

Wildlife on Conservation Reserve Program Lands

A Report to Cooperators

Introduction

During spring and summer of 2006, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, in conjunction with the USDA Farm Service Agency, conducted surveys for wildlife on CRP lands across eastern Washington. This report provides a brief overview of results and progress of that research.

We would like to thank each of the more than 300 landowners and farmers who participated in this research and generously provided access to their fields during this study. We surveyed over 410 fields across 10 counties and are grateful for the cooperation and interest of all participants.



CRP field in Douglas County in early June with blooming lupine and sagebrush-grassland habitat

The CRP program is currently the only large-scale effort to provide payments to farmers to take land out of production and achieve objectives of both soil conservation and wildlife habitat restoration. In order to assess how well the program is meeting the objective of providing wildlife habitat, we set out to survey a variety of fields enrolled in different practices and of different ages.



Savannah Sparrow singing from perch

Survey Results

We counted over 9159 individual birds of 94 bird species during our surveys and documented regular use of CRP lands by a variety of mammals.

The 20 most common bird species counted during our surveys are listed in Table 1. Common grassland species included Savannah and Grasshopper sparrows, while shrubsteppe species included Vesper and Brewer's sparrows and Sage thrashers. Species like swallows and Western kingbirds were often associated with habitats adjacent to CRP fields.

Table 1. The 20 most common breeding bird species observed during surveys of CRP fields in Washington.

Bird Species	Number Counted
Western meadowlark	2110
Horned lark	1687
Savannah sparrow	1251
Grasshopper sparrow	956
Vesper sparrow	619
Ring-necked pheasant	614
Common raven	290
Brewer's sparrow	272
Mourning dove	166
Northern harrier	96
Cliff swallow	82
Barn swallow	77
Red-winged blackbird	69
Brewer's blackbird	59
Say's phoebe	46
California quail	45
Western kingbird	44
Red-tailed hawk	39
Sage thrasher	38
Gray partridge	33

Mammals and Other Non-passerine Birds

Besides the variety of grassland and shrubsteppe birds that use CRP fields, we also evaluated the use of CRP by other shrubsteppe wildlife not readily detected with point count surveys. Thus, we surveyed for wildlife pellets in each field visited. Preliminary results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Mammal and bird species detected on pellet surveys. The number below is the number of fields with pellets present out of 410 fields surveyed.

Species	# of Fields with pellets
Mule deer	145
Gamebird	73
Owls	36
Coyote	30
Jackrabbit	8
Cottontail	7
Sage grouse	4

Further Study Analysis

We will be examining the wildlife survey data to see what species may be associated with different CRP practices, field age, adjacent landscape habitat type, and within-field vegetation characteristics.



Mule deer in eastern Washington

Obtaining the Final Report

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife will complete a full report of the CRP wildlife study in spring 2007. This report will be then be available at the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/>. If you do not have access to the web, but would like to receive a report, please plan to contact WDFW directly at 360-902-2515 in May 2007 to have a copy of the final report mailed to you.

Thanks again for your participation!

***Washington
Department
of Fish and
Wildlife***

***Wildlife
Program
Science
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