

Native Prairie Speaker Series

Title: Evaluating non-intrusive methods for monitoring Greater Sage-Grouse unoccupied leks in Saskatchewan

Abstract: Since 2013, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment has been assessing methods to develop a long-term monitoring program for Greater Sage-Grouse in Saskatchewan. In order to avoid disturbing the birds and because of the large area provincially that is required to be surveyed, we have been testing passive surveillance methods for known inactive and historical lek locations. The methods assessed include using trail cameras, Automated Recording Units (ARUs) paired with an automated recognizer, and Cooled Infrared technology.

Results from these methods are being analyzed and evaluated in an effort to find the most effective way to monitor the return of the Greater Sage-Grouse to historic breeding locations. Since 2013, the trail cameras are no longer assessed as it was determined ineffective, and the initial automated recognizer was inaccurate and required better local recordings to improve it.

Some of the recent advances in the assessment include updating the automated recognizer for the ARU recordings that has been built through collaboration with the University of Alberta; an ongoing experiment determining the effective distance an ARU can detect Greater Sage-Grouse and the ability of Cooled Infrared technology in a fixed wing aircraft to survey large areas effectively and successfully differentiating between Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater Sage-Grouse.

Presenter: Beatriz Prieto, Terrestrial Ecologist, Saskatchewan Ministry of the Environment

Bio: Beatriz (Bea) Prieto is the Terrestrial Ecologist for the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment and has been involved with species at risk conservation and monitoring, as well as with the South of the Divide initiative for the last 6 years working for the government. Originally from Spain, she has a Bachelor degree in Environmental Science by the University of Madrid in Spain, and a Master's degree in Biology by the University of Brussels in Belgium.