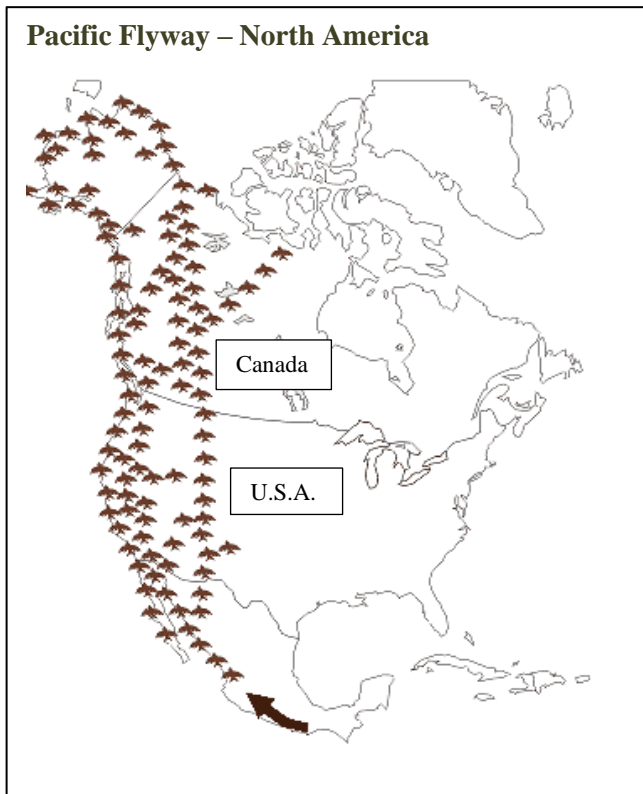


Fraser River Estuary, British Columbia, Canada, North America

Canada's Major Stopover for Migrating Birds of the Pacific Flyway

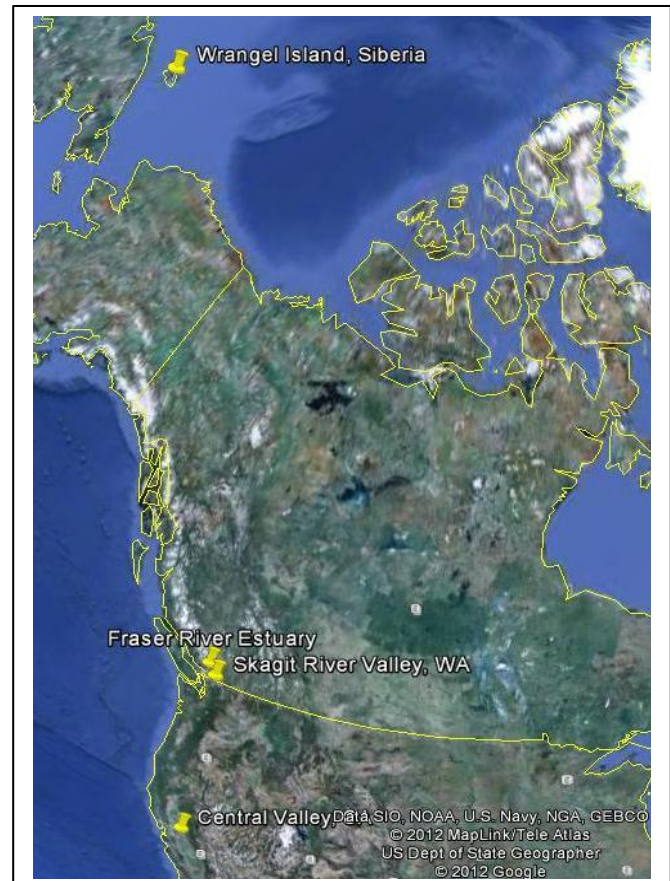
The Pacific Flyway is the path of migrating birds stretching from Siberia and Alaska to Central and South America covering over 20 countries and three continents.

The Fraser River Estuary is a critical crossroads as millions of the migrating birds converge on the mudflats, marshes and shallow tidal flats of the estuary where the fresh water meets the ocean. Waterfowl and shorebirds from breeding grounds in Siberia, Alaska, Yukon, and other arctic and prairie areas stop to refuel in the Fraser River estuary on their way to wintering grounds in California, Mexico, Central and South America or the South Pacific. Some species spend the winter in the estuary.



Courtesy of Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept.

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/birding/migration/flyways/pacific/>



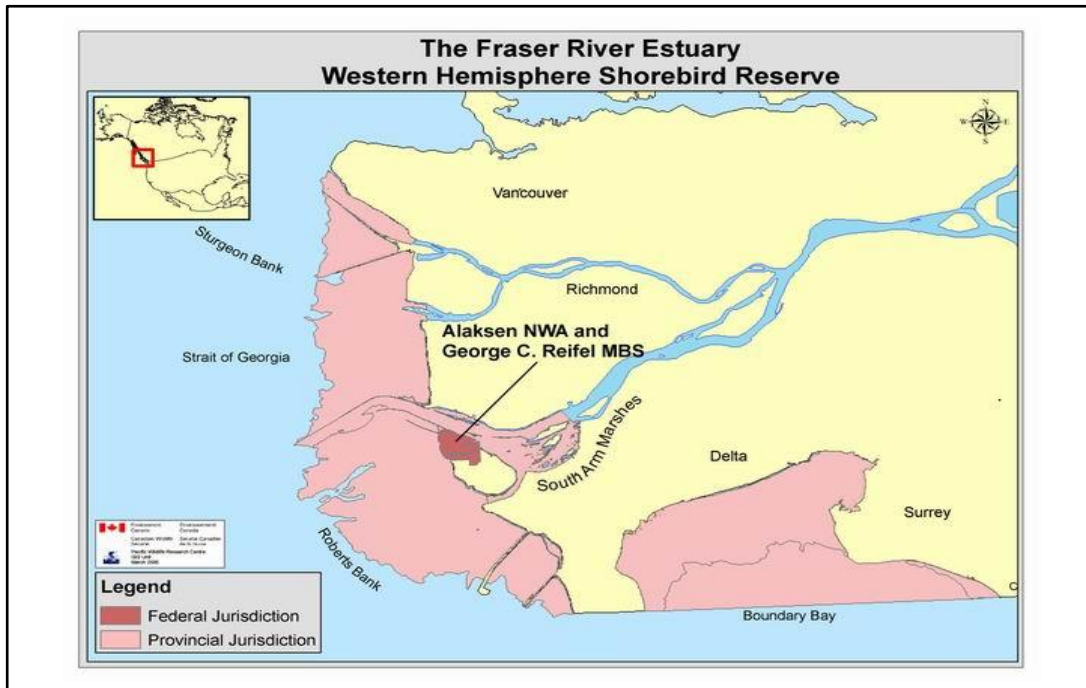
Mouth of the South Arm of the Fraser River



<https://www.google.ca/maps/@49.1015586,-123.0415925,35592m/data=!3m1!1e3> Google: imagery 2014/Terrametrics, Map data 2014 Google

Fraser River Estuary – International Significance for Migratory and Resident Birds

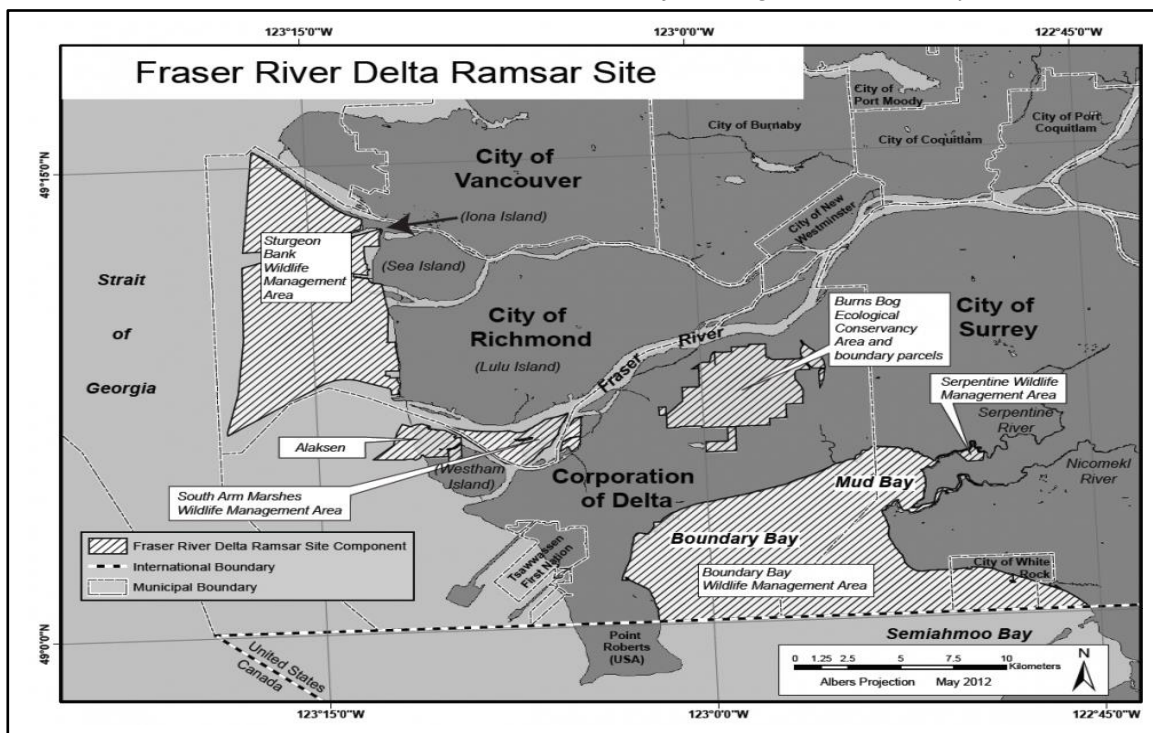
- Fraser Estuary declared **B.C. Wildlife Management Areas**: 1991: South Arm Marshes
1998: Sturgeon Bank 1995: Boundary Bay 2011: Roberts Bank (excluded area around Deltaport after removing protective Order-in-Council 2374, 1961 - removed 5,500 acres from protection)
- **2001** – Recognition by BirdLife International as an **Important Bird Area** (IBA), for Boundary Bay, Roberts Bank and Sturgeon Bank, the top three of 597 sites in Canada.
- **2004** – declared a **Hemispheric Site** in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network



<http://www.whsrn.org/site-profile/fraser-river-estuary>

- **2012** – Designation as a Wetland of International Significance, a **Ramsar Site**

Note: The area around Deltaport was deliberately excluded to accommodate port facilities and expansions. The Ramsar Site does not include the Roberts Bank Wildlife Management Area – only Alaksen



- Ramsar designations were the result of the first UN Convention on Wetlands of International Importance in Ramsar, Iran, 1971. The designations were deemed vital as global losses of wetlands were (and continue to be) very high.
- It took 40 years for Canada to take action to declare the Fraser River Delta Ramsar site even though the Fraser Delta exceeds the Ramsar criteria 60-fold for shorebirds and 30-fold for waterfowl.
- The Canadian Wildlife Service Report to the Ramsar designation process concluded that:

“no comparable sites exist along the Pacific coast between California and Alaska. There is no other site in Canada that supports the diversity and number of birds found in winter in the Fraser River delta.”
- Finally, in 2012, the Ramsar designation was declared but:

“...the designation omits Roberts Bank, a major part of the wetlands frequented by marine mammals, including endangered orcas, and providing feeding habitats for hundreds of thousands of migratory shorebirds and waterfowl, and hundreds of resident herons.

It is also the site of Port Metro Vancouver’s proposed Terminal 2, a giant expansion of the existing Deltaport container facility...A world-class wetland, at risk from imminent development, has been passed over for protection.” (Anne Murray: *Ramsar designation for Fraser delta better late than never*; Nov. 2, 2012, *straight.com*)

- The Ramsar designation is not supported by any legislation in Canada but it confirms that the Fraser River Estuary is a wetland of international significance and it should be protected.
- The Fraser Estuary is a major stopover on the Pacific Flyway for up to five million migrant birds from at least twenty countries.
- The Fraser Delta is the most important wintering area in Canada for waterfowl, shorebirds and birds of prey that use the full mosaic of habitats from the foreshore to the upland agricultural lands.
- The Fraser Delta supports around 310 species of birds – passerines, birds of prey, shorebirds and waterfowl:

“This IBA (Important Bird Area) supports globally or continentally significant populations of fifteen species, including American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Mallard, Brant, Snow Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Western Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plover, Dunlin, Great Blue Heron, Western Grebe, Red-necked Grebe, Glaucous-winged Gull, Thayer's Gull, and Mew Gull. In addition, the IBA supports nationally significant numbers of Barn Owl and Peregrine Falcon.”

“In total, fifty species of shorebirds have been recorded in the area.”
(IBA Website: Boundary Bay - Roberts Bank - Sturgeon Bank Fraser River Estuary)

- The Fraser Delta has international Significance for the entire world population of 3.6 million migrating Western Sandpipers as the Fraser Delta is one of their six major stopovers. Their survival depends on biofilm which is a nutrient-rich layer of microbes stuck to the mudflats of Roberts Bank.
- Environment Canada (EC), April 27, 2005: Environmental Assessment of Deltaport Third Container Berth at Roberts Bank in the Fraser Estuary:

“Given the international significance of Roberts Bank for migratory birds, and fish and wildlife generally, EC urges caution, and recommends a more detailed understanding of ecological impacts of past, present, and future planned projects, before any further changes are made to the system...We are concerned that the “chain” of the Pacific Flyway could be broken for shorebirds at some point given the ongoing economic development in the Delta. This constitutes a major risk for Canada’s environmental reputation and the economic and social benefits derived from wildlife.”