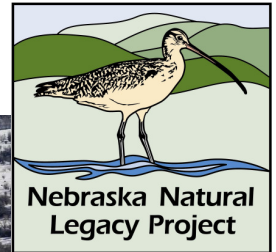


# Platte Confluence

landscape includes the South Platte River valley and North Platte River valley and the uplands lying between them in Keith and Lincoln counties. It also includes a small area of Sandhills to the north of the North Platte River



valley through which Whitetail, Birdwood, and White Horse creeks flow.

Both the North Platte and South Platte rivers in this reach are shallow streams, with braided, mostly wooded channels. However, open sandbars and wet meadows are more common in the floodplain here than in other reaches of the Platte in western Nebraska. Sandhill cranes use these open habitats for spring staging. River flows have been greatly depleted from upstream diversion, and Russian olive and eastern red cedar have become invasive in the floodplain woodlands and meadows. Cropland is common in the valley.

Whitetail, Birdwood, and White Horse creeks headwater in the Sandhills, their flows derived from the extensive aquifer below the dunes, and flow southward into the North Platte River. In their upper reaches, they are fairly pristine, coldwater streams with wet meadows in their floodplains. These streams are unique in that they support several species of rare, cold-water fish, including the northern redbelly dace and finsecale dace. The streams also support submergent wetland plants that feed over-wintering trumpeter swans. There are few protected lands within 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 in sandbars, meadows and woodlands, including reed canary grass, salt cedar, European phragmites, purple loosestrife, Canada thistle, and smooth brome
- ❖ Eastern red cedar, Russian olive, and other invasive shrub and tree encroachment of river sandbars, woodlands and meadows
- ❖ Altered natural hydrology, particularly lack of high spring flows, low summer flows, and reduced sediment transport to maintain sandbars and fish habitat and to prevent channel degradation

- ❖ Sedimentation and drainage of backwater sloughs
- ❖ Conversion of wet meadows to cropland

## Conservation Strategies

- ❖ Implement ecologically-sensitive grazing strategies on wet meadows on both private and public lands, in combination with prescribed fire and rest
- ❖ Undertake eastern red cedar and other tree clearing to maintain open meadow habitat for sandhill cranes, whooping cranes, and grassland birds. Initiate programs to control other invasive species.
- ❖ Expand shrub and herbaceous vegetation clearing on the river sandbars for water bird roosting and loafing habitat
- ❖ Restore and/or maintain Platte River hydrology necessary to sustain biological diversity and ecosystem function
- ❖ Facilitate sediment augmentation to restore the river channel
- ❖ Restore additional grassland habitat in the valley on private lands through high-diversity, local ecotype restorations
- ❖ Restore wetland hydrology and connect backwater habitats to the river

## Tier I At-risk Species

### Plants:

None

### Animals:

River Otter

Bell's Vireo

Greater Prairie Chicken

Long-billed Curlew

Whooping Crane

Iowa Skipper

Regal Fritillary

Married Underwing

Whitney Underwing

Ghost Tiger Beetle

Finescale Dace

Northern Redbelly Dace

Plains Topminnow

### Aquatic Communities:

Headwater, Cold Water Stream\*

Mid-order, Warm Water River\*

### Terrestrial Communities:

Cottonwood-Peachleaf Willow Riparian Woodland

Cottonwood Riparian Woodland

Sandbar Willow Shrubland  
Buckbrush Shrubland  
Buffaloberry Shrubland  
Chokecherry-Plum Shrub Thicket  
Freshwater Seep  
Western Alkaline Meadow\*  
Cattail Shallow Marsh\*  
Reed Marsh  
Sandhills Dune Prairie  
Perennial Sandbar\*  
Sandbar/Mudflat\*  
Riverine Gravel Flats\*

\* Priority for conservation in this BUL

<sup>1</sup> This is the only BUL where the species is known to occur

<sup>2</sup> Known to occur in only one other BUL

<sup>3</sup> Known to occur in only two other BULs

<sup>4</sup> Known to occur in only three other BULs