

MONTANA'S STATE WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

August 2013 Volume 2 Issue 1



State Wildlife Action Plan Progress Update

Fourteen work sessions were held across the state April through June to develop a process that will help identify areas where conservation efforts should be focused in Montana.

Many different factors were considered in this process. These included Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) presence and persistence; presence of other important species; current impacts; future threats; intact landscapes; corridors and connectivity; restoration opportunities; land protection status; watershed integrity; existing or future partnerships; existing investments; and uniqueness of an area.

Identifying areas to focus conservation efforts is very important to the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) revision. While we know that every habitat and species has a role and serves a purpose, we understand that not every habitat or species need the same amount of attention. Furthermore, if species and habitats are not prioritized, funding may not be used or allocated effectively. With the limited funding that Fish, Wildlife & Parks



Newly hatched trout fry

and other agencies and non-profit organizations receive, it is critical that priority habitats and species are identified.

For the most current list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need, please visit the SWAP update page at <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/conservationInAction/resources.html>.

We will post the prioritized areas on this webpage as soon as we have them drafted.

***SWAPs help
prevent endangered
species listings,
and keep common
species common.***



Juvenile great gray owl



Grizzly bears

Species Spotlight: Mountain plover

(*Charadrius montanus*)

Global Rank G3, State Rank S2B

Mountain Plovers are only found in Montana during the breeding season (April-September) and use prairie dog colonies and other shortgrass prairie sites for breeding. Both sexes incubate 2-4 eggs at one or two nests.

There has been a documented decline in mountain plovers in Montana. Because they require shortgrass prairie for nesting, foraging, and watching for predators in every direction, their population size may have been impacted by the elimination of grazers and by prairie dog control measures. Mountain plovers are compatible with managed grazing and could benefit from livestock being used to maintain shortgrass prairie habitat.



Mountain plover nest

Species Ranking

Many factors are assessed when calculating global and state ranks for species. The numeric ranking ranges from 1 (highest risk), to 5 (not vulnerable, secure). The Global Rank represents the species throughout their range, while the State Rank represents the species in Montana only. For detailed information on this ranking process, please visit this page:

<http://fieldguide.mt.gov/statusCodes.aspx#msrc:rank>

Montana's SWAP Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) list is adapted from this ranking process.

Species are reviewed annually to determine if any ranks should change. Because of this, the SWAP SGCN list will be dynamic and subject to change based on species reviews. This ensures that any conservation efforts are directed toward species with the most significant needs.





Did you know that 339 species have been observed in the Big Hole Focal Area (SWAP 2005)?

Community Type Spotlight: Floodplain, Riparian, Wetlands, and Open Water

All of the “wet places” in Montana have been identified as Community Types of Greatest Conservation Need. Meaning, there is a clear obligation to focus conservation efforts in these areas.

From lowland lakes and prairie rivers to mountain streams and alpine fens, water is key to the survival of many species, including most of the Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Both aquatic and terrestrial species are found in great abundance in these community types. In fact, species diversity is the highest in these aquatic community types than any other community type in the state.

Why are these areas so important? Habitat for one – some species (e.g., fish, amphibians, mussels) find all of their life requirements in one of these aquatic community types. Other species depend on

these areas for a specific need (e.g., feeding, hunting) or during a certain part of their life cycle (e.g., breeding).

These areas become increasingly important as the summer draws to an end and surface water becomes scarcer.

Impacts, such as competing water interests and climate change, could make these areas more vulnerable. Focusing conservation efforts on these areas now could have long-lasting effects that could positively impact hundreds of species in Montana.



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Idaho giant salamander larvae



Canada lynx

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Species Spotlight

SWAP Revision Summary

Public Meeting Schedule



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Wildlife & Parks**

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Pinyon jay