

## Instructions

Please download this Word document (available on the Industrial Commission/Outdoor Heritage Fund Program website at <http://www.nd.gov/ndic/outdoor-infopage.htm> ) to your computer and provide the information as requested. You are not limited to the spacing provided. After completing the report, save it and attach it to an e-mail and send it to [outdoorheritage@nd.gov](mailto:outdoorheritage@nd.gov) AND print it and mail it to: North Dakota Industrial Commission, ATTN: Outdoor Heritage Fund Program, State Capitol – Fourteenth Floor, 600 East Boulevard Ave. Dept. 405, Bismarck, ND 58505. If you are unable to scan attachments, mail them with your paper copy of the report. You will be sent a confirmation by e-mail of receipt of your report and attachments.

Outdoor Heritage Fund Status and Final Report Form/Guidelines			
This report is used to show progress of grant projects funded through the Outdoor Heritage Fund. Status Reports and the Final Report must be submitted as required in Contract.			
Contract Number 002-032	Report Date July 31, 2016	Period Covered by Report August 7, 2014 to June 30, 2016 (final report)	
Project Name Conservation of Grasslands and Long-billed Curlews on Private Lands in SW North Dakota			
Project Sponsor Name American Bird Conservancy			
Responsible Official (Last, First Middle) Merrie Morrison		Responsible Official's Title Vice President, Administration	
Project Sponsor Address PO Box 249			
City The Plains	State VA	Zip Code 20198	Telephone Number 540-253-5780
<b><u>Financial Update</u></b>			
Please provide the following information regarding the funding for your project based on the contract award:			
<b><u>Funds Spent this Reporting Period</u></b>			
(As appropriate please provide copies of receipts for purchases)			
Match Funding \$0			
In-kind Funding \$184,608			
OHF Funding Requested for Reimbursement \$13,794			
Total Funding Expended for this Reporting Period \$198,402			
<b><u>Total Funds Spent to Date</u></b>			
Match Funding \$0			
In-kind Funding \$184,608			
OHF Funding Received and Requested for Reimbursement \$13,794			
Total Funding Expended to Date \$198,402			
<b><u>Balance of Grant Funds</u></b>			
Match Funding \$0			
In-kind Funding \$0			
OHF Funding still to be Requested \$0			
Total Funding to be Expended on this Project \$0			
Do you anticipate needing to request a grant extension If yes, please explain			

Yes  No

**Work Completed during Period Covered by Report:**

(This information will be posted on the Outdoor Heritage Fund/Industrial Commission website)

American Bird Conservancy (ABC) appreciates the grant from the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund. The funding enabled ABC and partners to assist landowners in implementing land stewardship practices on private lands in southwest North Dakota. Practices implemented were focused on creating a mosaic of diverse plant communities across the landscape that benefit livestock, wildlife, and a multitude of bird species. To guide our efforts, we used the Recommended Management Actions developed for enhancing habitat for the Long-billed Curlew. Since the curlew co-occurs with other declining species across its range, sustainable management of working lands for curlews can also provide for the needs of other birds and wildlife. We worked with Natural Resources Conservation Service to identify opportunities to implement conservation actions that were not covered by existing programs and practices or to supplement existing practices.

We've worked with producers in Slope, Grant, and Sioux counties on six different projects. The monies have been used to fund fencing projects that have enabled the producers to distribute livestock grazing thereby improving the plant community and providing a mosaic of habitats for grassland birds, especially the Long-billed Curlew, on 1370 acres and five miles of fencing. A portion of our award was to go towards native seed plantings. We did not have the interest in these plantings that we anticipated and were unable to use the monies allocated to it.

One of the projects involved the use of temporary electric netting. The producers use sheep as part of an integrated management approach to control leafy spurge on native prairie. A short-duration, high-intensity, grazing method was used and continues to be used to reduce the amount of the noxious weed. Portable electric netting is used to create grazing paddocks for the sheep and to deter predators from harassing the sheep. Grazing alone will not eradicate leafy spurge, but it is anticipated to reduce and slow the spread of the weed thereby improving the rangeland for use by livestock, wildlife, and grassland birds. Two Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) projects involved the use of temporary electric fencing to create smaller paddocks within the pastures. Cattle grazing was used and continues to be used as a management tool to improve the plant community for wildlife and birds. The smaller temporary paddocks provided the flexibility to vary the intensity and duration of grazing depending on the goals for that particular pasture. The producers are using cattle to control Canada thistle, a noxious weed. The animals will graze on the thistle before it becomes too mature. All temporary fencing is removed by November of each year so as not to compromise wildlife movement. Cross-fencing was implemented in the remaining three projects to distribute livestock grazing. On two of these three projects we partnered with USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife program (PFW) and leveraged OHF funds with PFW funds on the fencing portion of fencing/water distribution projects. These projects were initiated to improve pasture conditions by implementing a rotational grazing system. Activities being implemented through the joint funding will result in improved vegetative conditions and trends for the benefit of prairie, wetlands, livestock, wildlife, and birds.

We assessed the initial curlew response by enlisting volunteers to conduct road surveys. The surveys were 20 miles long with stops every half mile. At each stop, the volunteer would record curlews if they were observed. These transects traverse multiple habitats and ownerships, and help provide an index of curlew abundance, as well as a list of other grassland species inhabiting these areas. Eight different survey routes were run in southwest North Dakota, some of them run twice - early and late spring. Curlews were observed on five of these routes.

The value to the citizens of North Dakota is multifold. The projects implemented maintain sustainable land use for those private landowners who rely on those lands for their livelihood. Cattle and sheep grazing are used as a management tool to decrease the presence of noxious weeds, thereby reducing herbicide expenses for the landowner and improving water quality and soil health. As the diversity of the habitat increases so will the different wildlife and bird species that use the habitat. Hunting and bird watching opportunities will improve. Our native prairie will be maintained for future generations to enjoy. Leveraging these funds with partner collaboration allows these benefits to be even more far reaching.

Photos of work completed are welcome (If appropriate, please submit photos of key elements of the project completed or in progress during reporting period) Do not exceed five photos per project report.



*Temporary fencing used to create smaller paddocks within pastures. Grazing is being used as a management tool to improve the plant community and soil health.*



*Temporary electric fencing using polywire and pigtail posts. Pasture on left ungrazed.*



*Using cattle grazing to control Canada thistle. Canada thistle on left side of fence was not grazed. Thistle on right side of fence was grazed.*



*Electric netting used to create temporary paddocks. Sheep grazing is being used as a management tool to control Leafy Spurge.*

Signature of Responsible Official

*Melanie S. Morrison*

*8/19/16*

The project reports shall be provided to the Commission in both electronic and hard-copy formats with permission for unrestricted distribution. The electronic versions shall be in a suitable format for posting on the Outdoor Heritage Fund/Commission website.

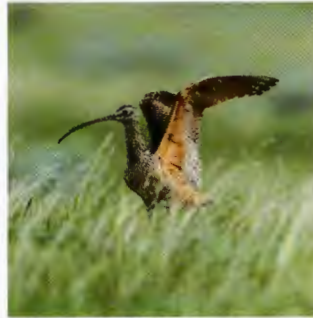
# BIRDS, HERDS, AND STEWARDS: From Grazing Alternatives to Grassland Sustainability

Authors: Jerome and Sandra Schaar, Schaar Farms; Cheryl Mandich, American Bird Conservancy

## Grassland Bird Declines

Grassland birds have shown the most widespread and severe population declines of any suite of landbirds in North America, with some species down 75-90% over the past 50 years. Habitat conversion, particularly due to agricultural crop production, has played a huge role in these declines, and there is continuing pressure to put native grasslands into production. Energy and residential development are placing additional stress on these habitats, as larger blocks of habitat are fragmented by roads and infrastructure.

Many of these bird species are adapted to grassland systems where grazing by large herbivores (e.g. bison) and periodic disturbance by fire were common, meaning there are opportunities to manage for these declining species on working farm and ranch lands. Some require shorter stature grasses for nesting, while others prefer more residual cover. Stemming or reversing population declines may be possible if further habitat conversion can be minimized, in combination with the adoption of appropriate management actions to maintain or enhance the grassland habitat qualities needed by each species (or those with similar needs). – Dan Casey



Long-billed Curlew by Tom Jurasik - iStockphoto

## Multiple Species Benefits

Collaboration with partners allows the opportunity to identify conservation opportunities on working lands that meet the economic needs of landowners while maintaining or enhancing habitat for grassland birds. The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) is working closely with many partners to assist landowners in conservation planning and implementing programs and practices to sustain the economic value of working lands while improving and conserving habitat for declining or at-risk bird species.

The Long-billed Curlew is used as the focal species to target habitat conservation delivery within the Northern Great Plains. The species is not listed as threatened or endangered (nor has this been proposed), and its habitat needs can be met in working agricultural landscapes with appropriate management. Since it co-occurs with other declining species across its range, sustainable management of working lands for curlews can also provide for the needs of other birds and wildlife. Loud, large, and fiercely territorial, it is easily recognized. Recommended management actions for the curlew can be accessed at [abcbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Land-Managers-Guide-to-Long-billed-Curlew-Conservation.pdf](http://abcbirds.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Land-Managers-Guide-to-Long-billed-Curlew-Conservation.pdf).

ABC has partnered with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to accelerate delivery of USDA Farm Bill Program conservation practices in portions of North and South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming to support populations of Long-billed Curlews and other species of conservation concern. Many NRCS practices ([www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/technical/fofg](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/technical/fofg)) have the potential to meet the needs of breeding curlews, e.g. Prescribed Grazing (528), Range Planting (550), Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645), Wetland Restoration (657), and those practices that facilitate livestock grazing management such as Fence (382).



The next generation is taking over the farm. Photo by Sandy Schaar



Time to move! With no water available on the pasture during the winter, grazing was being used to control tree dieback plants; cover needed to be moved to water every morning and evening. Photo by Sandy Schaar

## Sustainable Land Use

The focus is to identify conservation opportunities on private lands that meet the economic needs of landowners while maintaining or enhancing habitat for grassland birds. Long-billed Curlews nest from Texas to British Columbia, and spend their winters on the Pacific and Gulf coasts, Baja and north-central Mexico.

Within the United States, ABC and partners are working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to implement practices that achieve bird conservation, such as: Prescribed Grazing (528), Range Planting (550), Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645), Wetland Restoration (657), and those practices that facilitate livestock grazing management such as Fence (382).

Additional information on NRCS practices can be found at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/technical/fofg](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/technical/fofg)



Fresh water provided by the use of temporary water sources allows for the distribution of grazing. Photo by Jerry Schaar

## Schaar Farms

Changing Goals: Improve grasslands, wildlife habitat and species, including song birds, wading birds, bees, pheasants, curlew, grouse, and deer on 145 acres of land enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program and managed by Compatible Use Agreements.

Original goal: Grass for cows, deer, and pheasants

- Started looking at how grazing reduced the need for chemical control of noxious weeds
- Noticed additional bird species
- Noticed how the livestock grazing affected plant viability—reducing one species in favor of an increased viability in others
- Improved wildlife habitat

New goal: Healthy, sustainable rangeland for birds, herds, and stewards!



Canola trials—improved on left, grazed on right. Photo by Jerry Schaar



Canola and corn have been used in these pastures. Photo credit through this report belong to grassland stewardship Photo by Cheryl Mandich

Grazing Used as the Management Tool to Improve Health and Vigor of Plant Community and Ensure the Long-Term Function for Wildlife and Birds					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
# of pastures/Land Types	2 pastures—1 pasture used 1 half year, 1 pasture used 2 pastures	2 pastures—1 pasture used 3 half years, 1 pasture used 2 pastures	2 pastures—1 pasture used 4 half years, 1 pasture used 2 pastures	2 pastures—1 pasture used 5 half years, 1 pasture used 2 pastures	2 pastures—1 pasture used 6 half years, 1 pasture used 2 pastures
# of Pastures/size of pastures	2/75 ac	2/75 ac	2/75 ac	2/75 ac	2/75 ac
Resource Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available grazing for 10 months</li> <li>Soil erosion</li> <li>No livestock grazing for past 10 years</li> <li>Inappropriate habitat for fish and wildlife</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available grazing for 10 months</li> <li>Soil erosion</li> <li>No livestock grazing for past 10 years</li> <li>Inappropriate habitat for fish and wildlife</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available grazing for 10 months</li> <li>Soil erosion</li> <li>No livestock grazing for past 10 years</li> <li>Inappropriate habitat for fish and wildlife</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available grazing for 10 months</li> <li>Soil erosion</li> <li>No livestock grazing for past 10 years</li> <li>Inappropriate habitat for fish and wildlife</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available grazing for 10 months</li> <li>Soil erosion</li> <li>No livestock grazing for past 10 years</li> <li>Inappropriate habitat for fish and wildlife</li> </ul>
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with NRCS to develop grazing plan</li> <li>Use livestock grazing as the management tool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with NRCS and ABC to develop grazing plan for 2003</li> <li>Addition of permanent fencing to allow a pasture to be more of the impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-chemical control of noxious weed</li> <li>Improve grazing</li> <li>Reduce herbicide use</li> <li>Allow more species to be available</li> <li>Use livestock grazing as the management tool to improve habitat function</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-chemical control of noxious weed</li> <li>Improve grazing</li> <li>Reduce herbicide use</li> <li>Allow more species to be available</li> <li>Use livestock grazing as the management tool to improve habitat function</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-chemical control of noxious weed</li> <li>Improve grazing</li> <li>Reduce herbicide use</li> <li>Allow more species to be available</li> <li>Use livestock grazing as the management tool to improve habitat function</li> </ul>
Practices (NRCS priority)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribed Grazing (528)</li> <li>Controlled stocking with native grasses and forbs (645, 395)</li> <li>Reseeded cover crop on native seedling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribed Grazing (528)</li> <li>Range Planting (550)</li> <li>Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribed Grazing (528)</li> <li>Range Planting (550)</li> <li>Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribed Grazing (528)</li> <li>Range Planting (550)</li> <li>Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribed Grazing (528)</li> <li>Range Planting (550)</li> <li>Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)</li> </ul>
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canola trials planted in 2003</li> <li>Canola trials planted in 2004</li> <li>Native grasses established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canola trials planted in 2003</li> <li>Canola trials planted in 2004</li> <li>Native grasses established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canola trials planted in 2003</li> <li>Canola trials planted in 2004</li> <li>Native grasses established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canola trials planted in 2003</li> <li>Canola trials planted in 2004</li> <li>Native grasses established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Canola trials planted in 2003</li> <li>Canola trials planted in 2004</li> <li>Native grasses established</li> </ul>
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly wanted to graze area for cattle</li> <li>Chickens for for sale and pasture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduced to concept of using livestock to control noxious weeds</li> <li>Began working with American Bird Conservancy</li> <li>Discovered option of a pasture planting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduced to concept of using livestock to control noxious weeds</li> <li>Began working with American Bird Conservancy</li> <li>Discovered option of a pasture planting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduced to concept of using livestock to control noxious weeds</li> <li>Began working with American Bird Conservancy</li> <li>Discovered option of a pasture planting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduced to concept of using livestock to control noxious weeds</li> <li>Began working with American Bird Conservancy</li> <li>Discovered option of a pasture planting</li> </ul>

## Partners

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – technical and program support
- American Bird Conservancy (ABC) – technical support; project funding through the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Pheasants Forever (PF) – funding for pollinator planting



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