A detailed assessment of habitats within each IBA every ~5 years is useful to (a) provide a baseline of habitats within the IBA using the standardized categories that were derived from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and modified by BirdLife International for North American IBAs, and to (b) detect changes in key habitats required by trigger bird species over time. To enable this type of analysis, the BC IBA Committee will undertake comprehensive, quantitative assessments of habitats within IBAs when resources are available. Caretakers can assist with assessing the habitats within the IBA for the purposes of updating the original site summaries.

Caretakers can help the IBA Coordinator by identifying the habitats present within the IBA that are important for trigger species using the standard categories (see abbreviated example in Table 3). Important habitat are those that influence the success, abundance and distribution of the trigger species. If possible, rough estimates of the % area within the IBA occupied by each habitat should be provided.

In years when comprehensive habitat assessments are not made, Caretakers should simply note any significant annual changes in habitat in their annual reports.

Table 3. Abbreviated Example of Habitat Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Habitat Type</th>
<th>✓</th>
<th>% area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>Temperate coniferous</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrubland</td>
<td>Arid lowland scrub</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastline</td>
<td>Estuarine waters</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastline</td>
<td>Rock stacks &amp; islets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastline</td>
<td>Sea cliffs &amp; rocky shores</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea</td>
<td>Open sea</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea</td>
<td>Pelagic waters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands</td>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial</td>
<td>Freshwater holding pond</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>landscapes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Habitat Definitions

**Forest – boreal (general description):** northern areas south of the Arctic Circle and north of (about/at least) 50 degrees North latitude; generally dominated by spruce, fir, pine, hemlock, other softwoods, but can include areas predominated by hardwoods or areas with a mixture of soft and hardwoods.

**Forest – temperate (general description):** the North Temperate Zone extends northward from the Tropic of Cancer (about 23.5 degrees North latitude) to the boreal (which begins at about 50 degrees North latitude).

**Forest – elfin:** unique forest which may exist in BC only.

**Forest – gallery and riparian:** gallery forests are very unique and form corridors along rivers or wetlands and project into landscapes that are otherwise only sparsely treed, such as savannas, grasslands, or deserts. Gallery forests are able to exist where the surrounding landscape does not support forests. Consider using ‘Forest – river edge (river-island)’ where the riparian zone is mainly forested, but is not a genuine ‘gallery forest’.

**Forest – pine:** could be naturally occurring where pine comprises the vast majority of tree species or exists as a result of afforestation/wood and pulp plantations.

**Forest – river edge (river-island):** this category is for riparian forests or areas of land adjacent to bodies of water such as rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, marshlands, estuaries, canals, or reservoirs that is predominantly comprised of trees as opposed to shrubs.

**Forest – second growth & disturbed:** Area is predominantly treed, but the original forest was cut or controlled (by fire etc.).

**Shrubland – arid lowland scrub:** predominantly found in more southern regions, but can also be found in lower elevations of BC’s Okanagan Valley for example.

**Shrubland – arid montane scrub:** predominantly found in more southern regions, but can also be found in higher elevations of BC’s Okanagan Valley for example.

**Shrubland – riparian scrub and thickets:** similar to ‘forest – river edge’, but this is an area comprised primarily of shrubs that grow adjacent to rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, marshlands, estuaries, canals, or reservoirs.

**Shrubland – scrub:** commonly comprised of stunted, transitional vegetation (willow, birch, hawthorn etc.) post fire/other disturbance with or without canopy. In this case, species’ compositions appear at a climax.
Shrubland – second-growth & disturbed scrub: as above, commonly comprised of stunted, transitional vegetation (willow, birch, hawthorn etc.) post fire/other disturbance with or without canopy. In this case, species’ composition is not near climax, but areas show conspicuous signs of recent disturbance.

Grassland – alpine and sub-alpine: grasslands growing at higher altitudes (near to or above the tree line).

Grassland – alvar: an area of sparse vegetation that grows on a very thin soil layer over limestone bedrock. These are among one of the rarest habitats in the world and are only found around the Great Lakes.

Grassland – edaphic: are those in which the grasses grow in water-logged soils (i.e. flooded year-round).

Grassland – low, seasonally wet: similar to edaphic wetlands, but where conditions are not consistently wet.

Grassland – northern temperate: grassland not subject to consistent flooding/water-logging with, commonly, a variety of species present. Woody plants, shrubs or trees, may occur on some grasslands.

Grassland – steppe & dry calcareous: vast grass-covered plain without trees. Conditions are dry and normally with wide annual temperature variations.

Grassland – tundra: high latitude grasslands. Tundra grasslands are relatively uncommon due to high soil moisture.

Sea – open sea: < 200 nautical miles

Sea – pelagic: > 200 nautical miles

Wetlands – bog: usually covered in peat, they are highly acidic and low in nutrients with no significant in or outflows (fed by rainwater). Bogs are home to vegetation like Sphagnum Moss, but can also include lichens (Arctic) and trees such as Pin Oak, Black Spruce, and Larch.

Wetlands – ephemeral: these are depressed wetlands that temporarily hold water in the spring and early summer or after heavy rains. Periodically, these wetlands dry up, often in mid to late summer. They are isolated without a permanent inlet or outlet, but may overflow in times of high water. They are free of fish, which allows for the successful breeding of certain amphibians and invertebrates.

Wetlands – fens, transition mires & springs: fens are more alkaline than bogs, contain sedges, grasses, rushes (primarily) and are fed by groundwater/ surface water. Transition mires are areas where vegetation (in floristic composition and general ecological characteristics) is transitional between acid bog and alkaline fens. Springs are natural flows of groundwater.

Wetland – freshwater marshes and swamps: marshes are grassy wetlands often found along rivers and lakes. Marshes are dominated by grasses, reeds, rushes, and sedges. Swamps generally have hammocks, or dry-land protrusions, covered by aquatic vegetation, or vegetation that tolerates periodical inundation and have greater proportions of open water surface and may be deeper than marshes. In North America, swamps (unlike marshes) are usually regarded as including a large amount of woody vegetation.

Wetlands – inland delta: deltas are formed from the deposition of sediment carried by a watercourse as the flow leaves the mouth of the river.

Wetlands – riverine floodplain: a floodplain is flat or nearly flat land adjacent to a stream or river that experiences occasional or periodic flooding.

Wetlands – saline & alkaline lakes: salty and/or basic (higher than pH 7) lakes.

Wetlands – water fringe vegetation: not a riparian zone, but a zone where submerged vegetation such as elodea (Elodea canadensis), eelgrass (Vallisneria americana)transitions towards drier/land-based vegetation.

Artificial landscapes (aquatic) – freshwater holding pond (surface/groundwater fed): used primarily for watering livestock/other agricultural purposes and large enough to be considered a habitat. Associated land use is ‘water management’.

Artificial landscapes (aquatic) – other artificial wetlands: may have been constructed to treat sewage/other effluents or to attract wildlife etc.

Artificial landscapes (terrestrial) – arable land: farmland or areas where crops are being cultivated. Not perennial/orchard, but generally rotational sustenance or cash crop farming.

Artificial landscapes (terrestrial) – forestry and agro-industrial plantations: small-scale to larger-scale forestry plantations.

Artificial landscapes (terrestrial) – improved pastureland: refers to pastures that have been managed to improve their productivity or utility to the land-owner. ‘Improvements’ could refer to fertilization, specific plant breeding and selection, tilling etc.