

Project Highlight – SD State Wildlife Grant

Project Type Inventory

Title Statewide colonial and semi-colonial waterbird inventory with a plan for long-term monitoring

In a nutshell State Wildlife Grants funding is intended to help prevent future endangered species listings. Collecting baseline information on the status of wildlife species is a critical step. SDGFP contracted with the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO) to conduct a statewide inventory of waterbird species that nest in colonies and to develop a monitoring system for future use.

Relevant Species of Greatest Conservation Need

- American white pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)
- Wilson's phalarope (*Phalaropus tricolor*)
- marbled godwit (*Limosa fedoa*)
- willet (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*)
- piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*)
- interior least tern (*Sterna antillarum athalassos*)
- black tern (*Chlidonias niger*)

Relevant Habitats aquatic and terrestrial habitats that provide nesting sites for colonial waterbirds

Cooperators RMBO (Nancy Drilling)

Purpose Implement a statewide inventory of colonial and semi-colonial waterbird populations in South Dakota and develop a plan for their long-term monitoring, with an emphasis of species monitored by the South Dakota Natural Heritage Program

Timeframe January 2005 – December 2007

Location statewide

Summary or Important Findings

- 40% of the 1,025 sites surveyed had confirmed waterbird breeding during at least one year.
- 26 sites were identified as important waterbird colony areas, having more 200 total waterbird breeding pairs and/or more than 5 breeding species.
- Breeding was confirmed for 32 of the 46 targeted species.
- American white pelicans and double-crested cormorants were the most abundant nesting colonial waterbirds in South Dakota during the 3-year survey.
- Recommended monitoring includes monitoring known colonies and searching for new colonies, with use of citizen scientists for certain colonies.

Best contact person Nancy Drilling, RMBO

More Information

South Dakota Conservation Digest article, July/August 2009, "Breeding Colonial Waterbirds" by Nancy Drilling, South Dakota Breeding Bird Atlas, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory

Drilling, N. E. 2007. South Dakota statewide colonial and semi-colonial waterbird inventory with a plan for long-term monitoring: Final Report. SDGFP Wildlife Division Report 2008-01. Tech. Rep. M-ColonySD-04. Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Brighton, CO. 80 pp.

This final report does not detailed colony locations to protect these vulnerable sites.