



NORTH DAKOTA  
GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

# Watchable Wildlife *newsletter*

FEBRUARY 2011

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Craig Bihle

**B**ald eagles are becoming a common sight in North Dakota. Ten years ago nesting bald eagles were found primarily along the Missouri River but today they range across the state. The eagle population is steadily increasing and these new recruits have sought out new territories and nesting sites. Biologists have documented active bald eagle nests scattered along the entire length of the Red River, at wildlife management areas and national wildlife refuges, in the southwest along the Heart River, and in shelterbelts or even single trees surrounded by cropland.

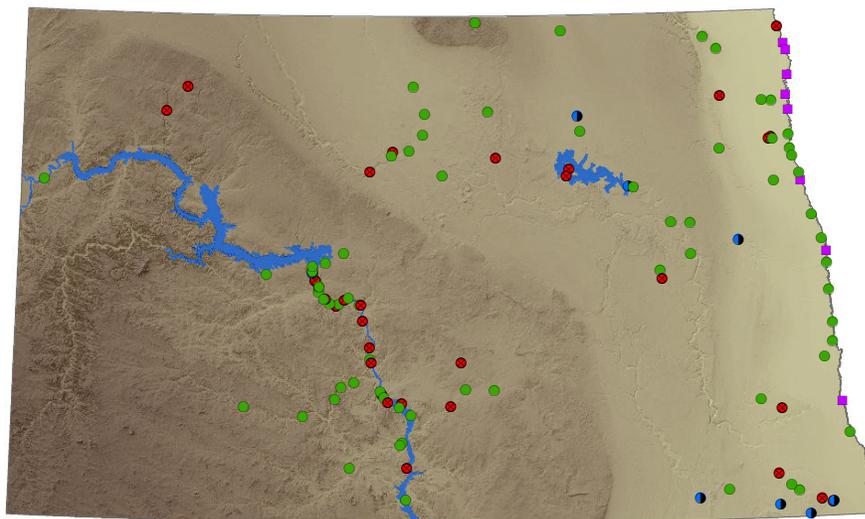
An eagle pair will begin building a new nest or doing maintenance on their previous year's nest sometime around February. Egg laying may commence as early as mid-March and downy young make their appearance in late April. Not until the end of July or even early August do the young fledge.

The bald eagle population has recovered so that as of 2007 it is no longer considered an endangered species.

Even though the species is no longer endangered, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and state wildlife agencies must continue to monitor the bald eagle to ensure it is staying on the right track. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is assisting in this effort by maintaining a database of bald eagle nest sites. The public has been instrumental in reporting new nest sites or providing updates to staff biologists on a nest site. If you observe a bald eagle

nest or perhaps know of a nest that is not indicated on the map please report the information to Sandra Johnson, conservation biologist, at 701-328-6382 or [eaglenest@nd.gov](mailto:eaglenest@nd.gov). A word of caution, bald eagles are sensitive to human foot traffic near their nest. It's best to stay at least 100 yards away while you enjoy viewing these magnificent birds. ■

—Sandra Johnson  
Conservation Biologist  
North Dakota Game and Fish Department



# State Wildlife Grants Project Highlights

State Wildlife Grants is a federal program that provides money to the state's fish and wildlife agencies to benefit at-risk species, many of which are nongame animals that received little attention prior to funding.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department developed a list of 100 species, deemed North Dakota's Species of Conservation Priority, on which to focus its funding efforts. A Wildlife Action Plan was also written to guide the use of funds.

What follows is an update of three ongoing projects in North Dakota funded by the SWG program.

## Wetland Restoration

Over time, wetlands degrade as sediment accumulates from years of wind and runoff. This is not a great thing for many plant varieties commonly found in wetlands, but sediment makes a great place for cattails to flourish, sometimes to the point where they take over. This leaves no room for other plants, making the wetland less appealing to the many birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals that call wetlands home.

In comes the bulldozer. You wouldn't think of a bulldozer and wildlife as a good mix, but there are exceptions. Years of cattail growth and sediment are removed by dozers. Enough sediment is removed to bring more productive soils back to the surface. In a short time the

plant and animal diversity is restored.

## Tree Removal

This may strike some as odd, but trees are not necessarily always good for wildlife. Volunteer trees in areas that are predominantly grass can have a negative influence on wildlife populations. Single or small groups of trees in open grassland provide perching sites for raptors or dens for predators that would not naturally have been there, making life especially rough on ground-nesting birds and waterfowl. Tree species like Russian olive and Siberian elm are adept at taking over areas.

The Game and Fish Department, through its own means and the help of partners, has begun to remove volunteer trees and decadent shelterbelts in some areas in an effort to restore open grasslands that many wildlife species need to survive.

## Bats

Very little is known of bats in North Dakota. Previous research has documented the species found here but little else. Through the State Wildlife Grants program, North Dakota State University has begun to answer a few more questions about these night-flyers. The two-year study that began last summer aimed to put together a distribution of each species in the state as well as identify important habitat

and "hot spots" for bat activity. The first year has brought some interesting findings including a range expansion by two species. The second year of the study hopes to identify important roosting habitat throughout the state. All the information gathered will help the Department better manage bats and their habitats. ■

—Patrick T. Isakson  
Conservation Biologist  
North Dakota Game and Fish Department



Little brown bat

Chris Grondahl

## More Information:

2010 Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest: [View here](#)

Eagles: [February 2010 North Dakota Outdoors Magazine Article](#)

State Species of Conservation Priority: [July 2004 North Dakota Outdoors Magazine Article](#)

State Wildlife Grants: [June 2006 North Dakota Outdoors Magazine Article](#)

State Wildlife Grants Television News Feature: [Watch here](#)

State Wildlife Grants Webcast: [Watch here](#)

North Dakota's State Wildlife Action Plan: <http://gf.nd.gov/conservation/cwcs.html>



*The Watchable Wildlife Newsletter is produced by Patrick Isakson, conservation biologist, North Dakota Game and Fish Department.*

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