



NORTH DAKOTA  
GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

# Watchable Wildlife *newsletter*

MARCH 2012

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By offering an online watchable wildlife newsletter, the Game and Fish Department increases viewership and reduces the amount of paper used. If you like what you see and would like to have it e-mailed to you, send your e-mail address to [newsletter@nd.gov](mailto:newsletter@nd.gov). Game and Fish will publish this newsletter annually.



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## Disease Killing Bats

A deadly wildlife disease is sweeping across the eastern United States and moving west, decimating bat populations in its path.

According to biologists, more than 5.5 million bats have been killed by white-nose syndrome, which is characterized by white fungus that grows on the muzzle and wings of bats.

While the fungus attacks bats hibernating for winter, it is unclear to biologists how the fungus kills bats. Once bats get the fungus they begin to exhibit a number of uncharacteristic behaviors such as coming out of hibernation, moving to colder areas of their hibernacula and flying around during winter months.

White-nose syndrome is known to affect more than half of the 45 bat species in North America including many found in North Dakota. The state's most

common species, little brown bat, has died in unprecedented numbers in the eastern United States.

The disease is found in four provinces and 16 states, and as far west as Oklahoma. It is not currently found in North Dakota or surrounding states, but the disease has steadily moved west.

The fungus is most commonly transferred by contact between bats on their roosts, but can also tag along on clothes of people who have entered roosting caves. If that person then moves to another cave with roosting bats, animals can be infected. Many caves throughout the country have been closed to human traffic to try to stop this means of transmission.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Departments is working with neighbor states and researchers to monitor white-nose movement. It is unclear how the disease will affect bat populations

in North Dakota as we do not have the large hibernation sites found in caves and mines in other parts of the country.

No cure is currently known for white-nose syndrome. Bat biologists from around the country have come together to try to change that. Research is being done to find a cure and to find ways to slow its spread. The Department is working with North Dakota State University to gather important information on bats and to identify important bat habitat in the state.

Bats are an important part of North Dakota's wildlife landscape. They are an effective controller of insect populations, most notably mosquitoes. A single little brown bat can consume 1,200 mosquitoes in one hour of foraging. Nationally, bats are responsible for control of a number of agricultural pests, and if lost would hurt many farmers economically. ■

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

# State Wildlife Grants Project Highlights

State Wildlife Grants Project Highlights

State Wildlife Grants is a federal program that provides money to state 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, to focus its funding efforts. A wildlife action plan was also written to guide the use of funds.

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

## Northern Leopard Frog

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service became concerned with Northern leopard frog populations in the upper Midwest and front-range of the Rocky Mountains. They asked state wildlife agencies in those areas to provide information on their population status.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department felt that leopard frog populations in the state were strong, but needed more information. The Department partnered with North Dakota State University to take a more in-depth look at the species. The proj-

ect is about to begin its second year, and has already yielded results. The FWS, due in part to information provided by the study, has decided that the Northern leopard frog has a secure population in the upper Midwest and will not be included as an endangered species.

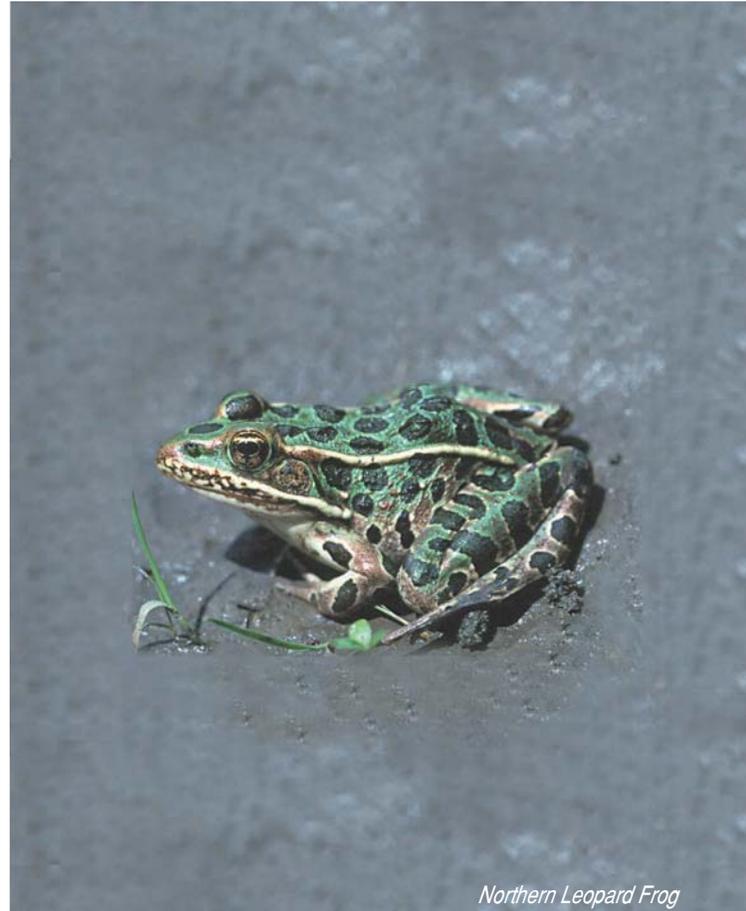
## Fire Restoration

Fire has long been an important aspect in the prairie life cycle. Historically, natural fires swept across the plains, clearing old, decadent growth and allowing new plants to emerge. In recent times, fire is used as a management tool for controlling weeds and sparking new growth in grassland habitats.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department has partnered with the Nature Conservancy to fund a fire restoration project on Davis Ranch in central North Dakota. Prescribed burns in both spring and fall will be employed to rejuvenate prairie habitat and

control weeds. It will also be used as an educational tool for local landowners to teach them the benefits and techniques of using fire on their own lands.

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



Northern Leopard Frog  
Chris Grondahl

## More Information:

2011 Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest: [View here](#)

Bats: [www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org)

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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