

Managing for Optimal Habitat Attributes for Species at Risk

by Diego Steinaker, SK Prairie Conservation Action Plan

As habitat for species at risk declines and threats to populations increase, it becomes critical to provide optimal conditions on what remains if we are to conserve or recover a species. The Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan (SK PCAP), with the financial support of the Government of Canada through the federal Department of the Environment, the Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, as well as other SK PCAP partner contributions, is publishing a series of guides on managing for optimal habitat attributes for some key species at risk in Saskatchewan prairies. The most recent guides were developed for the Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides*), Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus circumcinctus*) and Northern Leopard Frog (*Lithobates pipiens*).

The second part of the guide presents an index that places values on the habitat targets and BMPs in combination with other considerations. An Environmental Benefit Index (EBI) is a compound index that considers multiple environmental factors when determining an ecosystem outcome. Managing for a single species may result in habitat that is undesirable for another species. Conflicts between species are addressed in the Environmental Benefit Index (EBI). Thus, EBIs can be used to evaluate and prioritize opportunities for conservation programs. An EBI is of considerable importance in determining priority sites to invest in, particularly when funds are limited. The overall goal of the EBIs for species at risk habitat is to ensure maximum environmental value for an investment in

results-based conservation programming. You can find these "Guides to Managing for Optimal Habitat Attributes for Species at Risk" in the SK PCAP website: www.pcap-sk.org/resources-literature/resources



A family of Loggerhead Shrikes (also known as Butcher Birds). The species is threatened and conservation efforts are being made to increase its numbers in Saskatchewan. Photo credit: George Tosh

The guides provide habitat targets and non-habitat related beneficial management practices (BMPs) for land managers who may have the opportunity to aid in the conservation of species at risk on the land under their control. Additionally, the habitat targets and BMPs may be used by conservation organizations in designing results-based agreements with land managers. These very valuable publications were developed by Sue Michalsky and Heather Peat Hamm with technical and editorial input from a group of experts, including Corie White, Ashley Vass, Ryan Dudragne, Michelle Lanoie, Andrew Didiuk, Kris Kendall, Lea Randall, Dave Prescott, and Julie Mackenzie.

The guides are generally presented in two parts. The first part summarizes the important spatial and temporal needs of the species and presents habitat targets and non-habitat related BMPs. Habitat targets are presented at two major spatial scales: landscape-scale (e.g., land cover and topography), and site-scale (e.g., physical vegetation, plant communities, soil parameters, among others).

TARGETED GRAZING ACADEMY



February 5 – 7, 2019

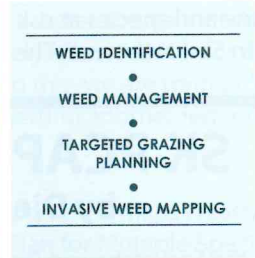
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3-Day Event!

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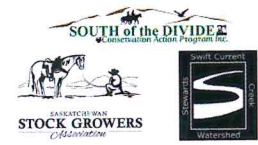
Day 1 & 2 • Intensive target-grazing school – planning & the ins and outs of grazing (supper & lunch provided)
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Limited Space!

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https://www.pcap-sk.org/rsu_docs/documents/grazing-academy-final.pdf