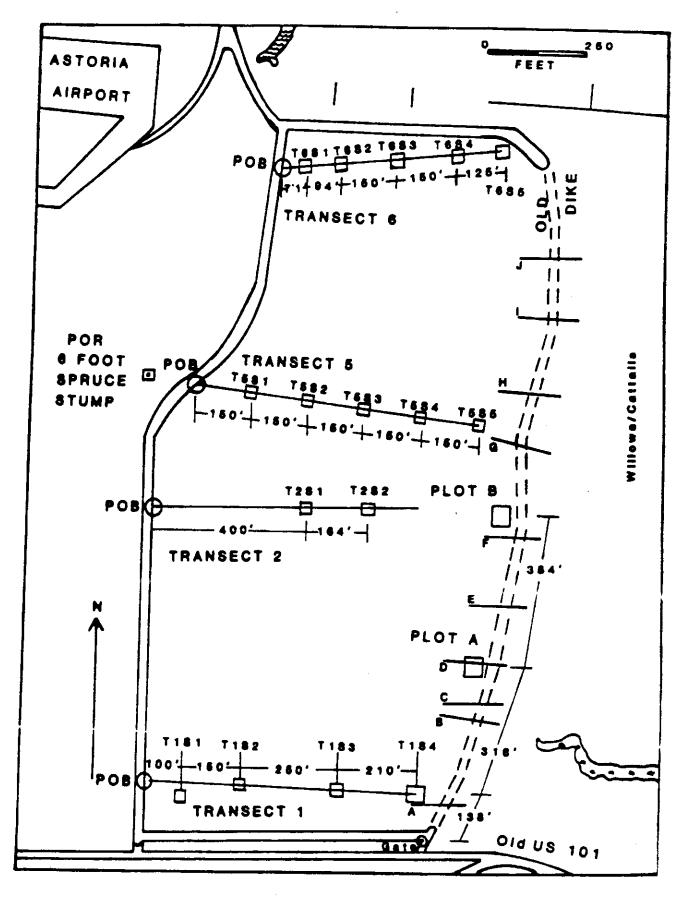


Figure 2. Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank vegetation sampling transects (Jackson et al 1989).

- 3. Determine the mean height class number for each life form and the <u>significance coefficient</u> for each hydrologic trait and substrate type. This is the height class significance coefficient;
- 4. Determine an importance value for each life form by multiplying the sum of the life form cover class mid-points by their respective height class significance coefficients;
- 5. Determine sum of importance values for all life forms, hydrologic traits and substrate types;
- 6. Determine a relative importance value for each life form, hydrologic trait and substrate type by dividing each respective importance value by the sum of all importance values. This is the habitat importance index number for the sample.

The process by which importance indexes are derived can be followed on figure 3. Defining the habitat importance index is the first step required for habitat classification and habitat assessment.

WILDLIFE HABITAT CLASSIFICATION

All habitat assessment systems require a classification of the habitat to be assessed. The Links system provides a method that simultaneously classifies and assesses the habitats sampled. It is a numeric interface between habitat classification and assessment.

The task of defining the relative importance of various wildlife habitat classes in each sample was accomplished using figure 4. The importance index derived for each wildlife habitat type on figure 3 is transferred to the corresponding life form, hydrologic trait and/or substrate type on figure 4. A dominance threshold was used to distinguish the dominant and subordinate habitat classes. Any life form, hydrologic trait or substrate type that obtained an importance index greater than or equal to the threshold was considered a dominant habitat class. The threshold selected for the Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank was .35. A subordinate threshold of .15 was selected to distinguish classes lower than .35 but above .15.

An upper case letter code is used to represent habitat classes. Habitat classes are organized fractionally in the code with increasing importance to the left. A slash separates the dominant classes from the subordinate and a dash separates codominant and cosubordinate classes (figure 4).

Following Larson (1976) and Cowardin et al (1979), each class is modified by descriptive components of each habitat class (e.g., short narrow leaf emergents, floating vascular, etc.). Modifiers are represented by lower case letters and are organized in order of decreasing importance to the right of the class or subclass they describe.

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Figure 3. Importance Index procedure for sample T1-S1.

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Figure 4a. Classification procedure for sample T1-S1.

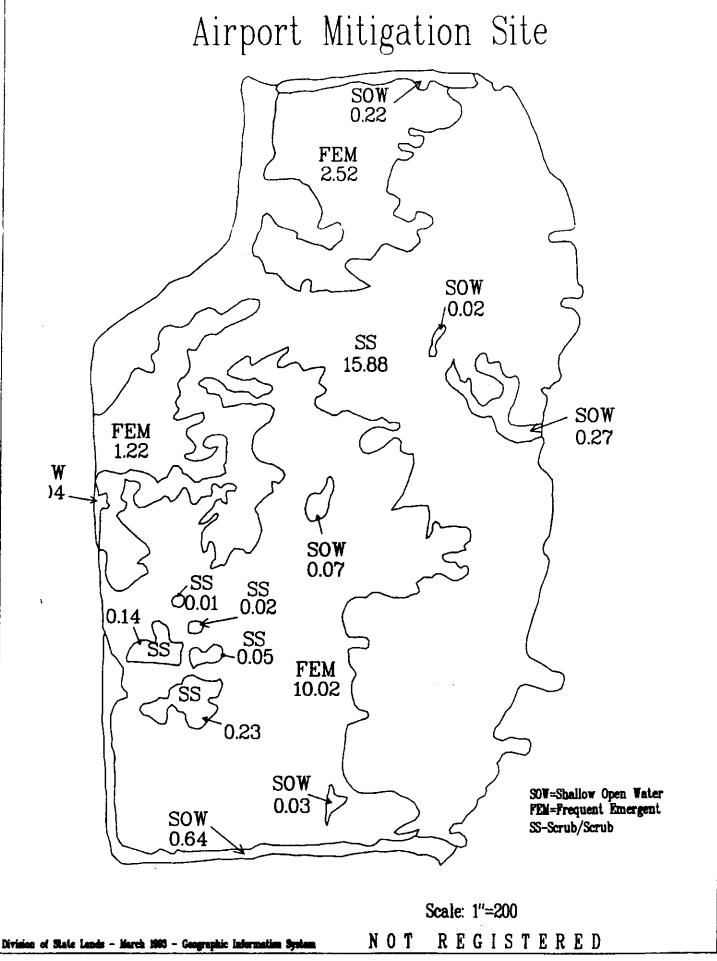


Figure 2. Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank habitat classification map (1989).

WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT

Habitat is an anthropogenic concept used to categorize similar plant and animal assemblages. The concept of habitat is strongly tied to the concept of ecosystem and includes both the biotic and abiotic attributes of the area defined. There are physical and biological variations within and between habitat types. Habitats experience cyclic variations in environmental conditions daily, seasonally and through historic and geologic time. Habitats may also experience successional or catastrophic changes. Habitat cannot be discussed outside of the context of species and habitat distinctions are often an artifact of human scale definition. These concepts are recognized in the Links wildlife habitat classification and assessment method.

The Links system is based on the premise that habitat structure largely explains habitat use by wildlife. The Links system incorporates three structural dimensions of vegetation (canopy heights and areal coverage) and one structural attribute (diversity). It further recognizes open water and exposed substrate types as structural components of wildlife habitat. Each application of the Links system is a snapshot picture in time. Therefore, site changes can be documented through a series of time sequenced applications. Likewise, habitat composition and structural goals can be modeled using this system and subsequently tracked through monitoring to establish success or failure at predetermined target dates.

Site Level Wildlife Habitat Importance Indexes

A multi-step procedure similar to the procedure used at the sample importance value level is used to derive an importance value at the site level and to derive a subsequent set of site level habitat importance indexes (Appendix 1):

- 1. Average all importance values in their respective structural categories;
- 2. Aggregate the sample image units on the area corrected air photograph by dominant habitat type. Digitize each aggregated unit and compute areal coverage;
- 3. Multiply the average importance vale of each respective habitat type by the area of the site covered by that habitat. These numbers represent the number of habitat units per habitat type present;
- 4. Sum the habitat units derived in step three to define the total number of habitat units at the site; and
- 5. Divide each respective importance value by the total to derive the respective habitat importance indices for the site.

The habitat values and units determined in steps three and four can be used to compare sites in the same ecologic regime and assessed using the same system. The comparisons could be used to help define mitigation trade ratios or cost per credit in a mitigation bank system. However, this method does not account for time lag and risk factors that should also be considered in compensatory mitigation technical and policy decisions.

A test was needed to define how "meaningful" the importance index is for explaining wildlife habitat use of the habitats "indexed" using the above procedures. A monitoring effort was required to provide wildlife habitat use data for the test. In 1989, two volunteers, Howard Bruner and Mike Patterson, completed a one year survey of bird use at the Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank. A primary goal of this effort was to define a number for bird use by habitat type that could be compared with the "Links Habitat Index". After the monitoring was completed, the following procedure was used (Appendix 2):

- 1. Tabulate all habitat bird use by bird species and habitat type;
- 2. Convert use numbers to percent of total observations per bird species;
- 3. Sum total percents of use by habitat type;
- 4. Sum the subtotals defined in step three; and

5. Divide each of the subtotals in step three by the grand total derived in step four. The percentages derived represent the relative percent use of habitat types over a one year monitoring effort.

The relative percents of bird use by habitat type at the Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank are compared with the site's it water. Links Habitat Importance Indexes in table 1.

Table 1. Comparison between percent use of birds of habitat type and habitat type importance indexes at the Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank (1989).

Habitat	Links Importance Index	Relative Percent Use by Birds
Forest	Absorbed by Scrub/Shrub	11
Scrub/Shrub	.5911 = .48	48
Emergent	.36	35
Shallow Open Water	.039	04.9

CONCLUSION

The Links Wildlife Habitat Classification and Assessment method integrates two common tools employed by resource planners and managers for a large variety of resource related decisions. The first test of the method with respect to wildlife use of "indexed" habitat types appears to display a strong link between habitat structure and habitat use by birds. The numeric nature of the system allows for computer applications and subsequent potential to offer broad latitude in terms of area and scale of application. However, small scale (large

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area) applications should be field tested with large scale (small area) sampling to verify the accuracy differences at different scales.

The Links method should be applied to a number of sites to see if the match between importance index and relative percent bird use is consistently as close as it was in this test. Other wildlife use (e.g., mammals, reptiles, amphibians, etc.) should be monitored and compared with the index as well.

The Links system provides a method to define relative mitigation trade ratios based on site level importance values. However, these ratios do not recognize such factors as risk, time lag between habitat destruction and the achievement of compensatory mitigation goals. Nor does it explicitly recognize the impacts of ambient disturbance factors such as noise, human and ferral animal intrusion, stormwater quality, etc. There are other systems that address these considerations. As with all assessment systems, Links has strengths and weaknesses. Any conscientious application of the system should recognize this and make provisions to use complimentary tools to provide the best overall assessment possible. No assessment should be used as the final decision making effort but only as one part of the decision making information system.

Finally, if the structure/use relationship can be demonstrated consistently through the "Links Index", perhaps there are other inherent statistical relationships that can be used to examine a variety of ecological questions. For example, at this site there is a 5:1 ratio between total habitat units defined by the Links method (11,950) and total relative percent bird use over one year (2,395). Does this mean bird use accounts for 20 percent of the habitat units available? As other species are accounted for, will the ratio move closer to 1:1? Will the ratio remain the same or vary from site to site? Perhaps the ratio could be used as an index to define the relationship between habitat potential and actual habitat use. there is no relationship at all. The point is, that if future applications demonstrate such relationships do exist, we may be able to use Links and other similar tools to numerically indicate the affects of urbanization and fragmentation on habitat health. These tools could help us with a variety of policy questions regarding habitat regulation and planning (e.g., buffer widths, corridors, mitigation ratios and site selection, etc.).

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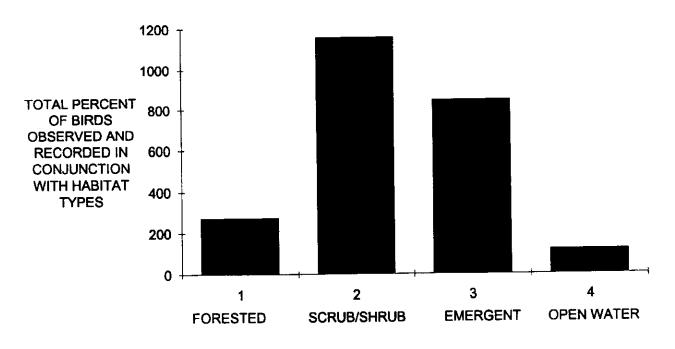
APPENDICES FOR DRAFT REPORT:

Application of Links Wildlife Habitat Importance Index Classification and Assessment at Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank.

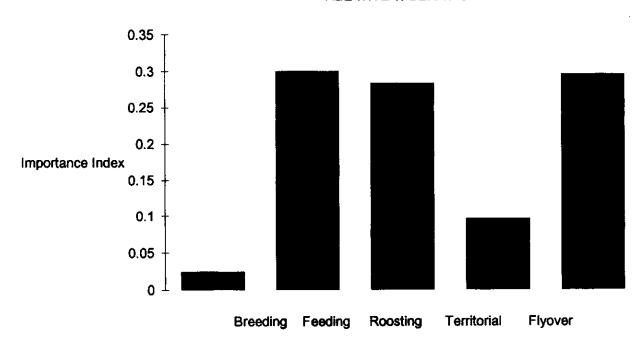
Submitted to: Oregon Division State Lands April 2, 1993 APPENDIX 1. Links habitat classification and assessment methodology applied to the Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank.

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APPENDIX 2. Bird monitoring data at the Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank from 1988 to 1989 (Bruner and Patterson 1989).

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APPENDIX 3. Vegetation data for the Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank from 1987 to 1989 (Jackson et al 1989).

Observed Changes in Plant Species by Site 1987-1989

	1987	1988	1989
	ground/canopy	ground/canopy	ground/canopy
m			
T1-S1			
Holcus lanatus		40%	
Glyceria	30%	10%	
Potentilla pacifica	5%	5%	
Scirpus microcarpus		30%	100%
Lotus corniculatius	T	15%	
Ranunculus repens		T	
Galium trifidum		Ť	* •
Spiraea douglasii		T.	
		•	
T1-S2			
	_		
Juncus effusus	75%	90%	98%
Potentilla pacifica		18	
Lotus corniculatius		18	
Carex obnupta		8%	
Deschampsia cespitosa			2%
Ranunculus repens		<u>T</u>	
Galium trifidum		T	
T1-S3			
Juncus effusus	50%	98%	
Holcus lanatus		28	
Scirpus microcarpus		${f T}$	100%
•			
T1-S4			
Juncus effusus	60%	3%	10%
Deschampsia cespit e sa	000	3 0	50%
Holcus lanatus	20%	20%	J0 %
Lolium perenne	200	20%	
Agrostis alba		20%	
Rubus spectabilis		3%	T
Rosa nutkana		3%	18
Ranunculus repens	T	3%	5%
Typha latifolia		2 %	10%
Oenanthe sarmentosa		3%	
Rubus ursinus	T	3%	
Alopecurus geniculatus		20%	
Galium aparine		T	
Potentilla pacifica			15%

1987	1988	1989
ground/canopy	ground/canopy	ground/canopy

	je sem, canopy	ground/canopy	ground/ca
Digitalis purpurea		_	
Gallum trifidum			5%
Heracleum lanatum			T
Rumex crispus		~~	T
Stachys mexicana		==	${f T}$
Alnus rubra			${f T}$
Salix spp.	50%	50%	50%
Pyrus fusca	30%	30%	30%
	20%	20%	20%
Site A 10m x 10m			
Cirsium spp.			
Lysichitum americanum	T	1%	
Alopecurus geniculatus	1	2 %	2%
Rumex conglomeratus	20	10%	
Vicia gigantea	28	28	
Trifolium parryi	- -	10%	1%
Lotus corniculatius		10%	
Galium aparine	15%	10%	
Rosa nutkana	10%	10%	
Rubus ursinus	10%	2%	
Rubus laciniatus	30%	2 %	\
Rubus discolor			` >35%
Holcus lanatus			/
Erechtites	10%	20%	T
Erechtites spp.	3%	1%	T
Rubus spectabilis		T	
Juncus balticus		$ar{ ilde{ t T}}$	15%
Oenanthe sarmentosa	= -		
Carex obnupta		=-	3%
Scirpus microcarpus			2%
Solanum dulcamara			1%
Bareground			T
Water			11%
Salix spp.	60%	10% 60%	30%
Sambucus racemosa	20%	-	
Ainus rubra	20%	20%	2 %
Pyrus fusca		10%	3 %
		10%	15%
T2-S1			
Carex obnupta	100%	0.5%	
Scirpus microcarpus		95%	50%
Juncus effusus		5%	
Water	— -		10%
			40%

	ground/ canopy	ground/canopy	ground/cano
T2-S2			
Potentilla pacifica	5%	5%	
Juncus effusus	85%	85%	4 %
Scirpus microcarpus Ranunculus repens	5%	5%	
Lotus corniculatus		2%	
Deschampsia cespitosa	5%	3%	
Unvegetated muck soil			1% 95%
Site B 10m x 10m			
Ribes divaricatum		2%	10%
Rubus spectabilis	T	5%	15%
Rumex conglomeratus		1%	T
Typha latifolia		1%	
Oenanthe sarmentosa Scirpus microcarpus	10%	10%	20%
Lotus corniculatius	15%	60%	8%
Ranunculus repens	5 %	2 %	13%
Alopecurus geniculatus	15%	5%	
Lonicera involucrata		3%	
Agrostis spp.		1%	4 %
Agrostis alba		2% 2%	
Hyoscyamus niger		25 18	
Juncus effusus		T	
Deschampsia cespitosa		1	6 %
Epilobium spp.			15%
Potentilla pacifica			1% 3%
Vicia gigantea			1%
Athyrium filix-femina			1%
Galium trifidum			1%
Rubus discolor		${f T}$	1.9
Rubus ursinus			`>2 %
Rubus laciniatus Salix Sp.			/
Alnus rubra	30%	5% 50%	11%
Salix Sp. dead	70%	T 50%	3%
Alnus rubra dead			2 %
			88

1987 1988 1989 ground/canopy ground/canopy

	ground/canopy	ground/canopy	ground/ca
T5-S1			, , , ,
Juncus effusus	95%	88%	24%
Scirpus microcarpus	5%	12%	246
Galium trifidum Water	==		1%
udcet			75%
T5-S2			
Oenanthe sarmentosa	5%	0.54	
Ranunculus repens	90%	25%	4 %
Carex obnupta	5%	50%	1%
Athyrium filix-femina	==	25 %	91%
Potentilla pacifica			3 %
Agrostis alba	- -	${f T}$	1%
Holcus lanatus		Ť	~-
T5-S3		•	
Salix spp.	208		
Juncus effusus	20%	10%	
Oenanthe sarmentosa	40%	50%	98%
Agrostis alba		35%	
		5%	28
T5-S4			
Oenanthe sarmentosa		150	
Salix spp.	10%	15 ዩ 2 ዩ	
Juncus effusus	10%	5 3 %	
Renunculus repens	10%*	10%	30%
Rubus ursinus		5%	15%
Rubus spectabilis	5%	10%	
Lotus corniculatius	25%	5%	159
Lysichitum americanum			15%
Agrostis spp. Juncus effusus			25% 10%
Galium aparine		T	704
Erechtites spp.		$ar{ extbf{T}}$	
-reencres spp.		$\bar{\mathbf{T}}$	

1987	1988	1989
ground/canopy	ground/canopy	<pre>ground/canopy</pre>

	ground, camppy	ground, canopy	ground/ ca
T5-S5			
Oenanthe sarmentosa		75%	40%
Ranunculus repens	60%	10%	~-
Carex obnupta		10%	50%
Ribes divaricatum			5%
Rubus spp.			4%
Athyrium filix-femina			1%
Equisetum spp.			T
Dead Rubus & Alder		5%	
T6-S1			
Lotus corniculata	40%	2%	20%
Oenanthe sarmentosa	40%	50%	10%
Athyrium filix-femina		2%	10%
Ranunculus repens		2 %	
Holcus lanatus		35%	
Heracleum lanatum		7%	
Scirpus microcarpus			50%
Agrostis spp.			5%
Galium aparine			5%
T6-S2			
Juncus effusus	90%	75%	10%
Rubus spectabilis		10%	10%
Oenanthe sarmentosa	10%	5%	40%
Holcus lanatus		3%	
Athurium filix-femina		5%	5%
Agrostis spp.		2 %	20%
Epilobium angustifolium	-		15%
T6-S3			
Juncus effusus	N/A	80%	85%
Carex obnupta	N/A	10%	
Spiraea douglasii	N/A	10%	1%
Water			14%

W.C G.A	1987 ground/canopy	1988 ground/canopy	1989 ground/canopy
T6-S4			
Oenanthe sarmentosa Galium aparine Rubus spectabilis Ribes divaricatum Scirpus microcarpus Holcus lanatus Bidens cernua Stellaria calycantha Dead fern Dead spruce	N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A N/A	40% 20% 20% 5% 2% 10%	80% 9% 1% 3% 2% 5% T
T6-S5			
Scirpus microcarpus (par Ribes divaricatum dead Oenanthe sarmentosa Grasses Water	tly dead)		65% 20% 10% 1% 4%

APPENDIX 4. Habitat indicator species at the Astoria Airport Mitigation Bank derived using a simple numeric threshold based on frequency and abundance.

	A	В	С
1	BIRD SPECIES	FOREST (%)	SCRUB/SHRUB (%)
2	Song sparrow	1	59
3	Marsh wren	1	59 7
4	American goldfinch	6	46
5	Barn swallow	40	20
6	Cedar waxwing	17	59
7	Common yellowthroat	3	59
8	Bewicks wren	0	83
9	Tree swallow	0	Ō
	Green-wing teal	0	0
11	Norther harrier	5	44
	Rufus humingbird	6	94
	American robin	30	63
	Black-capped chickadee	14	79
	Swainsons thrush	0	100
16	Black-shouldered kite	0	100
17	Mallard	0	0
18	Common snipe	0	14
19	Great Blue Heron	0	30
20	American Crow	49	50
	Perigrine falcon	0	100
$\overline{}$	Merlin	100	Ó
23	Pine siskin	0	100
24	Short-eared owl	0	50
25	Coopers hawk	0	0

INDISP.XLS

	D	E
1	EMERGENT (%)	SHALLOW OPEN WATER (%)
2	40	0
3	92	0
4	40	6
5	40	0
6	24	0
7	38	0
8	17	0
9	83	17
10	78	22
11	44	5
12	0	0
13	3	3
14	7	0
15	0	0
16	0	0
17	85	15
18	86	Ō
19	20	50
20	1	0
21	0	0
22	0	0.
23	0	0.
24	50	0
25	100	0

INDISP.XLS

	F	G
1	NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS	FOREST INDICATOR SPECIES
2	174	FALSE
3	210	FALSE
4	15	FALSE
5	5	FALSE
6	17	FALSE
7	34	FALSE
8	18	FALSE
9	6	FALSE
10	9	FALSE
11	16	FALSE
12	38	FALSE
13	33	FALSE
14	29	FALSE
15	1	FALSE
16	1	FALSE
17	27	FALSE
18	7	FALSE
19	10	FALSE
20	10	TRUE
21	1	FALSE
22	1	FALSE
23	1	FALSE
24	2	FALSE
25	1	FALSE

INDISP.XLS

	Н	
1	SCRUB/SHRUB INDICATOR SPECIES	EMERGENT INDICATOR SPECIES
2	TRUE	FALSE
3	FALSE	TRUE
4	FALSE	FALSE
5	FALSE	FALSE
6	FALSE	FALSE
7	TRUE	FALSE
8	FALSE	FALSE
9	FALSE	FALSE
10	FALSE	TRUE
11	FALSE	FALSE
12	TRUE	FALSE
13	TRUE	FALSE
14	FALSE	FALSE
15	FALSE	FALSE
16	FALSE	FALSE
17	FALSE	TRUE
18	FALSE	FALSE
19	FALSE	FALSE
20	FALSE	FALSE
21	FALSE	FALSE
22	FALSE	FALSE
23	FALSE	FALSE
24	FALSE	FALSE
25	FALSE	FALSE

	J
1	SHALLOW OPEN WATER INDICATOR SPECIES
2	FALSE
3	FALSE
4	FALSE
5_	FALSE
6	FALSE
7	FALSE
8	FALSE
9	FALSE
10	FALSE
11	FALSE
12	FALSE
13	FALSE
14	FALSE
15	FALSE
16	FALSE
17	FALSE
18	FALSE
19	TRUE
20	FALSE
21	FALSE
22	FALSE
23	FALSE
24	FALSE
25	FALSE