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South Dakota Wildlife Action Plan

From Vision to On-the-Ground Action

The key to healthy people and healthy wildlife is habitat - clean air and water, healthy and diverse landscapes, and other features that help fish and wildlife survive. South Dakota's wildlife action plan identifies and locates South Dakota's essential habitats, identifies the habitats that have changed since the state was settled, determines which animals need special attention to ensure their long-term survival, and develops ways for the state to be more proactive in wildlife and habitat management.

Proactive Efforts that Benefit Wildlife and People **Improving Management of Grassland Bird**

More than one third of the bird species of greatest conservation need in South Dakota's wildlife action plan are grassland birds, which have suffered alarming declines in North America from loss of grassland habitat. Artificial tree plantings are common efforts to provide winter wildlife cover, but they can create abrupt edges in grassland habitats. To

demonstrate the effects of tree plantings on grassland birds, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the University of Montana conducted the first study that experimentally showed that grassland birds avoid woody edges in otherwise suitable grassland. Once trees had been removed, however, bobolink, savannah sparrow, sedge wren and dickcissel distributed themselves throughout the grasslands. Research like this is critical to understanding management practices and refining them in the appropriate manner.



Before tree removal/Frank Quamen, University of Montana



After tree removal/Frank Quamen, University of Montana



Black-crowned night-heron/Doug Backlund

Gathering Information to Take Action Inventory of South Dakota's Colonial Waterbirds

An important aspect of South Dakota's wildlife action plan is to monitor changes in wildlife populations before they become endangered. South Dakota has a wealth of wetland habitats that support a variety of colonial waterbirds such as herons, egrets, terns, gulls, pelicans, and grebes. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks partnered with the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory to conduct a statewide inventory of waterbirds that nest in colonies and to develop a system to track them in the future. The 2006 field season confirmed breeding at 45% of the 544 sites visited. The great blue heron, double-crested cormorant, pied-billed grebe, and western grebe had the highest number of active colonies. Gathering sound biological information will help South Dakota manage species and habitats to avoid future endangered species listings.



Protecting Imperiled Land, Water and Wildlife Researching American Burying Beetles

A goal in the wildlife action plan is to monitor the population size of the endangered American burying beetle, with the ultimate goal of removing it from the endangered species list. The American burying beetle has an interesting habit of burying food for its developing young. It has disappeared from most

of its former distribution; however a population was discovered in south-central South Dakota in 1995. With State Wildlife Grants funding, the Department partnered with South Dakota State University and the University of Delaware to conduct a mark and recapture study of the American burying beetle population. The population numbers between 3800 and 7800 individuals, far exceeding the 500 individuals required for a sustainable population, as defined in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Recovery Plan. This research will help avoid future conflicts over this endangered beetle.

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American burying beetle marked for study/
Doug Backlund, South Dakota Department
of Game, Fish and Parks

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