

DRAFT AGENDA FOR SOUTH DAKOTA ALL-BIRD WORKSHOP

DATE: August 17, 2004

PLACE: Ramkota Best Western Inn, Pierre, SD

CHANGE IN SCOPE: North Dakota Game and Fish Department has decided not to participate in this workshop. They will hold a separate workshop in December 2004. However, we will still have participants from North Dakota, and a number of presentations pertain to both Dakotas and broader regions.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES:

1. Provide all bird conservation orientation to attendants, including descriptions of major bird initiatives and other national, regional, and local conservation programs.
2. Provide updates on Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan/Strategy in North and South Dakota.
3. Provide opportunities for discussion of topics related to South Dakota's bird conservation planning effort.

EXPECTED AUDIENCE:

Agency personnel involved in land management or natural resource management and protection; university staff involved in bird research and monitoring; private individuals with a strong interest in birds and bird conservation and management. Expected audience unlikely to have had much exposure to regional or national bird planning initiatives.

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- Increased familiarity with regional and national bird planning initiatives and with specific efforts to include all birds in land management
- Increased familiarity with Comprehensive Plan/Strategy efforts in the Dakotas
- Input on Draft SD All Bird Conservation Plan
- Enhanced coordination among agencies, private organizations, and others interested in all-bird conservation and management
- Enhanced awareness of issues and threats pertaining to South Dakota birds
- Enhanced awareness of research priorities
- Springboard for follow-up meetings/discussions about workshop topics

PRESENTATION TIME:

Unless otherwise arranged, plan for 15 minutes plus 5 minutes for questions.

Informational session (morning and early afternoon, if needed):

This list is not necessarily in final order.

Topic or presentation title	Speaker	Confirmed?
Northern Great Plains Joint Venture	Andy Schollett, NGPJV Coordinator	Y
Prairie Pothole Joint Venture – A Board Member’s Perspective	George Vandel, SDGFP	Y
“The Prairie Pothole Joint Venture: More Than Just Ducks”	Neal Niemuth, USFWS	Y
“Integrated Conservation Planning in the Prairie Pothole Region: The HAPET Approach”	Neal Niemuth, USFWS	Y
Update on TNC’s ecoregional planning in the Dakotas	Bob Paulson, TNC	Y
SDGFP private lands program update and relevance to all birds	Tim Olson or Chad Switzer, SDGFP	Y
“South Dakota Partners for Wildlife update and relevance to all birds”	Boyd Schulz, USFWS	Y
Overview of Partners in Flight’s North American Landbird Conservation Plan	Arvind Panjabi, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory	Y
Bird monitoring program for Black Hills National Forest	Arvind Panjabi, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory	Y
“DU’s approach to all-bird conservation”	Scott Stephens, DU	Y
Update on North Dakota’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy	Sandra Hagen, NDGFD	Y
Update on South Dakota’s Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan	Eileen Dowd Stukel, SDGFP	Y
Integrating all-bird management on a national grassland	Dan Svingen, Dakota Prairie Grassland, USFS	N
Integrating all-bird management on a national wildlife refuge	Bill Schultze, Sand Lake NWR, USFWS	Y

Discussion session (afternoon):

Topic	Discussion leaders
Draft SD All Bird Conservation Plan	Kristel Bakker and Eileen Dowd Stukel
Recent and ongoing research projects and prioritization of future needs	KC (Kent) Jensen and Ken Higgins
Upcoming issues/threats that could impact bird populations in the Dakotas	KC (Kent) Jensen and Ken Higgins



SOUTH DAKOTA ALL-BIRD WORKSHOP REPORT

August 16-17, 2004
Ramkota Inn, Pierre, SD

Workshop preparation and coordination: Following contacts from Deborah Hahn, Migratory Bird Coordinator for the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA), wildlife diversity personnel with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP) and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department began planning a joint Dakotas All-Bird Workshop. Because of conflicts with other meetings, North Dakota chose to hold a separate workshop later in 2004.

Invitees: A workshop announcement was distributed to state, federal, nongovernmental, university, and tribal resource personnel involved in bird conservation and management in North and/or South Dakota. Members of the South Dakota bird list-serve were also made aware of the upcoming workshop. A registration form was subsequently sent to those who had expressed an interest in the workshop. Approximately 50 individuals registered for the event (see attached list of participants).

Workshop objectives:

1. Provide all bird conservation orientation to attendants, including descriptions of major bird initiatives and other national, regional, and local conservation programs and on Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan/Strategy in North and South Dakota.
2. Provide opportunities for discussion of topics related to South Dakota's bird conservation planning effort.

Logistics: The workshop was comprised of an evening social on August 16 and an all-day workshop on August 17, which included a group luncheon. The format of the workshop included presentations in the morning and early afternoon and three group discussion topics in the afternoon.

Presentations: Fifteen speakers helped fulfill workshop objective 1 (see attached agenda). Abstracts were requested of speakers and are attached.

This workshop represented an opportunity to seek input on several important discussion topics (objective 2). Summaries of the discussion sessions are attached.

Handouts: In addition to the agenda and list of participants, attendees received the following:

- a copy of workshop sponsor IAFWA's information brochure
<http://www.iafwa.org/Attachments/IAFWA%20Brochure.pdf>
- a copy of "A Guide to North American Bird Conservation – the four major plans and NABCI" by Alison J. Banks, sponsored by RMBO And Colorado Division of Wildlife
http://wildlife.state.co.us/habitat/waterfowlmngmtplans/handbk_nabirdplans.pdf
- draft list of South Dakota's priority bird species (supplement to a discussion topic)

Followup: A copy of the workshop report was sent to IAFWA, to workshop participants, and to others who were unable to attend but were interested in workshop results.

Report submitted by Eileen Dowd Stukel, SDGFP, Pierre



SOUTH DAKOTA ALL-BIRD WORKSHOP AGENDA

AUGUST 16-17, 2004
Ramkota Inn, Pierre SD



Monday, August 16, 2004	
Evening social with refreshments, 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm, Lewis and Clark Room, Ramkota	
Tuesday, August 17, 2004, Theatre 1	
8:00 am – 8:10 am	Introduction and logistical details Eileen Dowd Stukel, SD Dept. of Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP)
8:10 am – 8:30 am	Northern Great Plains Joint Venture – A current perspective Andy Schollett, Northern Great Plains Joint Venture
8:30 am – 8:50 am	The Prairie Pothole Joint Venture: More than just ducks Neal Niemuth, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
8:50 am – 9:10 am	Role of the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Management Board with All Bird Management George Vandel, SDGFP
9:10 am – 9:30 am	Integrated conservation planning in the prairie pothole region: The HABET approach Neal Niemuth, USFWS
9:30 am – 10:00 am	BREAK
10:00 am – 10:20 am	Partners in Flight North American Landbird Conservation Plan Arvind Panjabi, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO)
10:20 am – 10:40 am	Update on The Nature Conservancy's ecoregional planning in the Dakotas Bob Paulson, The Nature Conservancy
10:40 am – 11:00 am	Monitoring birds in the Black Hills Arvind Panjabi, RMBO
11:00 am – 11:20 am	All-bird conservation in the prairies – New paradigm or same game? Scott Stephens, Ducks Unlimited
11:20 am – 11:40 am	SDGFP private lands program update and relevance to all birds Tim Olson, SDGFP
11:40 am – noon	South Dakota Partners for Wildlife Program Boyd Schulz, USFWS
Noon – 1:00 pm	Soup and sandwich buffet, Ramkota Inn courtyard, sponsored by IAFWA
1:00 pm – 1:20 pm	Role of the national grasslands in all-bird conservation Dan Svingen, US Forest Service
1:20 pm – 1:40 pm	Integrating all-bird management on a national wildlife refuge and wetland management district Bill Schultze, USFWS
1:40 pm – 2:00 pm	North Dakota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy Sandy Hagen, North Dakota Game and Fish Department
2:00 pm – 2:20 pm	Update on South Dakota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan Eileen Dowd Stukel, SDGFP
2:20 pm – 2:45 pm	BREAK

2:45 pm – 3:30 pm	Discussion topic: Draft South Dakota All-Bird Conservation Plan Discussion leaders: Kristel Bakker and Eileen Dowd Stukel
3:30 pm – 4:15 pm	Discussion topic: Recent and ongoing research projects and prioritization of future needs Discussion leaders: KC Jensen and Ken Higgins
4:15 pm – 5:00 pm	Discussion topic: Upcoming issues/threats that could impact bird populations in the Dakotas Discussion leaders: KC Jensen and Ken Higgins

SOUTH DAKOTA ALL-BIRD WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

AUGUST 16-17, 2004
Ramkota Inn, Pierre SD

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<p>Andy H. Schollett Northern Great Plains Joint Venture 240 West Century Avenue Bismarck, North Dakota 58503 701-250-4463 ext. 141 aschollett@fs.fed.us</p>	<p>Bill Schultze USFWS, Sand Lake NWR 39650 Sand Lake Drive Columbia, SD 57433 605-885-6320 William_Schultze@fws.gov</p>	<p>Boyd Schulz USFWS PO Box 247 Brookings, SD 57006 605-697-2500 Boyd_Schulz@fws.gov</p>
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ABSTRACTS

Northern Great Plains Joint Venture – A current perspective Andy Schollett, Northern Great Plains Joint Venture

No abstract provided.

The Prairie Pothole Joint Venture: more than just ducks Neal Niemuth and Carol Lively, USFWS

Abstract: Conservation efforts in the U.S. portion of the Prairie Pothole Region have centered on waterfowl, largely because of funding availability. However, the Prairie Pothole Region also contains large proportions of the range and population of many species of breeding grassland birds, shorebirds, and waterbirds, and these species are increasingly being integrated into conservation planning efforts in the region. The Prairie Pothole Joint Venture, which was formed in 1987, has long been a leader in all-bird conservation. The 1995 update to the PPJV implementation plan specifically targeted conservation of non-game birds as an objective, and current revisions to the implementation plan provide even more detailed non-game objectives. From 1987 to 2000, PPJV partners spent \$776 million to protect, restore, or enhance 5.9 million acres of habitat. In South Dakota alone, PPJV partners spent \$108 million on more than 1 million acres. Increased attention to non-waterfowl birds will require an infusion of non-waterfowl money.

Role of the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Management Board with All Bird Management George Vandell, SDGFP

Abstract: The Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Management Board was developed in 1986 to guide, advise and cooperatively make decisions involving implementation and evaluation of habitat projects in Prairie Pothole Joint Venture (PPJV). The PPJV was one of the initial joint venture components of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. One of the primary functions of the Management Board is to develop partnerships among all the various groups, organizations and state and federal agencies involved with waterfowl management in the region. The PPJV Management Board has been actively involved in Farm Bill activities and has assumed a leadership role in making sure that conservation components adequately address habitat needs of birds that nest in the region. As the Plan began to achieve its habitat and evaluation goals, the initial emphasis on waterfowl has been broadened to include all bird management. The PPJV Board immediately recognized the value of all bird management and was one of the first joint ventures to aggressively embrace this concept. The PPJV is presently in the process of developing various bird group plans, evaluation methods and inventory and monitoring techniques for all bird management activities.

Integrated conservation planning for birds in the Prairie Pothole Region: the HAPET approach

Neal Niemuth and Ron Reynolds, USFWS

Abstract: Conservation planning for non-waterfowl birds lags behind waterfowl planning and is complicated by a lack of basic biological information and knowledge of habitat relationships for many species. However, many of the concepts, planning tools, and data used in waterfowl conservation planning can be adapted to aid in planning for non-waterfowl species. We have developed conceptual and empirical landscape-level habitat models for grassland birds and some species of shorebirds and waterbirds in the northern Great Plains. Predicted presence of was influenced by landscape composition and regional gradients in bird density and resource distribution. Landscapes with high conservation potential for grassland birds, shorebirds, waterfowl, and waterbirds show considerable overlap. Conservation planning must also consider the dynamic nature of the Prairie Pothole Region, where vegetation structure and wetland availability vary dramatically with annual precipitation, and land use is influenced by commodity prices and agricultural programs.

The Partners In Flight North American Landbird Conservation Plan

Arvind Panjabi, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory

Abstract: The goals of Partners In Flight (PIF) are to help species at risk and keep common birds common through voluntary partnerships among public and private sectors to benefit birds. The PIF North American Landbird Conservation Plan provides a continental synthesis of conservation priorities among 448 species of landbirds across North America. The Plan is based on a comprehensive biological assessment of landbirds breeding in the United States and Canada using a peer-reviewed scientific process. This assessment identifies 100 species, termed the Watch List, that are most in need of conservation measures to reverse or stabilize population declines. One hundred and fifty-eight species, including 62 Watch List species, are recognized as species characteristic of a single North American avifaunal biome (Stewardship Species) and merit special recognition in long-term planning and management to ensure that populations remain stable into the future. The plan provides habitat specific information on the status and needs of birds in each avifaunal biome, along with broad recommendations for addressing conservation issues. The plan also identifies monitoring needs and priorities among landbirds. Future versions of the plan will incorporate Mexico, the Caribbean, and other parts of Latin America into its scope.

Update on The Nature Conservancy's ecoregional planning in the Dakotas

Bob Paulson, The Nature Conservancy

No abstract provided.

Monitoring Birds in the Black Hills

Arvind Panjabi, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory

Abstract: Since 2001, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO), in conjunction with Black Hills National Forest (BHNF), has implemented *Monitoring the Birds of the Black Hills*, a habitat-based bird monitoring program in the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wyoming. RMBO has designed this program to provide statistically rigorous long-term trend data within 30 years for

populations of most diurnal, regularly breeding bird species in the Black Hills, including some U.S. Forest Service Region 2 Sensitive Species and BHNH Management Indicator Species. In the short term, this program provides information needed to effectively manage and conserve bird populations in the Black Hills, including the spatial distribution, abundance, and habitat relations of each species. This cooperative project supports the BHNH's efforts to comply with requirements set forth in the National Forest Management Act and other statutes and regulations. Annual reports from each year of the project are available for download from the BHNH website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/blackhills/projects/wildlife/index.shtml>.

All-bird Conservation in the Prairies: New paradigm or same game?

Scott E. Stephens, Director of Conservation Planning, Ducks Unlimited Inc., 2525 River Road, Bismarck, ND 58503

Abstract. All bird conservation is comprised of two important components: conservation planning and conservation programs. The key information needs for the planning component include information on the density of the birds of interest, information on the demography, and information on the condition of the landscape which influences the other two. Unfortunately, for most non-game birds we lack information on both the density and the demography. Despite this challenge there are rigorous ways to proceed with conservation work amidst the uncertainty. In short, that strategy is to review what you do know, continue to increase and refine what you know, but proceed with implementing conservation work based on the best current science. Planning alone is not adequate to qualify as conservation; implementation of on-the-ground conservation work has to occur. However, we do know some important things with respect to non-game birds: most South Dakota birds are tied to grassland habitats, many South Dakota birds are tied to wetland habitats, most grassland and wetland dependent birds have undergone steep declines, and most demographic studies that have been done point to grassland loss as a factor driving poor demographic performance. Fortunately, several research and monitoring programs are underway or being developed to address the density component. However, the demographic component is still poorly studied yet critically important given source/sink dynamics documented for many better-studied species. Ducks Unlimited has had research ongoing since 2000 in the Missouri Coteau region of North and South Dakota examining the influence of landscape characteristics on nest survival rates of shorebirds and raptors that accompanies other nesting waterfowl work. To date, DU has collected data on over 650 shorebird nests and nearly 200 raptor nests that will be analyzed this fall to develop demographic models of important areas for these species. Ducks Unlimited and numerous partners have also been conducting research to document conversion of native grassland across the Coteau region and develop predictive models of which of the remaining tracts are at highest risk of conversion. However, the preliminary results of this grassland risk work make it clear that Hyde, Hand and Hughes counties in central South Dakota are ground-zero for ongoing grassland loss. Additionally, this area has been identified as a grassland bird diversity hotspot in South Dakota. In summary, all-bird conservation is prairie and wetland conservation in South Dakota. There is a huge urgency to protecting existing grassland/wetland complexes, there is great interest from landowners in grassland easement programs, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has the staff and capacity to get grassland/wetland conservation easements purchased and the important habitat protected. We desperately need all of the bird conservation groups to pull together additional funding to help get these critical landscapes protected.

South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks Private Lands Program update and relevance to all birds

Tim Olson, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, Wildlife Division, 523 E. Capitol Ave, Pierre, SD 57501

Abstract: The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP) private lands program has been actively involved with wetland and grassland restoration, enhancement and management in cooperation with private landowners for approximately 16 years. Initial efforts began in the Lake Thompson watershed, but a statewide program has been in place for approximately 10 years. Cost share funds are provided to cooperating landowners upon completion of eligible wetland and grassland habitat projects. Multi-purpose embankment ponds, managed grazing systems and grassland plantings are the most popular practices. Partnerships with federal, state, and local government agencies, non-governmental conservation organizations and private landowners are essential in leveraging SDGFP hunting license dollars with grant monies from various sources such as the North American Wetland Conservation Act grant program. For several years SDGFP has provided hard matching dollars to conservation partners who have been awarded NAWCA grants totaling approximately \$6 million. All grant projects have focused on wetland and grassland habitat conservation and restoration on private lands. Pressures to convert remaining wetland and grassland habitat to production agricultural lands remain, or are increasing due to lucrative federal agricultural subsidies that many landowners find hard to resist. Considerable SDGFP private lands program funding is provided to ranchers or diversified operators interested in maintaining sustainable cattle grazing operations on native or reestablished grasslands. Funds are provided to assist with water development (multi-purpose ponds), fencing for grazing systems and grass seedings. Historically, the program has had a waterfowl emphasis, but trends toward delivery of an all-bird habitat program are evident. Joint ventures organized under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan have been given clear direction to deliver on-the-ground habitat projects that will benefit all birds. The Northern Great Plains Joint Venture, a new venture in its formative stages, includes all of western South Dakota and will be an impetus to move toward an all-bird habitat program. Emphasis to improve native grassland and riparian habitats through more careful grazing practices on private lands will likely become program priorities in western South Dakota. There is a need to build on the science base for bird species besides waterfowl to assure that on-the-ground program results appropriately address habitat needs for all birds of management concern.

South Dakota Partners for Wildlife Program

Boyd Schulz, USFWS, South Dakota Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

Abstract: The SD Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW) program is a relatively small branch of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) that performs wildlife habitat improvement projects on private land. The staff of the program consists of three people in the Brookings Wildlife Habitat office and 8 Wildlife Biologists located strategically throughout the state. The PFW relies upon grant and partner funding to perform many of the habitat projects conducted. The four main habitat improvement projects conducted include; native grass plantings, rotational grazing systems, wetland restorations, and wetland establishments. Recently, riparian improvement projects have also been conducted to a lesser degree. From 1991-2004, 3700 agreements have been written with landowners in SD to improve habitat on their land. From 1998 to the present, \$11,700,000 of grant, partner, and FWS funding have been spent to complete habitat projects. A not so hidden agenda of the program is to keep the native prairie

habitat on the landscape, water and grass. Ranchers hold a common interest in keeping grass for livestock production. This is the audience in which the PFW works most.

SD has an opportunity that other states to the east of us did not. The tall grass prairie, primarily to the east of SD, was converted to row crop production in a relatively short period of time. At the time of settlement, it was primarily converted directly into row crop production. Whereas in SD, primarily dominated by mixed and short grass prairie, an intermediate step of cattle ranching exists between native undisturbed prairie and row crop production. The trend of conversion of native prairie to row crop production continues. In 1996, agricultural receipts for crops exceeded livestock for the first time. All of the sudden SD has more in common with Illinois and Ohio than Montana and Wyoming. Native prairie loss rates seem to be highest in east central SD. This same area is arguably the best area for waterfowl production on the North American continent. Recent data indicates that if the trend of grassland conversion continues at its' current rate, in a five to eight year period this area of east central SD will drop below a threshold in which waterfowl populations will be able to maintain their current levels.

The PFW program focuses on waterfowl projects because that is where the current partner's dollars are coming from. The projects conducted not only benefit waterfowl but all native grassland bird species. The PFW will continue to perform habitat projects on private land in the years to come.

Role of the national grasslands in all-bird conservation **Dan Svingen, US Forest Service**

Abstract. The U.S. Forest Service manages 20 National Grasslands, encompassing approximately 4 million acres of tallgrass, mixed grass, and short grass prairie. These individual Grasslands are typically the largest publicly-owned tracts of native or restored prairie in their respective states. In South Dakota, the Grand River National Grassland is managed as part of the Dakota Prairie Grasslands. The Fort Pierre and Buffalo Gap National Grasslands are administered by the Nebraska National Forest. These three Grasslands are managed for multiple-uses, including bird conservation. All three units have recently revised their management plans. Under the new plans, these Grasslands will focus on: increasing grassland vegetative diversity and composition; enhancing woody regeneration where appropriate; increasing prairie dogs, and reducing noxious weeds. Habitat management will largely be implemented through site-specific revisions of individual Allotment Management Plans. Continued involvement of all interested parties is vital to successfully accomplishing the objectives of the new management plans."

Integrating all-bird management on a national wildlife refuge and wetland management district **Bill Schultze, USFWS**

Abstract. Sand Lake NWR integrates the needs of waterfowl, over-water nesting birds, and shorebirds in the water management program on the refuge. Managers need to consider objectives, the species present, and their needs to determine the timing of their management actions. The wetland management districts in eastern South Dakota protect habitat through fee-title and easement purchase. The Fish & Wildlife Service's wetland and grassland easement program provides the best opportunity to preserve the habitat needed for all bird species in eastern South Dakota.

North Dakota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy **Sandy Hagen, North Dakota Game and Fish Department**

Abstract. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is the primary agency responsible for implementation of management and conservation programs for all species of wildlife in the state. This includes both game and nongame species of wildlife. For over 60 years the source of revenue for the Department has come largely from sportsman's dollars, rightly so, that money is used on the management of sport fish and wildlife. In 2001, the Department was awarded with new Federal Aid grants, now known as State Wildlife Grants (SWG), to be directed at those species which typically receive no monetary support. These Federal Aid dollars were also to be directed at those species in the greatest need of conservation. States retain the authority to identify those species which are declining in the state and need additional research and management to avoid listing as a Federally Threatened or Endangered species.

Under condition of accepting these funds, North Dakota and all other 49 states are required to complete a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan/Strategy (CWCS) by October 1, 2005. Congress has identified eight required elements to be included in the Strategy. The CWCS must identify and focus on "species in greatest need of conservation," yet address the "full array of wildlife." The Department continues to receive federal funds through SWG to develop the state's comprehensive plan which will include birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and freshwater mussels. Funding is also being used for several research projects which will provide information relating to the eight required elements of the CWCS.

Update on South Dakota's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan **Eileen Dowd Stukel, SDGFP**

Abstract. State wildlife agencies evolved from an emphasis on game and sportfish restoration to a broader mission today, although emphasis and funding continue to favor game species. The environmental movement of the 1970s resulted in the passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, which has been administered with an inefficient and expensive species-by-species approach. The Teaming with Wildlife initiative has attempted to address the funding needs of fish and wildlife species and habitats through conservation, environmental education, and wildlife-associated recreation. State and territorial fish and wildlife agencies have recently received annual State Wildlife Grants appropriations for use on fish and wildlife species of greatest conservation need and related habitats, law enforcement, and education efforts. Acceptance of SWG funds requires the completion of a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan or Strategy by October 1, 2005.

South Dakota is using an ecosystem approach to the Plan, which will include habitat-based classifications to address the needs of most species in combination with specific needs of species of concern. Four management units have been identified - great plains steppe, Black Hills, Missouri River, and eastern prairie. The species of concern list has been drafted by the SDGFP Wildlife Diversity Program staff and will soon be distributed for expert review for finalization during September 2004. SDGFP is using a variety of public involvement techniques, including an Advisory Team, meetings with specific land and resource management agencies, maintenance of an interactive web-site, and open houses in four major cities during September 2004. The SD Comprehensive Plan is viewed by the agency as an important opportunity to

reach new constituents and partners, while continuing to address the needs and expectations of traditional users.

Discussion topic: Draft South Dakota All-Bird Conservation Plan
Discussion leaders: Kristel Bakker and Eileen Dowd Stukel

PLAN OUTLINE: Kristel began by describing the plan's outline and her approach to the components. The plan focuses on South Dakota bird species and habitats. Step involved in drafting the plan to date include:

- Identification of priority species
- Identification of priority species by habitat
- Brief habitat descriptions and locations
- Habitat requirements by individual species
- Management option for individual species
- Summaries of management options by habitat types
- Conservation issues and threats by habitats
- Research needs by habitats
- Identification of gaps in current knowledge
- Focus on research and monitoring on species with identified needs

DEVELOPMENT OF LIST OF PRIORITY BIRD SPECIES: Would like to separate waterfowl and migratory shorebirds and focus on species of greater conservation need. Information sources:

- PIF Watch List
- Area Importance component
- Declining Species
- USFWS protected species
- American Bird Conservancy Green List
- Waterbird species of High/Medium Concern
- Forest Service Sensitive Species List

QUESTIONS ADDRESSED TO MEETING ATTENDEES:

1. Which species should be on list?
2. Are the ranks/species levels appropriate?
3. Where should the focus be in regards to the list? Please provide input on list.

DISCUSSIONS IN REGARDS TO ABOVE QUESTIONS:

1. Why isn't Willet listed? Must have not been high in certain ranking area, but probably should be listed. Incorporated in Shorebird Plan
2. Shorebird Plan incorporates birds that should be in the All Bird Conservation Plan. Birds in one plan should be in another so no confusion and not flipping between plans.
3. What about Woodpeckers (especially those in the Black Hills)? Should be on list since several are or will be on Forest Service Sensitive Species List.
4. Virginia's Warbler? Should be in plan even though limited range in SD. Birds with limited range in SD should still be represented
5. What about species dependent on aspen? Ruffed Grouse and other species dependent on aspen should be on the list since numbers seem to be decreasing.
6. Northern Goshawk? Should be in plan since FS sensitive species and one maybe of concern.
7. Eastern Species? Eastern species can be used as an indicator of habitat in eastern SD. Some examples include Eastern Wood-Pewee and Eastern Towhee.

8. Lapland Longspur? Why is this species on the list? Have seen in croplands so conservation not needed as much as for grassland obligates. This species is also quite abundant in ND.

9. Western Tanager, Red-Breasted Nuthatch? More common species but not in direct need of conservation. SD conservation score caused these species to be on list. Much can be done for these species from a stewardship perspective.

OTHER THOUGHTS/DISCUSSIONS:

1. AI measures are actually relative density measures rather than % of total population.

Partners in Flight is not using state-based scores anymore in regards to 0 to 5 ranks (or AI).

- should not rely on these scores; would be better to delete this column for this plan
- the reason PIF does not rely much on these is due to not knowing how the densities were originally calculated/measured
- look at BCR physiographic regions for Avifauna Conservation instead

2. Should Wintering Species be kept in Plan?

Yes; specific distinctions as such indicate things that might affect survival so it is best to keep these items/species; also this is good from a stewardship perspective, esp. when looking at a specific land patch that is holding a specific species.

3. Things that need to be considered:

- Species common in SD but a significant population exists here
- Species SD can maintain/sustain in the future (whether/not doing well)

4. Further thoughts in regards to Species List

- Make All Bird Conservation Plan with species of high priority as focus but also include species that are common
- List does a good job of looking at SD species and comparing with species that are rangewide but should look at species with limited range
- if considering species with limited range, then some species will need to be added to list
- be wary of comments/suggestions from public in regards to the species list; stick with a ranking system as you did
- List should be distributed but describe parameters for removal/addition of species
- if species is suggested as removal/addition to list, then justification should be provided
- List should be organized in such a way that it is easier to peruse, e.g., break down list by habitat type and arrange table by specific physiographic regions; break down by BCR
- Use combination of scores to rank species, e.g., AI + BCR
- look at combination of scores to determine ranks and reasons

Several participants volunteered to assist in reviewing future drafts of the plan, and Kristel will follow-up by incorporating these suggestions into the next draft plan.

Discussion session notes taken by Alyssa Kiesow, SDGFP, Pierre

Discussion topics: Current Issues of Concern and Research Needs for Bird Conservation in South Dakota

Discussion leaders: KC Jensen and Ken Higgins

Kent C. Jensen, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences, South Dakota State University, Brookings, SD

Kenneth F. Higgins, South Dakota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences, South Dakota State University, Brookings, SD

We conducted a 1 hour session that outlined the current threats facing bird conservation in South Dakota, current research efforts that we could identify within the state, and an open discussion forum where other threats and opportunities for avian conservation were outlined and discussed.

Threats for Bird Conservation in South Dakota

Farm Bill legislation and the continuance of the CRP program. – Perhaps the greatest threat for bird conservation in South Dakota and throughout the Great Plains is the uncertainty of the renewal of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) within the 2005 Farm Bill. Currently, there are approximately 1.4 million acres of CRP lands within the state that have been seeded into grass cover. These CRP lands are on either 10- or 15-year contracts with private landowners. If the CRP program is not reauthorized, these contract acres will begin expiring, and about one half of the acres (733,000) will be reconverted to cropland in 2007 alone. In the 4 states of SD, ND, MT, and NE, a total of 4.7 million acres of CRP land will expire in 2007. Habitat conversion at this scale cannot but have negative impacts on grassland-dependent species. The reauthorization of the CRP program within the Farm Bill to allow the Great Plains states to retain current levels of permanent grassland cover is vital to maintaining grassland bird populations at current levels.

Other issues that are related to the Farm Bill and agricultural concerns were:

- conversion of wetlands and native grasslands to cropland, and
- chronic overgrazing on native grasslands within the state

Economic pressures and recent developments in cropping technology (ie. Roundup-ready soybeans and corn) have caused landowners, particularly in counties in central South Dakota, to convert native mixed-grass prairie into row crops. The economic viability of this practice in areas of the state with limited rainfall is questionable. However, current USDA farm programs may encourage landowners to undertake this practice because of guaranteed crop subsidies that economically out-weigh the return from maintaining native vegetative cover and sustainable grazing systems.

Additionally, the current drought that encompasses much of the central and western 2/3 of the state has resulted in short-term overgrazing of native grasslands. This, coupled with the predominant traditional grazing management system of utilizing season-long, or year-long pastures where grasslands are not rested and allowed to rejuvenate has caused degradation of the native grassland habitats and the associated loss of vegetative diversity that is important to native grassland birds. Moreover, chronic overgrazing allows the invasion of cheatgrass or downy brome (*Bromus tectorum*) and other exotic invasive species that degrade native habitats.

Invasive and exotic species – There are several issues of concern that center around the increase in invasive and exotic vegetation in prairie habitats. These include:

- woody invasion (eastern redcedar) and shelterbelts
- saltcedar in the Cheyenne River bottoms

Woody invasion into prairie habitats can have serious consequences for prairie-dependent bird species. These problems include increased predation because of the perches provided to birds of prey, increased nest parasitism from brown-headed cowbirds due to the increased edge provided by shelterbelts and woody plantings, and increased common grackle populations which may cause some crop depredation problems for farmers.

Saltcedar (*Tamarix* spp.) has begun to appear along the upper reaches of the Cheyenne River drainage in South Dakota. Saltcedar is an aggressive colonizer that is able to survive in a wide variety of habitats; saltcedar often forms monotypic stands, replacing willows, cottonwoods and other native riparian vegetation. The impacts of saltcedar may be felt widely in areas where it becomes established. The stems and leaves of mature plants secrete salt, forming a crust above and below ground that inhibits other plant growth. Saltcedar consumes large quantities of water; a single large plant can absorb 200 gallons per day. Saltcedar's high water consumption further stresses native vegetation by lowering ground water levels and can also dry up springs and marshy areas.

Energy development – There were some issues of concern surrounding potential energy development plans within the state. These included:

- Wind farm impacts
- Coalbed methane development

The impacts of wind turbine generators on bird populations are largely unknown. However, recent reports of large numbers of mortalities from turbines on migratory birds, particularly birds of prey, have caused concern about the influence of wind farms on bird populations. Recent research on the Buffalo Ridge wind farm in western Minnesota showed fairly low mortality rates for migratory birds in those areas. However, this area is within habitats that have been largely converted to row crop agriculture, and therefore may not be representative of wind farm mortalities within native grassland habitats. Additionally, turbine placement is usually on ridges or hill tops within the wind farm landscape, and these are also the locations favored by native prairie grouse for their display grounds or leks. The impacts of wind farms on bird populations in native grassland habitats are therefore an issue of some concern.

Coalbed methane development is also an issue that may have some impact within South Dakota. Currently, coalbed methane development has been limited to Wyoming and parts of Montana, but the associated infrastructure with its roads and pipelines has caused considerable fragmentation of native habitats (usually sage-steppe habitats) and has been implicated as a factor in declining Greater Sage-Grouse populations. An associated problem with coalbed methane development is the development of collection ponds for water that is pumped out in the process of collecting the natural gas. These ponds have been implicated in the spread of the West Nile virus (WNV) into the arid regions of the West by providing breeding habitats for mosquitoes, particularly *Culex tarsalis*, which has been implicated as the main vector for WNV. Additionally, recent research on Greater Sage-Grouse has found that they have little to no natural immunity to WNV and all birds that have been challenged with even very low doses of

WNV in captivity have died. WNV has been documented as the major form of mortality in a recent sage grouse population study in Wyoming.

Other issues of concern – There were several other issues of concern that were discussed briefly at the workshop. These include (in no particular order):

Missouri River Management – Controversy continues around the management of water levels with the mainstem Missouri River reservoirs in the Dakotas and the releases that are managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers. Missouri River management has direct implication on many bird species, but is a particular concern for breeding populations of least terns and piping plovers.

Timber management & fire management in the Black Hills – Recent large forest fires in the Black Hills have elevated issues surrounding timber management practices within all levels of government in the state as well as the general public. Infestations of pine beetle in the central and northern Black Hills have caused damage to large areas of forest habitat and increased their vulnerability to catastrophic wild fire. Additionally, the recent drought has greatly increased the possibility of massive wild fire within the Black Hills. Management decisions by the US Forest Service concerning logging and thinning within these areas have obvious implications on bird conservation within the Black Hills. The current forest master plan for the Black Hills is under development and revision, and its outcome will set the stage for future bird conservation efforts.

Additional issues that were mentioned, but not discussed at length were:

Avian diseases (WNV)

Local and urban predators (81 million birds per year killed by housecats in WI)

Hostility toward public ownership of land in western South Dakota

No wildlife extension person in the Dakotas

ATV/recreational use of public lands

Prairie dogs management on public and private lands

Conservation Needs

Workshop discussions culminated with an open session to outline some needs for management and conservation of birds and habitats within South Dakota. These issues/needs were:

- (1) *Long-term monitoring* – we need directed and planned monitoring efforts to adequately assess population trends within all major habitats within the state.
- (2) *Use of landscape-level management actions* – utilize recent advances in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) that allow managers to make management decisions on a landscape level. Landscape-level management also requires constant updating of land cover/land use data sets that could be incorporated into the monitoring efforts.
- (3) *Habitat quality and change assessment* – utilization of GIS technology allows for ranking of habitats in terms of their quality as habitat for birds. Managers should also utilize this technology to address temporal changes on land use and habitat quality and direct management decisions as needed.

- (4) *Development of alternative funding strategies* – efforts should be made to identify and develop funding opportunities to assist in avian conservation at all levels for both governmental and non-governmental entities.
- (5) *Improved extension/landowner relationships* – the development of more effective relationships between bird conservation advocates at both the public and private levels and landowners should be a high priority.
- (6) *Volunteer use* – efforts need to be made to develop an organized way for management organizations to utilize volunteers in monitoring and other activities for the conservation of birds in the state.

Research Efforts

There are currently several research and monitoring projects underway within South Dakota (Table 1). The workshop discussions indicated that perhaps there could be some effort made to prioritize research needs within the state. However, it was recognized that research is largely governed by funding agencies and the opportunities that exist within specific funding opportunities. Prioritizing research efforts across all concerned agencies may therefore be difficult. However, workshops like this one do offer the opportunity for all interested stakeholders in avian conservation to contribute to discussions concerning prioritization of conservation issues which then identify knowledge gaps that lead to research efforts. In this way, all interested parties do have some influence in the establishment of research priorities.

Table 1. Ongoing and planned avian research and monitoring projects in South Dakota.

Project Title	PI	Institution
Stopover biology of shorebirds at small natural and large managed wetland sites in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. (Thomas - PhD project)	Dave Swanson	USD
Modeling the occurrence of western birds in the Black Hills: Why are some species present and others absent?	Dave Swanson	USD
Inventory of the avifauna of Goat Island, Missouri National Recreational River (National Park Service)	Dave Swanson	USD
Determination if pre-burn canopy coverage is a good predictor of post-burn use by black-backed woodpeckers and other woodpeckers	Kerri Vierling	SDSMT
Black-backed and Lewis's woodpeckers reproduction following fire and salvage logging activities	Kerri Vierling	SDSMT
Association of black-backed woodpeckers with mountain pine beetle infestations in the Black Hills, South Dakota	Joshua Millspaugh	Univ. of Missouri - Columbia
Habitat assessment and conservation strategy for sage grouse and other selected species on Buffalo Gap National Grassland, Fall River Ranger District.	Greg Schenbeck	US Forest Service, Buffalo Gap Natl. Grassland
Section-based Bird Monitoring and Inventory on Grand River National Grassland	Arvind Panjabi	Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory
Monitoring Birds in the Black Hills	Arvind Panjabi	Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory
An evaluation of nesting success of grassland birds in fragmented and unfragmented areas in the mixed grass prairie region of South Dakota, with emphasis on declining grassland species. (Berman – MS Project)	Kristel Bakker	DSU/SDSU

Bird Inventories at Jewel Cave National Monument, Mount Rushmore National Memorial, and Wind Cave National Park	Arvind Panjabi	Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory
Effects of post-fire succession on cavity nesting communities	Kerri Vierling	SDSMT
Annual Off Road Breeding Bird Survey	Park Staff	Wind Cave NP
Nesting and brood-rearing ecology of long-billed curlews in relation to grazing regimes (Clarke – MS Project)	KC Jensen	SDSU
Grassland bird nesting in relation to bison and cattle grazing systems on the Pine Ridge Reservation (Marvill – MS Project)	KC Jensen	SDSU
Burrowing owl nesting in relation to bison and cattle grazing systems on the Cheyenne River Reservation (Murray – MS Project)	KC Jensen	SDSU
Survival, spatial ecology and habitat selection of sympatric greater prairie-chickens and sharp-tailed grouse in central South Dakota (Norton – MS Project)	KC Jensen	SDSU
Survival and movements of Merriam's wild turkey gobblers in the southern Black Hills (Steinke – MS Project)	KC Jensen	SDSU
Breeding and Wintering Ecology of Greater Sage-Grouse in northwestern South Dakota and southwestern North Dakota	KC Jensen	SDSU
Modeling scaup wetland usage in eastern South Dakota (Kahara – PhD Project)	Steve Chipps	SDSU – Coop Unit
Lesser scaup diets and body composition (Strand – MS Project)	Steve Chipps	SDSU – Coop Unit
Ecology of Merriam's wild turkeys in the Southern Black Hills, South Dakota (Lehman – PhD Project)	Les Flake	SDSU
Survival and habitat use of breeding hen pheasants in eastern South Dakota (Shilowski – MS Project)	Les Flake	SDSU
Comparing avian nesting success in cool-season CRP, warm-season CRP, and alfalfa fields (Rock – MS Project)	Dan Hubbard	SDSU
A landscape approach to grassland bird conservation in the prairie pothole region of the northern Great Plains	Dave Naugle	Univ. of Montana
25 year banding study of birds in Aberdeen, SD	Dan Tallman	NSU
Annual waterfowl surveys on 98 four-square-mile plots in South Dakota	Neal Neimuth	Bismarck HAPET Office - USFWS
Breeding shorebird survey in South Dakota	Neal Neimuth	Bismarck HAPET Office - USFWS
Associations between breeding shorebirds and landscape-level, basin, and local habitat characteristics	Neal Neimuth	Bismarck HAPET Office - USFWS
Evaluation of survey and sampling methodology for regional surveys of breeding waterbirds	Neal Neimuth	Bismarck HAPET Office - USFWS
Utilizing geo-referenced BBS data to develop spatially explicit landscape-level habitat models for a variety of breeding birds	Neal Neimuth	Bismarck HAPET Office - USFWS
Nest survival estimates for shorebirds and raptor species in the Coteau region of South Dakota	Scott Stephens	Ducks Unlimited - Bismarck
Breeding bird survey and habitat associations in Custer State Park	Chuck Deiter	SDSU
Nesting raptor survey on the Grand River National Grassland	Dan Svingen	US Forest Service, Dakota Prairie NG

Burrowing owl surveys on the Grand River National Grassland	Dan Svingen	US Forest Service, Dakota Prairie NG
Sharp-tailed grouse lek surveys	Dan Svingen	US Forest Service, Dakota Prairie NG
Banding station – Cascade Springs, Black Hills (since 1998)	KC Jensen	SDSU
Banding Station – Farm Island, Pierre area	Doug Backlund	SDGFP

USD – University of South Dakota

SDSMT – South Dakota School of Mines and Technology

SDSU – South Dakota State University

DSU – Dakota State University

NSU – Northern State University

SDGFP – South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks

USFWS – US Fish and Wildlife Service

NPS – National Park Service

Discussion session notes taken by Jessica (Nan) Clarke and KC Jensen, SDSU, Brookings