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Prairie Pothole
JOINT VENTURE

2005 Implementation Plan



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





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The Prairie Pothole Joint Venture boundaries (PPJV) include one-third (100,000 square miles) of North America's Prairie Pothole Region (PPR). Its uniqueness lies in the millions of depressional wetlands that constitute one of the richest wetland systems in the world. These "prairie potholes" and their surrounding grasslands are highly productive and support an incredible diversity of bird life. The PPR is breeding habitat for myriad wetland and grassland birds, and also supports significant numbers of spring and fall migrants.



northern pintails

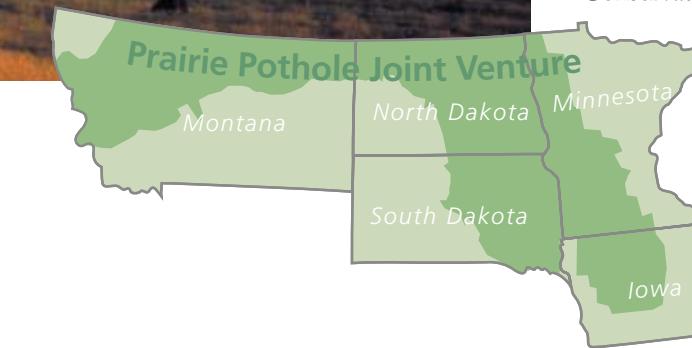
Once a vast grassland, the PPR is now an agrarian system dominated by cropland. Changes in land use have, for the most part, been detrimental to the migratory birds that use the PPR. Many wetlands have been drained or degraded, and the loss of native prairie – particularly in the eastern portion of the PPJV – has been extensive. Despite these losses, millions of wetlands and large tracts of native prairie still remain. The PPR is one of the most altered – yet also one of the most important – migratory bird habitats in the Western Hemisphere. It is the backbone of North America's "duck factory", and critical habitat for many wetland- and grassland-dependent migratory birds.

The PPR is envisioned as place where abundant populations of wetland and grassland birds can be sustained in perpetuity for the benefit of all people who enjoy these species. Accordingly, the mission of the PPJV is to implement conservation programs that sustain populations of waterfowl, shorebirds, other waterbirds and prairie landbirds at objective levels through targeted wetland and grassland protection, restoration and enhancement programs. The PPJV operates through partnerships that implement conservation using a mix of habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement programs.

The U.S. PPR is a dynamic place, socially as well as climatically. Nowhere is that more apparent than in rural communities, which are experiencing difficult social changes due in large part to depopulation and changing economies. Several factors are involved, including human demography, new land uses, advances in farm equipment, new crops, and energy development. These factors affect migratory bird resources as well as human populations and economies. The PPJV recognizes these inter-relationships, and believes that by addressing factors that impact both people and birds, we can have positive impacts on both communities and avian conservation.



prairie pothole



This plan provides a road map for integrating the conservation of all migratory birds under one framework. The process involves stepping down the objectives of the four, international "species groups" plans for waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds, and landbirds as they apply to the PPJV. Population and habitat trends, coupled with knowledge of how species respond to landscape change, will then be used to build a biological foundation and set quantifiable goals. Focal species will be selected to represent groups of birds of special interest, and associated threats and limiting factors are identified.

Conservation actions and treatments will be proposed, and models will be developed that depict where to implement particular conservation actions. After each species group has set spatial and programmatic priorities, an integrated landscape design will be developed by overlaying priority habitats for focal species from each bird group. Conservation actions will then be partitioned into protection, restoration, or enhancement projects

for on-the-ground delivery. Monitoring and evaluation will be used to measure performance and provide feedback to improve future management performance.

Currently, the four bird groups differ markedly in their knowledge of population status, habitat requirements, and understanding of factors that drive population change. Such differences limit our ability to implement comprehensive, integrated bird management, although the overriding need to protect existing wetlands and native grasslands is already apparent. At this juncture, there is potential for rapid progress in integrated planning.

However, as we embrace the philosophy of integrated, all bird conservation, there are some important principles to bear in mind. These include: (1) the merits of separate planning but integrated action, (2) the potential pitfalls of identifying geographic priorities strictly on the basis of spatial overlap, and (3) an awareness that managing for one species will impact the welfare of another. These concerns notwithstanding, the planning framework presented here should provide for future growth and opportunities under the paradigm of integrated, "allbird" conservation.



marbled godwit



black tern



bobolink