



Oglala Grasslands

landscape occupies the plains and rolling hills in the northwestern Panhandle north of the Pine Ridge. Mixed-grass prairie covers most of the plains and hills. Rock outcrops and badlands are dispersed among the prairie, as are small stream valleys. The soils are predominantly clays derived from Pierre Shale and, the prairie is dominated by blue grama, green needle grass, and western wheatgrass.



This landscape is one of the larger, intact grasslands remaining in Nebraska and contains extensive badlands. Several plant communities including the western floodplain terrace grassland, silver sagebrush shrub prairie, greasewood shrub prairie, and northwestern mixed-grass prairie occur nowhere else in the state. Scattered playas occur in the landscape. These grasslands support extensive prairie dog towns, swift fox populations, and extensive habitat for grassland birds. Prairie dog towns within the BUL may be suitable for colonization of black-footed ferrets migrating from established colonies in southwestern South Dakota. The Oglala National Grassland occupies a large portion of this landscape.

Stresses Affecting Species and Habitats

- ❖ Specific livestock grazing and haying practices that may reduce native plant diversity and promote uniform habitat structure
- ❖ Invasive plant species, primarily cheatgrass
- ❖ Potential disease in prairie dog populations

Conservation Strategies

- ❖ Work with private landowners and the U.S. Forest Service to implement ecologically-sensitive grazing strategies that reduce cheatgrass and promote native plant diversity and diverse wildlife habitats.
- ❖ Restore sagebrush communities on selected sites
- ❖ Manage public lands to maintain black-tailed prairie dog towns at an ecologically-functional level

Collaborative Conservation Opportunities across State Borders

Coordinate with South Dakota and Wyoming conservation agencies and tribes, particularly efforts to benefit shared species of greatest conservation need on the NE Oglala Grasslands/WY/SD Great Plains Steppe Ecoregion borders (i.e., Fall River and Shannon counties in SD and Niobrara County in WY). Nebraska Tier I at-risk species identified also in the South Dakota wildlife action plan include the

swift fox, burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, and long-billed curlew. And, species identified also in the Wyoming wildlife action plan include the swift fox, burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, and long-billed curlew. Species lists may be updated as new information becomes available. Innovative methods for sufficient information exchange could aid the collaborative process.

Coordinated wildlife management actions (e.g., working with landowners; rotational burning, mowing, and grazing) should mirror medium to high priority conservation goals identified in the South Dakota Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan and/or conservation actions identified in the Wyoming State Wildlife Action Plan (e.g., cheatgrass control measures). Collaborative conservation efforts across state borders should include researchers, federal and non-profit environmental program coordinators, and landowners, particularly those with properties extending over state lines. It will be necessary to identify and develop staffing and funding sources for implementation of conservation actions beyond state boundaries.

Tier I At-risk Species

Plants:

Barr's Milkvetch¹
Dog-parsley³
Gordon's Wild Buckwheat³
Rocky Mountain Bulrush¹

Animals:

Pierre Northern Pocket Gopher²
Swift Fox
Baird's Sparrow
Bell's Vireo
Brewer's Sparrow
Burrowing Owl
Chestnut-collared Longspur³
McCown's Longspur³
Ferruginous Hawk
Loggerhead Shrike
Long-billed Curlew
Regal Fritillary

Aquatic Communities:

Headwater, Warm Water Stream
Mid-order, Warm Water River*

Terrestrial Communities:

Cottonwood-Peachleaf Willow Riparian Woodland
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Sandbar Willow Shrubland
Buckbrush Shrubland
Buffaloberry Shrubland
Chokecherry-Plum Shrub Thicket
Freshwater Seep
Western Alkaline Meadow
Western Sedge Wet Meadow*
Playa Wetland
Spikerush Vernal Pool
Cattail Shallow Marsh
Threadleaf Sedge Western Mixed-grass Prairie*
Northwestern Mixed-grass Prairie*
Western Floodplain Terrace Grassland*
Silver Sagebrush Shrub Prairie*
Greasewood Shrub Prairie*
Perennial Sandbar
Sandbar/Mudflat
Rock Outcrop*
Badlands*

* Priority for conservation in this BUL

¹ This is the only BUL where the species is known to occur

² Known to occur in only one other BUL

³ Known to occur in only two other BULs

⁴ Known to occur in only three other BULs