



CENTRE FOR INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

# Dakota Field Guide & Storybook





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**Gloria Eastman** | Canupawakpa Dakota Nation

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**Joyce Wasicuna** | Sioux Valley Dakota Nation

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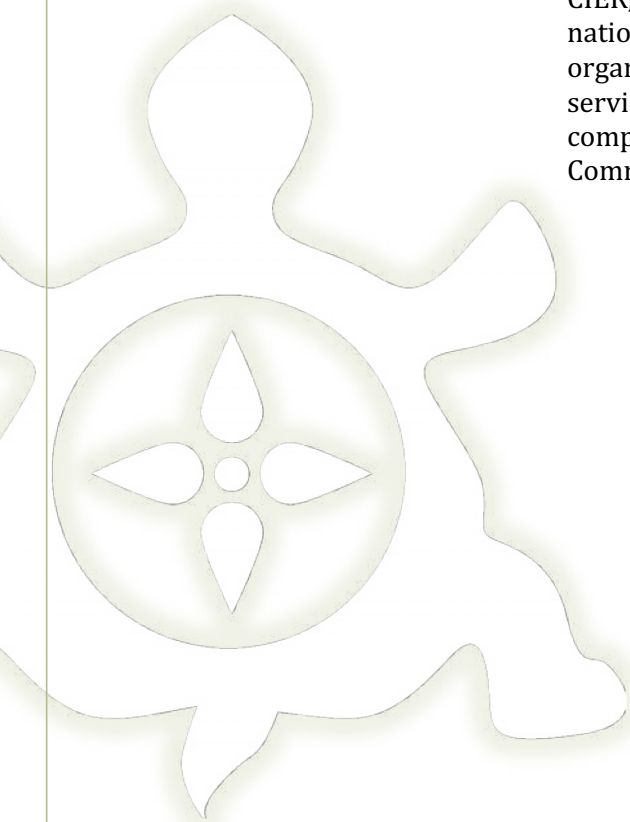
**Tim Poole** | Government of Manitoba

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# Foreword

Imagine seeing and hearing the world the same way our kunshi (grandmothers) and unkan (grandfathers) did. They knew which birds surrounded them by listening and watching, they knew the names of them in our language and our own stories about them. Birds were highly respected and revered by our ancestors, sometimes referred to as “grandfathers” for their spiritual maturity and experience. They learned from the birds and there are many stories of the winged ones bringing messages and visions to our people and carrying our prayers for us.

Today, fewer people pay attention to the birds surrounding them. Birds can tell us about the health of an ecosystem, they can tell us about the weather, and they can help us when we pray to them. The goal of the *Dakota Field Guide & Storybook* is to teach readers how to identify birds in the wild and to encourage being outdoors and connecting with nature. In addition, the *Dakota Field Guide & Storybook* aims to decolonize how we view, understand, and interact with the natural world, to do so in the same ways the generations before us have!

The *Dakota Field Guide & Storybook* also raises awareness of bird Species at Risk and the degradation of the prairie Grasslands ecosystem. As Indigenous people of the land, protection and conservation is not just about the Species at Risk or the health of the ecosystem but includes protecting the relationship and connection we have with them. That connection is a part of our language, our culture, and identity as Dakota Oyate (the Dakota Nation).

## A message from the Elders who Contributed to the Field Guide

Birds play an important part of the life cycle – from transferring pollen from flowers, spreading plant and tree seeds, keeping insect and pest populations down and bringing beauty to the world. Everything has purpose in life.

Try to imagine a world without sound or movement in the air – it would be quiet. You would be bored. Think about the way the world seems to wake up in the springtime when the songbirds sing, when you see the migrating birds returning, the happiness you feel when you know a new year is beginning.

The Elders before us used to say to take quiet time to listen to the birds, sit outside, listen and enjoy them, that’s good for you. Older people used to teach the young ones what animals were around us. In the future there may be a hard time coming – we need to learn what’s around us, what trees we can use to make fires, what animals to eat, what plants to use as a tea, all the things we need to know to survive.

# 1.0 Introduction

The birds contained in this guide can be found (at the time of printing, 2020) within or in proximity to Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, located in southwestern Manitoba, Canada. However, this is not an exhaustive list of all the birds that can be found within the identified area. This guide is intended to be enjoyed as an introductory-level guide to learn about birds, bird watching, and the grassland ecosystem.

## 1.1 A Note on Dakota Language

The Dakota words throughout the guide are spelled using character accents (see chart below). As Elders from Sioux Valley Dakota Nation and Canupawakpa Dakota Nation helped develop the Field Guide, there are both “d” dialect and “n” dialect used (to a lesser extent). The “d” dialect is Santee, used in Sioux Valley, whereas the “n” dialect is Ihanktowan, used in Canupawakpa. When there are two spellings, the “d” dialect will be presented first, followed by the “n” dialect, there will be a note if a word comes from the “n” dialect and not the “d” dialect.

For example:

- Bird: Barn Swallow (Ićanpsinpsincada/ Ićanpsinpsincana)
- Dakota Pronunciation: Ee-chan-psee-pseen-cha-dah (or Ee-chan-psee-pseen-cha-nah)

Vowel	Pronunciation	Vowel	Pronunciation
A	“ah” or “uh” sound	O	“oh” sound
E	“eh” or “ah” sound	U	“oo” sound
I	“ee” sound		

Other sounds:

Spelling	Pronunciation	Example	Pronunciation
Ĉ	“ch” sound	“Wićoni” – life	We-cho-nee
Ġ	Guttural “ghh” sound	“Maġa” – Goose	mah-ghah
Ĥ	Guttural sound	“Waĥća” - Flower	Wa-kh-chah
K’	Hard “Kuh” sound		
P’	Almost a hard “B” sound	“P’o” – Fog	“PB-oh”
Un	“oon” sound	“Anpahotuna” - Chicken	Ahn-pa ho-too-na
Ẓ	“Jh” sound like “pleasure”	Peẓi - Green	Peh-zhee

## 1.2 How to Identify Birds in the Wild

Birds are incredibly diverse, including here in the prairie grasslands. Learning how to identify birds may take practice, but it can be fun and has many benefits – including the many health benefits that come just from spending time outdoors.

Below is a list of characteristics that will help you identify birds, based off the “Peterson System” of identifying birds (Latimer & Stray Nolting, 1999). Identifying birds in the wild can be challenging at times and the list below teaches what you should pay attention to so that you can narrow down your guesses and get closer to identifying the birds you see.

**Colour:** birds come in a variety of colours, in the prairies however, there are many bird species that come in varieties of browns, blacks, and whites.



**Bird size:** compare the size of the bird you want to identify to a bird species that you already know – note if its bigger or smaller.

**Field markings:** field markings are the designs that make birds unique – spots, stripes, and patches that can appear on their head, chest, wings, body or tails.

**Shape of the bird:** notice the details that make up the shape of the bird – its width (how plump or skinny it is), the length and shape of the wings, tail, neck and beaks.

**Location:** although birds can fly anywhere, birds have natural habitats where you are more likely to find them. These are places where they prefer to live and breed – for example, you will be more likely to see waterfowl (ex. ducks, geese, and gulls) in marshy areas or bodies of water.

**Behaviour:** some birds are visible and even approachable, while others will hide and can be difficult to find. Other behaviors to watch for: how they walk, timing (when are they being most active? Some birds are nocturnal), how they feed and eat, and how their tails move.

**Sound:** some birds are heard more than they are seen! A lot of birds have very distinctive calls that can be quickly recognized once learned.

### 1.3 The Birds in the Dakota Field Guide & Storybook

The birds in the *Dakota Field Guide & Storybook* are divided into three main categories: Prairie Grasslands, Prairie Woodlands, and Prairie Wetlands. Although there is some overlap between habitats, readers will have a better sense of where to find certain bird species.

### 1.4 Additional Resources

The following are a list of additional resources to support bird watching activities.

#### Organisations:

- Bird Studies Canada
- Brandon Riverbank and Discovery Centre
- Important Bird Areas Canada
- Manitoba Important Bird Areas Program
- Nature Manitoba
- Westman Naturalists

#### Online resources:

Online resources are great because most are free and use video and audio so you can hear and see how birds sound and behave. Here are a few:

- **All About Birds** | Website: [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org) © Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- **eBird** | Website: [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org) © Cornell Lab of Ornithology [eBird is managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology]
- **Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation Species at Risk Factsheets** | website: <https://www.mhhc.mb.ca/our-programs/species-at-risk/>

- **Manitoba Breeding Bird Atlas** | Website: [https://www.birdatlas.mb.ca/index\\_en.jsp](https://www.birdatlas.mb.ca/index_en.jsp)

**Birding groups:**

There are networks of “birders” (people who love bird watching) that can be found anywhere there are birds! You can join birding groups and walks or join online platforms/ social media. Here are a few within southwestern Manitoba:

- **Manitoba Birds Discussion Group** | Website: <https://groups.io/g/Manitobabirds>
- **Westman Naturalists** | Website: <https://westman-naturalists.weebly.com/>

## 2.0 Prairie Grassland Birds

### American Goldfinch<sup>1</sup>

*Spinus tristis*

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

**Elder story:** Like most birds, the males are brighter than the females, but in the wintertime they [male and female goldfinches] look dull. Once it's spring again they grow back their bright yellow feathers.

**Identification:**

- ❖ Very small, bright yellow birds. Adult females are a lighter yellow to olive colour, with more white details on their bodies and wings. Adult males are bright yellow with a black forehead, black and white wings. Juveniles do not have a black forehead and are duller yellow to brown, with black and white wings. As goldfinches fly, they may make a call that sounds like the phrase "potato-chip".



**Federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) Status:** not listed; **Manitoba Endangered Species Act (ESA) Status:** not listed

### Barn Swallow (Ićanpsinpsincada/ Ićanpsinpsincana)<sup>2</sup>

*Hirundo rustica*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Ee-chan-psee-pseen-cha-dah (or Ee-chan-psee-pseen-cha-nah)

**Translation:** Swallow (Note: all Swallow species are called by this name)

**Habitat:** Grasslands

**Identification:**

- ❖ Swallows are small to medium sized birds with royal blue backs, heads, and wings. The area around and below their beaks are orange, their bodies are yellow to white in colour. Their wings come to a point and their tail feathers look square with white spots and two pointed ends.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Black Billed Magpie (Unkċe Kiġa)<sup>3</sup>

*Pica hudsonia*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** oon-k-chay kee-gh-uh

**Translation:** Smiles at poop

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

**Elder Story:** The name of the bird is poking fun at the fact magpies will happily eat anything. Magpies were known to follow the buffalo, just as we did. Magpies would eat the ticks and other insects off the buffalo and forage in its poop.



**Identification:**

- ❖ Magpies are medium-sized black and white bird, but if you look closely you can see the black has a blue sheen to it. Its shoulders are white with black wings and white tips and its underbelly is white. They have long tail feathers. They're very noisy birds and can be spotted out in the open easily.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Bobolink<sup>4</sup>

*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*

**Habitat:** Grasslands

**Identification:**

- ❖ Named after its bubbling flight song, the Bobolink is a medium-sized bird. The male is black from the front of the head all the way down to the belly, but the back of the head is a soft, pale yellow. Its wings are black and white, and the lower back is white, with a black tail. The female is a buffy-yellow colour, with a dark strip across the eye.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Brewer's Blackbird (Zitkada sapa/ Zitkana sapa)<sup>5</sup>

*Euphagus cyanocephalus*

**Dakota pronunciation:** zeet-ka-da saw-pa (or zeet-ka-na saw-pa)

**Translation:** Black bird

**Habitat:** Grasslands, parks and agricultural fields

**Identification:**

- ❖ Brewer's Blackbird is a medium-sized bird, about the same size as a Red-winged Blackbird, but without red and yellow shoulder patches. Males are a glossy black colour with iridescent blue and green. Females are brown with dark eyes (unlike the males who have bright eyes) and almost black tailfeathers.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Brown-headed Cowbird (Zitkada ptanwanapi agan yaka/ Zitkana ptanwanapi agan yaka)<sup>6</sup>

*Molothrus ater*

**Dakota pronunciation:** zeet-ka-da p-tawn-wah-na-pee ah-gawn yah-kuh (or zeet-ka-na p-tawn-wah-na-pee ah-gawn yah-kuh)

**Translation:** bird sitting on a cow's back

**Habitat:** Grasslands

**Elder Story:** Their named that because they sit on cows or follow them closely to eat insects that they wake. These birds do not make nests; they lay their eggs in other bird nests. They leave their eggs and either the eggs are rejected, eaten, or they are accepted and raised by other bird species. This can be bad for their young if the fostering birds have a different diet and they can end up starving, or they can't raise their own young because the Cowbird eats more than the fostering species.



**Identification:**

- ❖ Cowbirds are medium sized birds. Adult males are black with brown heads and adult females are all brown. Grown cowbirds can be seen with other blackbirds and can be found mainly in cattle pastures, open fields, and high up in trees.

**Fact:** They are called Cowbirds because they tend to follow cows. That's because the cow's movement wakes up insects the Cowbirds eat. (Latimer & Stray Nolting, 1999)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



## Clay-Colored Sparrow<sup>7</sup>

*Spizella pallida*

**Habitat:** Grasslands and scrubs

**Identification:**

- ❖ Clay-colored Sparrows are roughly the same size as a Chipping Sparrow (see Woodland Birds) and share the same silhouette. However, Clay-colored Sparrows have a more neutral colour palette, they are beige, tan, and grey, with a grey cap and distinctive grey collar.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Common Grackle<sup>8</sup>

*Quiscalus quiscula*

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

**Identification:**

- ❖ Common Grackles are taller and longer tailed than a typical blackbird. They have a flat head and long, pointed beak, bright piercing eyes. From a distance they look black, but the males are a brownish colour with purple and green iridescent shine and their heads a blueish purple that ends in a V shape on their chests. The female Common Grackles are a glossy brown with subtle iridescent notes of purple and green. Juveniles are brown all over with brown eyes.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## European Starling<sup>9</sup>

*Sturnus vulgaris*

**Habitat:** Farmyards

### Identification:

- ❖ European Starlings are dark black birds about the size of a robin and appear oily in the summer, with purple and green iridescent shine. However, in the winter they are dark brown, almost black and covered in white specks, the non-breeding adults share this same appearance.



**Fact:** European Starlings are quite new to Turtle Island (North America). One hundred were released in New York in the early 1890s by a group of Shakespeare enthusiasts. (Latimer & Stray Nolting, 1999)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Hawk (Čanška/ Bdehopeča)<sup>10,11,12</sup>

*Buteo swainsoni*; *Circus hudsonius*; *Buteo jamaicensis*

**Pronunciation:** Chan-shka (or Bday-ho-peh-cha)

**Dakota Translation:** Hawk

**Habitat:** Grasslands and woodland edges

### Identification:

- ❖ **Swainson's Hawk** adults have a white face with distinct brown collar, white belly and dark edges to the wings.
- ❖ **Northern Harriers** have a distinctive white rump and a v-shaped flight pattern. Males are slate grey with black wing tips, females are brown and juveniles are brown above but orange on their belly.
- ❖ **Red-tailed Hawk** are variable in colour, but most adults have the distinct orange tail and a broad brown band on their bellies.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed  
(all three Hawks)



Swainson's Hawk



Northern Harrier



Red-tailed Hawk

## House Sparrow<sup>13</sup>

*Passer domesticus*

**Habitat:** Towns and farmyards

### Identification:

- ❖ House Sparrows are small, plump birds with round heads. The male adult's wings are a rich brown with black details, a whitish body, and a brown head with a grey cap and black around the beak area, extending to the chest. The female is a mix of browns and has a beige underbelly, extending up to its beak and no grey cap.



**Fact:** House Sparrows are relatively new to Turtle Island (North America), being released from New York in the 1850s. They are native to Europe, Asia and Africa. (Latimer & Stray Nolting, 1999)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Kingbird (Wasnasnaiceda/ Wasnasnaicena)<sup>14,15</sup>

*Tyrannus tyrannus; Tyrannus verticalis*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Wah-sna-sna-ee-che-da (or Wah-sna-sna-ee-che-na)

**Translation:** loosely translates to something rattling (Note: this includes both Kingbird species)

**Habitat:** Grasslands

**Elder Story:** Their name has something to do with the sound that they make with their wings.

### Identification:

- ❖ An **Eastern Kingbird** is roughly the same size as a Robin. They are dark-grey to black on the tops of their heads and bodies, with bright white feathers from the beak down to their tails. The tails are long and dark and come to a square, white tip. Their beaks are sharp and narrow looking.
- ❖ A **Western Kingbird** looks very much like an Eastern Kingbird, but its colouring sets it apart. The Western Kingbird is a light grey colour, with a pale to bright yellow belly and dark tail feathers.



Eastern Kingbird



Western Kingbird

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed (both Kingbirds)

## Western Meadowlark (Tašiyaka popopidan)<sup>16</sup>

*Sturnella neglecta*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Tah-she-ya-ka po-po-pih-da

**Translation:** loosely translated – ta (possessive) your boil is popped (Note: the origin of the name or back story is lost).

**Habitat:** Grasslands

**Elder Story:** They sing “koda čiče do!” [translated: “friend, I welcome you”]. Some people depend on the meadowlark for their prayers. There are stories of meadowlarks bringing visions to our people *ahanna* (a long time ago) and carrying our prayers for us, they still do this.

### Identification:

- ❖ Meadowlarks have a patterned mixture of brown, black, and beige with bright yellow chests with a black “V”; although they appear dull in winter. Their heads are flat with short necks and long beaks.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



## Mourning Dove (Wakiyeda/ Ti wakiyena)<sup>17</sup>

*Zenaida macroura*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Wah-kee-ye-da (or tee-wah-kee-ye-na)

**Translation:** Dove (can be used to describe any dove or pigeon)

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

### Identification:

- ❖ A Mourning Dove is smaller than a pigeon and are white/tan coloured with dark grey, pointy tipped wings and tail feathers. Their sad sounding call (which is why they are named Mourning Doves) can be heard in the evenings, it sounds almost like an owl “hoo-hoo”.

**Fact:** Once the Mourning Dove finds a partner, it is known to mate for life. (Latimer & Stray Nolting, 1999)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



### Ring-necked Pheasant (Šyo opi hanska)<sup>18</sup>

*Phasianus colchicus*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** She-oh oh-pee hawn-ska

**Translation:** loosely translated, it means a prairie chicken with a longer tail

**Habitat:** Grasslands

**Elder Story:** You can see Šyo and Šyo opi hanska appear in the old *waniyetu wowapi* (winter counts). Just like other birds, it's the males that are colourful with green/blue heads, red around the eyes and the females are brown all over.



#### Identification:

- ❖ Ring-necked Pheasants are quite new to Turtle Island (introduced by Europeans). Pheasants are large birds that look and act similar to a chicken. Unlike a chicken though, the male birds have green necks with a white collar like a Mallard duck. Their faces are red, with whitish beaks and black stripe patterns all over their brown bodies. Their tails are very long. Females are mostly brown and white with dark stripe patterns and shorter tails.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Savannah Sparrow<sup>19</sup>

*Passerculus sandwichensis*

**Habitat:** Grasslands

#### Identification:

- ❖ The most common of all Manitoba's grassland sparrows, this small brown bird has a small crest on its head and a yellow marking adjacent to its eye (often referred to as a yellow lore).



**SARA Status:** special concern; **ESA:** not listed



## Sharp-tailed Grouse/Prairie Chicken (Šyo)<sup>20</sup>

*Tympanuchus cupido*; *Tympanuchus phasianellus*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** She-oh

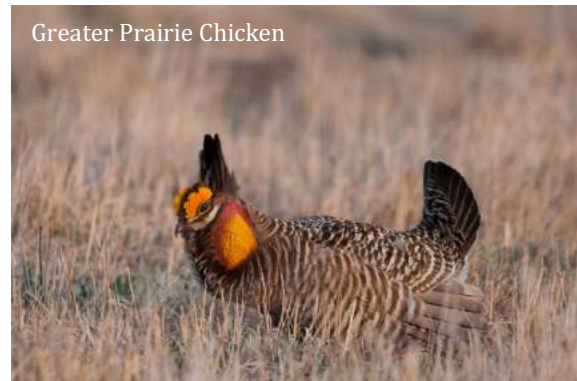
**Translation:** Prairie chicken

**Habitat:** Grasslands

**Elder Story:** Our people used to eat them frequently. They make loud noises ruffling their feathers. They sit in trees. The powwow chicken dance is based off the mating ruffle of this bird.

### Identification:

- ❖ A Prairie Chicken, also known as Sharp-tailed Grouse, acts like a chicken and shares a similar silhouette. However, they are white with brown stripe patterns all over, have “wings” from their heads, similar to some headdresses. The males have feathered collars and orange air sacs on their necks which produce loud sounds. Female Prairie Chickens do not have the feathered heads, collars or orange sacs, but share the same body patterns.



**Fact:** Although many people call it a Prairie Chicken it is a Sharp-tailed Grouse in English. Prairie Chickens used to be found across the southern prairies of Canada but are now extirpated.

**SARA Status:** extirpated; **ESA:** extirpated (Greater Prairie Chicken)

**SARA:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed (Sharp-Tailed Grouse)

### Short-eared Owl (Hiyankaga)<sup>21</sup>

*Asio flammeus*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** heen-yawn-ka-gha

**Translation:** loosely translated, it means they bring the night

**Habitat:** Grassland

**Elder Story:** Seeing an owl is like a bad omen. Owls are messengers and when they appear, they are telling you someone you know is about to pass away. They mean no harm; they are just the messenger, don't hurt them.

**Identification:**

- ❖ Short-eared Owls are medium-sized owl; their ears can barely be seen. They are brown spotted with beige and white on the upperparts. Their face is light with yellow eyes outlined in black.

**SARA Status:** special concern; **ESA:** threatened



### Song Sparrow<sup>22</sup>

*Melospiza melodia*

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

**Identification:**

- ❖ Song Sparrows are very small, round birds patterned with rich browns, whites, and greys (mostly near the head) and white underbellies. They have round heads with long, rounded tails. You can find Song Sparrows in nearly any open area.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Turkey Vulture<sup>23</sup>

*Cathartes aura*

**Habitat:** Often seen flying over open areas from woodland edges

**Identification:**

- ❖ Manitoba's only vulture, the Turkey Vulture has a bare, bright pink head, a hooked white beak, black feathered neck and brown back and wings. In flight, look for a bird rocking as if it's in a boat on a windy day. Its dark body contrasts sharply with its long, grey wings and rounded grey tail.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## 3.0 Prairie Woodland Birds

### American Crow (Uncišiceda)<sup>24</sup>

*Corvus brachyrhynchos*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** oon-chi-she-chay-da

**Translation:** Like a bad mother-in-law

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

**Elder Story:** Have you heard crows before? They make a racket. The name is poking fun at the way a mother-in-law speaks or nags at a daughter-in-law. It sounds funnier in Dakota, there's a lot of humour in our culture and language. Crows are among the first to come back in the spring [and] we are anxious to see them because it usually snows, snowstorms, or rains sleet – they used to say they brought the snow back (wa kan pi – brings down the last snow). The late Gordon Bone Wasteste said he noticed that the crow and raven are crossing (interbreeding) and are becoming medium-sized and harder to tell apart.

**Identification:**

- ❖ Crows and Ravens come from the same family and are difficult to tell apart, but a Crow is smaller, black with a thinner beak. When flying, a crow's tail will be shaped like a fan, while a raven's tail will be shaped like a triangle or wedge. Males and females are difficult to tell apart.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### American Robin (Šišoka)<sup>25</sup>

*Turdus migratorius*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** She-sho-ka

**Translation:** Robin

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

**Elder story:** The Šišoka become more active at the end of winter, that's how you know spring is near. If you pay attention to how active they are they can tell you about the weather. You can hear them singing early in the mornings during the spring and summer months. After it rains, you'll see them eating worms.

**Identification:**

- ❖ Robins are small birds, mostly grey, with a darker head and rusty orange coloured chest. It can be difficult to tell male and female adults apart, as females are slightly lighter. Juveniles are much lighter than adults and can have dark coloured spots on their chests.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



## Baltimore Oriole<sup>26</sup>

*Icterus galbula*

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

**Identification:**

- ❖ Orioles are small-medium sized black birds with a bright orange chest and stomach, and bright orange tailfeather tips. Adult females are a lighter orange that covers their head, chest, body, and tails, with brown and white wings.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Black Capped Chickadee (Škibibida/ Škibibina)<sup>27</sup>

*Poecile atricapillus*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** sh-kee-bee-bi-dah (sh-kee-bee-bi-na)

**Translation:** Chickadee

**Habitat:** Forest

**Elder Story:** In Dakota we call spring “wetū” (pronounced “way-too”). This is named after the mating call of the chickadee which sounds like two whistles going “waaay-tooo”. That’s how we know its springtime, the chickadees are telling everyone “spring, spring is here!” Chickadees are not shy; they will eat from your hand if they’re hungry – usually in the winter when food is harder for them to find. Offer them food on your hand by a bird feeder you know they use. If you ever watch them eat, they will take turns eating one at a time.



**Identification:**

- ❖ Chickadees are small, plump birds, with big heads, and tiny beaks. They have a black cap, white cheeks, black under beak, a grey back, wings, and tail and whitish body. Listen for their distinctive calls which sound like “chickadee-dee-dee”.

**Fact:** Chickadees spend a lot of time hanging upside down! (Latimer & Stray Nolting, 1999)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



## Blue Jay<sup>28</sup>

*Cyanocitta cristata*

**Habitat:** Forests

**Elder Story:** Blue Jays are known to tip off other animals like the deer when a hunter or other threat is coming in the woods. If you go hunting and start hearing the Blue Jay warning calls you might not come home with anything! They also warn other birds of threats, like from larger birds.

**Identification:**

- ❖ Blue Jays are bigger than Robins and smaller than Crows. On the tops of their heads and backs they are vibrant shades of blue, black and white, with white to grey below. Their black beaks are long, straight and pointed. Their feet and legs are dark grey to black. They have a distinctive head shape which appears pointed.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Cedar Waxwing<sup>29</sup>

*Bombycilla cedrorum*

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

**Identification:**

- ❖ Cedar Waxwings are smaller than Robins and have a brown head and chest that fades to grey on the wings. Their heads are narrow with a black “mask” around the eyes and dark beaks. The tips of the wings are black and red closer to their body. Their tails are grey to dark grey with bright yellow tips.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Chipping Sparrow<sup>30</sup>

*Spizella passerina*

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

**Identification:**

- ❖ Chipping Sparrows are smaller than other sparrows, they are slightly bigger than a Chickadee. They are slender with round heads, a medium-sized beak. The male and females are similar; both are a medium brown, with streaked patterns and a white underbelly. The key difference is their head colourings; the males have a rusty orange crown and white cheeks, whereas the females (and non-breeding birds) have a brown cap and beige coloured face.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Common Raven (Kangī /Kangitaka)<sup>31</sup>

*Corvus corax*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** kaw-ghee (or kaw-ghee-tah-ka)

**Translation:** Raven

**Habitat:** Forest

**Identification:**

- ❖ Ravens are slightly bigger than Crows, but slender and with narrower wings. They are entirely black, including their beaks, eyes, tails, legs and feet. In flight, their tail feathers are a long wedge shape.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Dark-eyed Junco (Čanĥpa zitkada/ Čanĥpa zitkana)<sup>32</sup>

*Junco hyemalis*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Chan-h' -pah zeet-ka-da (or Chan-h' -pah zeet-ka-na)

**Translation:** Dark-eyed Junco

**Habitat:** Forest

**Identification:**

- ❖ Watch for these birds in early spring as the snow melts. They do not breed near Sioux Valley, but they travel through in large numbers on their way to the boreal forest. The Dark-eyed Junco is a medium-sized sparrow with a round head, pale pink beak, round dark grey body, white belly and long tail. In flight, the outer tail feathers are white.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Golden Eagle (Wambdi tanka)<sup>33</sup>

*Aquila chrysaetos*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** wam-bdee tahn-ka

**Translation:** Golden Eagle

**Elder Story:** all eagle feathers are highly prized and used ceremonially, they're considered sacred and never killed for sport.

**Identification:**

- ❖ Another bird which breeds further north but if you are lucky, may be spotted in late winter and early spring, and again in the fall. Adult Golden Eagles are one of the largest birds in Turtle Island (North America). They are dark brown with a golden sheen on the back of the head and neck.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Eastern Towhee<sup>34</sup>

*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*

**Habitat:** Scrubs

### Identification:

- ❖ Eastern Towhees are a secretive bird of steep-sided river valleys. They are slightly smaller than a Robin and look like them too! However, Towhees are much darker, nearly black and a more vibrant orange chest, with a whitish centre. They have thick, dark beaks that also set them apart from Robins – which have yellow beaks. The males appear black, while the females look brown. Juvenile Towhees are brown all over.



**Fact:** Towhees are named after their call, which sounds like “tow-hee”.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## House Wren (Pteḡaniča/ Čanyuksasana)<sup>35</sup>

*Troglodytes gedon*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** p-tay-gha-nee-cha (or cha-you-ksa-sa-na)

**Translation:** Wren (“n” dialect translation – they’re breaking up twigs)

**Habitat:** Open Woodlands

**Elder Story:** In the “n” dialect, they’re also known as Čanyuksasana, loosely meaning they’re breaking up twigs to make a nest. The male Wren makes a twig nest and attracts a female who completes the rest of the nest. They sometimes take over other bird nests, pushing eggs out and attacking newborns.



House Wren eating a moth

### Identification:

- ❖ House Wrens are all brown, plump songbirds. They have flat heads and long, curved beaks, stripped patterns on their wings, and short, upright tails. Fact: One male House Wren will build multiple nests in the spring in the hope of attracting a female to one of them.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



## Ruby-throated Hummingbird (Tanageda/ Tanadena)<sup>36</sup>

*Archilochus colubris*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Tah-nah-ghey-dah (or  
tah-nah-ghey-na)

**Translation:** Hummingbird

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

### Identification:

- ❖ Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are tiny birds with long beaks (which they use to drink nectar from flowers), short wings and tails longer than its wings when seated. The name hummingbird comes from the "humming" sound they make in flight and the Ruby-throated piece comes from the adult male which has a red iridescent patch on its neck/collar. The rest of the bird appears green with white underbellies, The females look whiter and without the red patch of their male counterparts.

**Fact:** Hummingbirds are found only on Turtle Island (North America) (Latimer & Stray Nolting, 1999). Hummingbirds are also found in South America, but only on the wider American continent.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

## Least Flycatcher<sup>37</sup>

*Empidonax minimus*

**Habitat:** Forests

### Identification:

- ❖ Least Flycatchers are small, round headed and round-bellied birds with short wings and a long tail. They are an olive-grey colour with whitish bellies, small dark eyes surrounded by a white ring, and beaks outlined in white. You are more likely to find them by listening for their calls and going in their direction. Their call sounds like the phrase "chebek" sung out very fast.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



## Northern Flicker<sup>38</sup>

*Colaptes auratus*

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

### Identification:

- ❖ Flickers are a type of woodpecker and slightly larger in size than the Hairy Woodpecker. They have grey and tan heads, with black stripes extending from the beak area (almost like a mustache) and their chests are tan with dark spots. They look brown from a distance but have neat stripe patterns on their feathers. Their undersides of the wing and tail feathers are bright yellow.



**Fact:** Unlike other Woodpeckers, you will often see Northern Flickers sitting on the ground eating insects. (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Tree Swallow (Ićanpsinpsincada/ Ićanpsinpsincana)<sup>39</sup>

*Tachycineta bicolor*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** ee-chan-psee-pseen-cha-da  
(or ee-chan-psee-pseen-cha-na)

**Translation:** A Swallow (Note: all Swallow species are called by this name)

### Identification:

- ❖ Tree Swallows are small birds about the size of a Sparrow. They have long, pointed wings and a short, square tail. Their heads are round with black surrounding their black eyes and tiny black beaks. The males are a rich blue colour with bright white underbellies extending up to their beaks. The females are muted in colour and the juveniles are brown before they become blue.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Warbling Vireo<sup>40</sup>

*Vireo gilvus*

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

**Identification:**

- ❖ Warbling Vireos are about the size of a Chickadee. They have round heads, thick bodies, medium-length tails and thick, straight beaks. They look brownish-grey with a white stripe near their eyes and whitish-yellow underbellies.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Eastern Whip-poor-will<sup>41</sup>

*Antrostomus vociferus*

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

**Identification:**

- ❖ Whip-poor-wills can be easily heard but hard to see due to their mixed browns ruffled feathers which look like dark leaves or tree bark. They are bigger than Robins and smaller than Crows. When the Whip-poor-will gets its name from the song it sings.



**Fact:** Whip-poor-wills are most active at dusk, dawn and nights with bright moonlight. Their large eyes and sensory bristles around the bill help it capture insects under low light levels. (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019)

**SARA Status:** threatened; **ESA:** threatened (Eastern Whip-poor-will)

## White-breasted Nuthatch<sup>42</sup>

*Sitta carolinensis*

**Habitat:** Forests

### Identification:

- ❖ The White-breasted Nuthatch is a very small bird with a big head and almost no neck, appearing mostly grey with black details above and white underneath. They have short tails and straight, pointed beaks. The male Nuthatch has a black cap and a vibrant rusty-orange coloured patch by its legs. The females have a grey cap and a duller orange patch.



**Fact:** These birds are known to sit sideways on trees with their bodies facing down to the ground and holding their heads upright. (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Wild Turkey (Zicha Tanka)<sup>43</sup>

*Meleagris gallopavo*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Zee-cha tawn-ka

**Translation:** Literally means big bird

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

### Identification:

- ❖ You can hear them making gobbling sounds from a distance and although they spend most of the time in the ground, they can also be found high up in trees. Wild Turkeys are huge dark coloured game birds with bronze-green iridescence to most of their feathers. Their rump and tail feathers are tipped with rusty-orange or white. The bare skin of the male's heads and necks vary from red to blue to grey.



**Fact:** Wild Turkeys can swim if they need to. (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Woodpecker (Čankatoto/ Čankatotona)<sup>44,45</sup>

*Dryobates pubescens; Dryobates villosus*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** cha-wn-kah toe-toe  
(ending in “na” if using the n dialect)

**Translation:** knocking on wood (Note: includes both Woodpecker species)

**Habitat:** Forests

### Identification:

- ❖ The Downy Woodpecker is the smallest Woodpecker and looks nearly identical to the Hairy Woodpecker. The main difference is in their body size and beak size, which is much smaller and shorter than the Hairy Woodpecker. Both species are black and white with white spots and stripes. The males of both species have red patches on the backs of their necks.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed (both Woodpeckers)



Downy Woodpecker



Hairy Woodpecker

## Yellow Warbler<sup>46</sup>

*Setophaga petechia*

**Habitat:** Open woodlands

### Identification:

- ❖ Yellow Warblers are tiny, all yellow, well-rounded birds with round heads. The males have reddish streaks on their chests (females have to a lesser degree). Both male and female have greyish tones in their wingtips and black eyes and light legs and feet.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



## 4.0 Prairie Wetland Birds

In this section, the term “wetlands” is used to describe any wetland areas, marshes, and bodies of water.

### American Coot (Ćankpa/ Ćankpana)<sup>47</sup>

*Fulica americana*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Chawn-kh-pa (or Chawn-kh-pa-na)

**Translation:** an American Coot (also known as a Mud Hen)

**Elder Story:** We used to eat them and their eggs, the eggs are easy to find.



**Iktomi (Spider/ trickster):** This is a story for the winter time, although the Elders who contributed to this guide gave permission to include this story, the proper protocol is to invite an Elder over or visit them during the winter, feed them or give them something in return for a story.

Iktomi (pronounced ick-toe-me) was walking along a lake with a bag on his back when Ćankpana approached and asked, “Iktomi, what are you carrying on your back?”. Iktomi responded, “I’m carrying old songs on my back. I can sing you the songs if you will dance for me.” So Ćankpana gathered his friends to meet at Iktomi’s tipi. Iktomi’s old blind Kunshi (grandmother) sat by the door, as Iktomi sang to the birds, “close your eyes while your dancing, close your eyes and dance, if you open them you’ll have red eyes, close your eyes and dance.” As the birds danced one opened its eyes to see Iktomi’s Kunshi killing one by wringing its neck. In a panic, it began yelling at the others, “open your eyes, they’re going to eat us, run!”. They headed to the door and Iktomi’s kunshi said “I got two of them!” as she held one up by its two feet in each hand and the others got away. To this day, Ćankpana and his friends have red eyes.

#### Identification:

- ❖ Coots are chicken-like birds with short wings and spend a lot of time on the ground. They are dark-grey to black in colour and smaller than a Mallard duck. They have a bright white, sloped bill with a grey tip and have thick yellow-green legs and big feet.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



### American White Pelican (Bdega)<sup>48</sup>

*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Buh-day-gha

**Translation:** Pelican

**Identification:**

- ❖ Pelicans are larger than geese and have long necks, big bright orange bills, a white body and white wings with black tips. Adults grow a yellow hump near the tip of the bill.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### American Wigeon (Magak'sica)<sup>49</sup>

*Mareca americana*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Muh-gha-k-see-cha

**Translation:** Duck (Note: most ducks species are called the same name)

**Identification:**

- ❖ Male and female Wigeons look different from each other – the male has a partly green head and white cap and brown body while the female is brown all over. Both have white bills with black tips.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Bald Eagle (Wambdi/ Wambdi pa ska)<sup>50</sup>

*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Wom-bdee (or wom-bdee pah- skah)

**Translation:** Bald Eagle (or white-headed eagle)

**Elder Story:** The eagle flies the highest, they are the closest with Creator and represent our seven sacred teachings. It's a privilege to wear an eagle feather, the right to wear one is earned. By extension, family members also earn that right to wear them. This is how the war bonnets were made a long time ago, each feather was earned one by one. The war bonnet belongs to the Dakota. The eagle feathers on a staff is the flag of our people – the eagle staff belongs to the Dakota too.



There are protocols for how we treat eagle feathers. Never abuse the feathers by using them as ornaments, don't abuse it by having them near alcohol or pezi (marijuana), keep them put away from areas where there will be lots of visitors – this is to keep them from a woman on her moon time. Feathers and medicines were never kept in houses, they were always separated/ stored away (in a shed, for example). Only those that understand the value of it should handle feathers. They're not to ever touch the ground or be laid on the ground.

Little girls receive a plume when they are given a name and the teachings to go with it. All of the protocols and teachings should be passed from an Elder.

### Identification:

- ❖ Adult Bald Eagles have white heads and tails with dark brown bodies and wings. Their legs and bills are bright yellow. Juveniles have mostly dark heads and tails; their brown wings and bodies are mottled with white in varying amounts. Young birds attain adult plumage in about five years.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Black Tern<sup>51</sup>

*Chlidonias niger*

#### Identification:

- ❖ Terns are found in marshy areas. Adults are mostly grey with black heads, while young are grey with white and black heads.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



### Great Blue Heron (Hoka to)<sup>52</sup>

*Ardea herodias*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** ho-ka toe

**Translation:** Blue Heron (in this context, hoka means heron)

#### Identification:

- ❖ Blue Herons look like Cranes due to their long, skinny legs, large stature, long neck and long bills. They are a light grey-blue all over with bright orange bills, and black stripes extending from their eyes and beak into long, pointed plumes.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Blue-winged Teal<sup>53</sup>

*Spatula discors*

#### Identification:

- ❖ A Blue-winged Teal is similar in size to a Green-winged Teal. They have a round head with a larger beak. The males have brown bodies with black spots on the chest, a blue head with a white stripe between the eye and beak and a small white patch in front of their black rear. Females, juveniles and non-breeding males are brown with dark spots all over.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Bonaparte's Gull (Wiča tankakadan/ Wiča tanktakana)<sup>54</sup>

*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** wee-cha tawn-ka-ka-daw  
(or wee-cha tawnk-ta-kah-na)

**Translation:** Big man (Note: most gull species share this name, but the name has been around so long, we do not know the origin or story behind it)

**Identification:**

- ❖ Adults have black heads, red legs, and large white triangles in the wingtips that contrast with the gray wings. Nonbreeding Bonaparte's Gull are mostly white with grey upper wings and grey spot on the cheek.



**Fact:** Bonaparte's Gulls breed in northern Manitoba including near Churchill and build their nests in trees.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Bufflehead (Maḡaksica)<sup>55</sup>

*Bucephala albeola*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Muh-gha-k-see-cha

**Translation:** Duck (Note: most ducks species are called the same name)

**Identification:**

- ❖ These ducks have very large heads, which includes a white patch behind the eye extending around the back of their head and green and purple colour in adult males. Females are greyish brown with a white patch on the cheek.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



## Canada Goose (Maga)<sup>56</sup>

*Branta canadensis*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Muh-gha

**Translation:** Goose

**Elder Story:** Geese mate with one partner for life. Watch for geese in the spring, when they start returning from their migration it's a sign spring is near. Some smaller birds ride with the geese to migrate from cold weather. When one goose is sick or injured another will stay with it until the other dies, they don't abandon them. They raise their young until they're ready to be on their own and they always have a home to return to.



### Identification:

- ❖ A Canada Goose is easily recognizable – they are large brown and white bodied birds, with long, thick necks and black heads with a white chin strap. They have short webbed feet.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Canvasback<sup>57</sup>

*Aythya valisineria*

### Identification:

- ❖ The males have a chestnut-brown head with a sloping forehead and red eyes. They have a black chest, a bright white body, and black rear end. The females have a similar build but are lighter brown with a whitish body and dark brown/black eyes.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Common Goldeneye<sup>58</sup>

*Bucephala clangula*

### Identification:

- ❖ The name Common Goldeneye is derived from the golden eyes which both male and females have. Males have a dark green, almost black head with a white patch on its cheeks, and black-and-white body and wings. The female Goldeneye has a brown head with greyish-brown body, no cheek patch, but instead have a light patch at the end of their beaks.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



### Common Loon<sup>59</sup>

*Gavia immer*

**Elder Story:** It may have been called Bdeza.

#### Identification:

- ❖ Loons are large birds with rounded heads and sharp bills. The males are black with white spots, stripes and checkered patterns and dark red eyes that fade to grey in the winter. Females and juveniles are much lighter grey-brown with a white chest, throat, and under parts. A Loon can be recognized by their call and can mainly be found in water or in the air. This is because the legs of a Loon are placed far back on the body to help them swim, but it makes walking awkward. Loons look stretched out in flight, with a long, flat body and long neck and bill.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Common Yellowthroat<sup>60</sup>

*Geothlypis trichas*

**Habitat:** Scrubs

#### Identification:

- ❖ Common Yellowthroats are small, plump, songbirds with long tail feathers and are named after their yellow throat. Their necks are so thick, they appear to not have one! The male Yellowthroat has a whitish underbelly, and a black mask around its eyes outlined with white. The females do not have a mask around their eyes and have a yellow throat and belly. Both appear olive to yellow coloured on top. Juveniles appear brownish with some yellowing.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Double-crested Cormorant<sup>61</sup>

*Phalacrocorax auritus*

#### Identification:

- ❖ These are large birds but smaller than the Canada Goose, with small heads and long thick necks. Breeding males are mostly black to darkish brown with orange around base of their long, straight beaks. Non-breeding and juveniles appear browner, with a light chest and underbelly.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Eared Grebe<sup>62</sup>

*Podiceps nigricollis*

### Identification:

- ❖ Eared Grebes are plentiful in the area. They are smaller than a Mallard and have a distinct appearance due to their head shape and golden plumes extending from their eyes. The breeding adults are mostly black above the head and upper body. Non-breeding Eared Grebes are brown and white without the golden plumes of which they are named.



**Fact:** Grebes have feet that are lobed instead of being webbed like the feet of a duck. The legs of Grebes are also very far back on their bodies, making them excellent swimmers, but very awkward on land. (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Forster's Tern<sup>63</sup>

*Sterna forsteri*

### Identification:

- ❖ Forster's Terns are slender birds that are grey above and white below, with a black cap and orange beak with black tip. Nonbreeding adults are lighter in colour, with a dark bill, white crown, and dark eye patches. Juveniles look like nonbreeding adults but have tan feathers on the upperparts and a shorter tail.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Franklin's Gull (Wiča tankakadan/ Wiča tanktakana)<sup>64</sup>

*Leucophaeus pipixcan*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** wee-cha tawn-ka-ka-daw  
(or wee-cha tawnk-ta-kah-na)

**Translation:** Big man (Note: most gull species share this name, but the name has been around so long, we do not know the origin or story behind it)

### Identification:

- ❖ A Franklin's Gull is around the size of a Bonaparte's Gull. They have a round black head with a dark orange beak and white eye area; a stark white body; long, light grey wings with black tips; short grey-black legs; and, a short, whitish tail with black bars. Female and non-breeding males are lighter than the male counterparts.



**Fact:** Franklin's Gulls breed in large colonies in wetlands. There was a colony of 60,000 Franklin's Gulls breeding at Oak Lake in 1995. (IBA Canada)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Gadwall<sup>65</sup>

*Mareca strepera*

### Identification:

- ❖ The Gadwall is about the size of a Mallard, the females resemble female Mallards but have a thinner, darker bill. Males are patterned with grey, brown, and black; their heads are brownish, and their rear ends look almost black. Females have a brownish-grey pattern all over with a more greyish coloured head.



**Fact:** Gadwalls will sometimes steal food from other birds returning to the water's surface. (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Green-winged Teal<sup>66</sup>

*Anas crecca*

### Identification:

- ❖ The Green-winged Teal is the smallest dabbling duck in North America. They have big heads, short necks, and tails that sit above the water. The males have cinnamon-coloured heads with a green line that extends from the eye to the back of the head. Their bodies are mixed pattern of greyish browns. Females and juveniles are brown and spotted all over with black bills. Their chests, throats, and are around the beak are lighter. In flight, both male and female have deep-green wing patches.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Herring Gull (Wiča tankakadan/ Wiča tanktakana)<sup>67</sup>

*Larus argentatus*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** wee-cha tawn-ka-ka-daw  
(or wee-cha tawnk-ta-kah-na)

**Translation:** Big man (Note: most gull species share this name, but the name has been around so long, we do not know the origin or story behind it)

### Identification:

- ❖ Herring Gulls are large gulls with light grey backs, grey wings with black tips, a white barrel chest and round head. Their bills and eyes are yellow.



**Fact:** It takes four years for a juvenile to transform its brown feathers to its final form as an adult. It's a slow transition that can make identifying a Herring Gull tricky. (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



## Hooded Merganser<sup>68</sup>

*Lophodytes cucullatus*

### Identification:

- ❖ The Hooded Merganser is a sight to be seen! The shapes of their heads can change from looking like huge fans, to looking like a tied back ponytail. Males expand their “crest” to attract females, but all Hooded Mergansers can do this. Breeding males have black and white crests, a black back and bill, brown body, wings and tails, and white chest. Females and non-breeding males are a mushroom brown colour all over with a warm brown crest and dark brown bill. Both male and female Hooded Mergansers have long, straight, and slightly hooked bills.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Killdeer (Siukansasha)<sup>69</sup>

*Charadrius vociferus*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** See-you-ka-sha-sha

**Translation:** Killdeer

**Habitat:** Short grass fields, gravel paths and other bare habitats

**Elder Story:** They have a high-pitched call and they say “Tibdo! Tibdo! Tibdo!”, they’re calling out “older brother!”. If you watch how they walk, they take a few steps, stop, shout, and look around, it’s like they really are lost, looking for their tibdo.



### Identification:

- ❖ Killdeer are small, slender birds with long legs. They are mostly tan coloured on their heads and backs, with white below on the face and belly. They have two black stripes around their neck/collar. They have round heads with large brown eyes. They have long tails which look orange when spread and their wings are black with a white stripe.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



## Lesser Scaup<sup>70</sup>

*Aythya affinis*

### Identification:

- ❖ A Lesser Scaup is slightly smaller than a Green-winged Teal and looks black and white but has an iridescent purple to green sheen on its head. They have a yellow eye, a bluish beak with a black stripe on the tip. The tops of their bodies are grey and white underneath with a black tail. Females are brown with a dark brown head, brownish yellow eyes and a white patch surrounding their black bill, but not all females have a white patch. Females have grey wings. Nonbreeding males and juveniles look like a cross between a female and a breeding male.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Mallard (Paḡunta)<sup>71</sup>

*Anas platyrhynchos*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Pah-gh-oon tah

**Translation:** its head is blue/green

**Elder Story:** It can also be called Pa kato [pronounced pah-gaw-toe], still meaning its head is blue/green.

### Identification:

- ❖ The male Mallard is an easily recognizable bird because of its emerald green head and neck, white collar, and bright yellow beak. The male has a long, grey body with a brown chest and tail and when in flight, they reveal a blue bar across their wings. Females and non-breeding males are greyish-brown all over with a streaky dark pattern, especially on the body and share the same wing pattern.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Marsh Wren<sup>72</sup>

*Cistothorus palustris*

### Identification:

- ❖ The Marsh Wren is a small, plump, round-bodied bird with a short, upright, dark striped tail and long thin legs. They have a dark thin bill, which reveals yellow inside and short, dark brown, barred wings. Their bodies are brown with a light throat and chest. They have dark eyes with a white/light streak extending from the eye area.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Northern Pintail<sup>73</sup>

*Anas acuta*

### Identification:

- ❖ Northern Pintails are long-necked ducks with a slender profile. In breeding males, the tail is long and pointed. The males have a brown head and stark white, grey and black all over. In flight, the wings are long and narrow and have a vibrant green bar across them. Females appear brown with patterned feathers and a darkish cap.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Northern Shoveler<sup>74</sup>

*Spatula clypeata*

### Identification:

- ❖ The male adults look like a Mallard due to its green head, but its large black bill and piercing yellow eyes sets it apart from the Mallard. Its colourings are slightly different too, appearing reddish-brown with more white and black contrasting details, minus the white collar a Mallard has. The female adults are brown and white with long orange bills and orange legs and feet. They also have a grey patch on their shoulders which set them apart.



**Fact:** The unique spoon-shaped bill of the Northern Shoveler works with small comb-like projections inside the bill to filter out food (like insects and small crustaceans) from the water. (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Peregrine Falcon<sup>75</sup>

*Falco peregrinus*

**Habitat:** Shorelines

### Identification:

- ❖ Peregrine Falcons are about the size of a crow, appearing greyish-brown and white, they look like they have lots of stripe patterns and have pointed wings and a long tail. They have a long wingspan and tail spread. The adult males are smaller than the females. You can find Peregrine Falcons perching or nesting on cliff faces in the north – or in on ledges on tall buildings in southern Manitoba cities, including Brandon and Winnipeg.



### SARA Status:

Peregrine Falcon anatum subspecies *Falco peregrinus anatum* (SARA Status: not listed)

Peregrine Falcon anatum/tundrius *Falco peregrinus anatum/tundrius* (SARA Status: special concern)

Peregrine Falcon pealei subspecies *Falco peregrinus pealei* (SARA Status: special concern)

Peregrine Falcon tundrius subspecies *Falco peregrinus tundrius* (SARA Status: not listed)

**ESA:** endangered

## Pied-billed Grebe<sup>76</sup>

*Podilymbus podiceps*

### Identification:

- ❖ A Pied-billed Grebe may be difficult to spot because it spends a lot of time diving or hidden in vegetation – but you can learn to recognize their call. They are small with dark to medium grey compact bodies and slender necks, big heads and short, thick beaks and almost no tail. During the spring and summer their crown and neck are dark and the throat is black. During breeding season their beaks are white with a black stripe, outside breeding season the beaks appear yellow to brown.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Purple Martin<sup>77</sup>

*Progne subis*

### Identification:

- ❖ Purple Martins are smaller than a Robin. They are dark purple to blue with iridescent shine and black tapered wings. Females have a grey chest and underbelly. Both male and female Purple Martins have small, slightly hooked black bills, short, forked tails and a recognizable shape in flight.



**Fact:** In Manitoba: Purple Martins nest exclusively in human-made bird houses. These houses often have multiple openings in the same house – like apartment-style living. (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019)

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Redhead<sup>78</sup>

*Aythya americana*

### Identification:

- ❖ A Redhead is named after the cinnamon-reddish head of the males. Redheads are roughly the size of Ring-necked Duck with a round head, large grey bill with black tips and golden eyes. They have a black chest, grey body, and black tail. Females are mostly brown, with a darker brown above, and lighter underneath, their eyes are black with a light beige face, grey bill with black outline and black tip.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



### Red-winged Blackbird (Zitkada/Zitkana sapa)<sup>79</sup>

*Agelaius phoeniceus*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** zeet-ka-da sa-pa (or Zeet-ka-na sa-pa)

**Translation:** Black bird – used contextually

**Habitat:** Marshy areas, ditches, pastures

**Elder Story:** You can see these birds sitting on long grass swaying in the wind. They are defensive birds so if you get close, they might attack. They tease and say “Po-hogidi”, [pronounced “po-ho-ghee-dee” meaning “your nose is dirty!”].

#### Identification:

- ❖ Red-winged Blackbirds are small-medium sized birds. The adult males are black with red and yellow shoulder spots. Females are dark brown with white streak patterns all over with a lighter underbelly and patch below their beak.

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



### Ring-necked Duck<sup>80</sup>

*Aythya collaris*

#### Identification:

- ❖ Ring-necked Ducks have a distinct head shape, almost cone-like. The adult males are black, with grey and white wings and yellow eyes. The females are a light to medium brown all over, with a lighter underbelly and light face, a brown cap, and brown eyes. Both male and female Ring-necked Ducks have greyish bills with a white base and white and black stripes near the tips.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed



## Ruddy Duck<sup>81</sup>

*Oxyura jamaicensis*

### Identification:

- ❖ The adult male Ruddy Duck is a small, cute, and almost cartoonish-looking duck. They often hold their stiff tail upright to create a unique silhouette that looks different from all other ducks. They have bright blue bills and black caps with white cheeks and rich brown bodies. In the winter however, they appear dull. Females and juveniles are a light, greyish brown colour with a dark cap and a stripe across their light cheeks.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Sandhill Crane (Pehan)<sup>82</sup>

*Antigone canadensis*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Pb-ay han

**Translation:** Crane

### Identification:

- ❖ Sandhill Cranes are big, tall birds with a long, skinny neck, long legs, and broad wings. Their thick bodies are grey with rusty orange to yellow highlights. Their heads are small with a grey cap, red eye mask, yellow eye and long straight black beak. In flight their wings look incredibly long and they fly with their neck and feet stretched out.



**SARA Status:** not at risk; **ESA:** not listed

### Sedge Wren<sup>83</sup>

*Cistothorus platensis*

**Habitat:** open woodlands, grasslands, and marshy areas

**Identification:**

- ❖ A very small wren, the Sedge Wren can be found in meadows, hayfields, and marshes, although they may not be there the following year because they move around a lot. The Sedge Wren has a round body, a striped back and wings made of browns, blacks, and whites, beige or whitish underbelly, and upright tail feathers.



**SARA Status:** not at risk; **ESA:** not listed

### Snow Goose<sup>84</sup>

*Anser caerulescens*

**Identification:**

- ❖ The Snow Goose is medium-sized goose with a thick bill and a long, thick neck. They can appear all white, all grey, or grey with white heads. There are variations of Snow Geese with pink bills with black “lips” and pink legs and feet, or more greyish-pink on darker geese.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

### Sora<sup>85</sup>

*Porzana carolina*

**Identification:**

- ❖ Sora’s are small, chickenlike birds about the size of a Robin. They are mostly brown above with grey underparts and long thick yellow legs and a short, upright tail. The males, females and juveniles have a black mask around their yellow beak, which is thick and looks big compared to their head size. Females and juveniles are lighter in colour and have less black colouring. You are more likely to hear a Sora than see one. Their call is a long whinny that starts off in a high pitch and moves downward.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Tundra Swan (Maga Ska)<sup>86</sup>

*Cygnus columbianus*

**Dakota Pronunciation:** Muh-gha ska

**Translation:** White goose

### Identification:

- ❖ Look for them in the wintertime or during the migration season. They look like geese, but are all white with black eyes, beaks, legs and feet. The juveniles appear whitish grey or beige and their beaks may be multi-coloured.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Willet<sup>87</sup>

*Tringa semipalmata*

### Identification:

- ❖ Willets are brown, white and grey pattern all over or can appear grey all over in the wintertime. Willets are about the size of a pigeon with long legs and thick, dark straight beaks. Their wings are broad and round and when in flight, you can see a bold white and black stripe across each wing.



**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## Wilson's Phalarope<sup>88</sup>

*Phalaropus tricolor*

### Identification:

- ❖ In most cases, males are brighter and more intricately patterned to attract females, with Wilson's Phalarope, the opposite is true. During the breeding season, females are more colourful than males – they are grey above with cinnamon or rusty highlights on the neck, a long black line extending from the beak, eye down to the base of their neck and bright white underneath. Females court males and males raise the young. Males and juveniles are more muted colours without the strong facial designs.



**Fact:** Phalaropes often spin around in circles in the water. The spinning pushes water away from the bird, and into the space comes water from below. This has the effect of forcing food up to the surface for the hungry phalarope to pick off (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019).

**SARA Status:** not listed; **ESA:** not listed

## 5.0 Species at Risk

Species at Risk (SAR) is a term used to describe species that are declining significantly over a long period of time and are therefore threatened with extinction. The State of the World's Birds (2018) estimates that 13% of the world's birds, a total of 1,469 species, are now threatened with extinction, and a further 9% (1,017 species) are near threatened (BirdLife International, 2018). That means one out of every eight bird species worldwide, is at risk, representing an increase of 40% since BirdLife International's first global assessment of threatened species in 1988. There are four bird Species at Risk which depend on the native prairies in or near Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. However, this is not an exhaustive list of SAR in the area.

### Chestnut-collared Longspur<sup>89</sup>

*Calcarius ornatus*

**Habitat:** Prairie Grasslands

#### Identification:

- ❖ The Chestnut-collared Longspur is similar in size to a sparrow. However, a breeding male has a black chest and belly, beige face and throat, and a chestnut collar/nape. Females and juveniles are light grey with soft streaks on the chest and dark cheek areas and dark streaks all over their body. All Chestnut-collared Longspurs have a distinctive tail which is mostly white with a black triangle in the center. Males in spring perform fluttering territorial displays in order to attract a female.
- ❖ The Chestnut-collared Longspur is a primary prairie endemic, meaning it only breeds on the Northern Great Plains (Manitoba Important Bird Areas Program). They rely on shortgrass and mixed-grass prairie with sparse, open vegetation to breed. You can find them in grazed or mowed grassland. They spend much of their time walking quietly among grasses foraging for food and nesting on the ground (often near a cow pie) in areas with slightly taller vegetation within their shortgrass habitat (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019).
- ❖ The main cause of their decline is habitat loss and degradation from converting natural land to crop farms and towns. The Chestnut-collared Longspur adapted to living on grazed land—originally by native species such as bison (aka buffalo), and now by livestock. Oil and gas development has also impacted their survival, because they tend to avoid areas which are regularly disturbed. If current rates of decline continue, Chestnut Collared Longspurs will lose another half of their population by the year 2037 (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019).



**SARA Status:** threatened; **ESA:** endangered



## Ferruginous Hawk<sup>90</sup>

*Buteo regalis*

**Habitat:** Prairie Grasslands

### Identification:

- ❖ Ferruginous Hawks have white underparts and rusty legs that form a V when the bird is soaring. They have rusty upperparts with pale heads. Immatures have varying amounts of brown spotting on the belly and legs. Rarer dark-morph Ferruginous Hawks are mostly a deep brown. Compared to other prairie hawks, the feathers on the legs (tarsi) of the Ferruginous Hawk stretches down to the feet.
- ❖ The Ferruginous Hawk is bigger than a Swainson's Hawk and smaller than a Golden Eagle (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019). It is a primary prairie endemic, meaning it only breeds on the Great Plains (Manitoba Important Bird Areas Program). The Ferruginous Hawk lives in open spaces in grasslands, prairie scrubs, and woodland edges, anywhere there are abundant rabbits, gophers, or prairie dogs. They can be seen soaring with their wings held slightly raised but with the wingtips held almost flat. They also turn into the wind and hover or kite in place as they hunt. They often hunt on the ground as well.
- ❖ The overall population of Ferruginous Hawks is a low conservation concern globally, but they are threatened in Canada. They are disappearing from the area around Sioux Valley. The decline in its breeding population was primarily due to changes to their nesting habitats, including conversion of grassland to grain crops, small mammal control, mining, and fire suppression (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019).



**Fact:** You can often see Ferruginous Hawks alone or in pairs. Courting pairs soar in wide circles and the male “sky dances” by repeatedly diving and ascending. The pair may then grasp beaks and talons and spiral toward the ground (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019).

**SARA Status:** threatened; **ESA:** endangered

## Loggerhead Shrike<sup>91</sup>

*Lanius ludovicianus*

**Habitat:** Prairie Grasslands with small areas of trees and shrubs, shelterbelts

### Identification:

- ❖ The Loggerhead Shrike is a small but predatory songbird. They are mostly grey with white underparts, black wings, a black mask and a thick black beak with a small hook. They are slender with long, rounded, black tails.
- ❖ Loggerhead Shrikes can be found in open country with shrubs and trees, or in shelterbelts adjacent to their favoured grassland foraging habitats. They nest in thorny trees which provides protection from predators, and a place to store food (see Loggerhead Shrike Fact). They also sometimes nest in brush piles or tumbleweeds and even the occasional cemetery. Before nesting, courting males sing to females, bring them food, perform a dance, and/or perform a flight display.
- ❖ Loggerhead Shrikes are a secondary prairie species, meaning they are birds which spend a proportion of their lifecycle in grasslands, in this case, breeding in trees but feeding in prairies (Manitoba Important Bird Areas Program). They are still numerous in some areas, but their populations have taken a steep decline which coincides with the introduction and increased use of chemical pesticides (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019). Other likely causes for their decline are habitat loss and degradation from farmlands and urban development, impacting the amount of available food for them. With their high breeding potential, Loggerhead Shrikes may still recover.



**Fact:** A Loggerhead Shrike is a skilled predator hunting from utility poles, fence posts and other perches, preying on insects, birds, and small mammals. They can kill and carry an animal as big as itself, transporting large prey in its feet and smaller victims in its beak. They may even skewer their kills on thorns or barbed wire or wedge them into tight places for easy eating. (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019).

### SARA Status:

Loggerhead Shrike migrans subspecies *Lanius ludovicianus migrans* (SARA status: endangered)

Loggerhead Shrike excubitorides subspecies *Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides* (SARA status: threatened)

**ESA:** endangered

## Sprague's Pipit<sup>92</sup>

*Anthus spragueii*

**Habitat:** Grasslands

### Identification:

- ❖ Sprague's Pipit is a small ground-nesting songbird with an upright stance. They are a mix of browns and beige with a short, thin beak, large dark eyes, and relatively long legs for its size. It is rare to see these shy birds on the ground where they hide in tall tussocks of grass. The male performs his spring song in flight over the prairie (see Sprague's Pipit Fact).
- ❖ Sprague's Pipit is a primary prairie endemic, meaning it only breeds on the Northern Great Plains (Manitoba Important Bird Areas Program). They nest in mixed-grass prairie and in lightly grazed rangeland and pasture in vegetation no more than 6–12 inches tall (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019). The presence of nesting Sprague's Pipits in a pasture shows that livestock grazing is benefitting wildlife (Manitoba Important Bird Areas Program).
- ❖ According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, if current rates of decline continue, Sprague's Pipit will lose another 50% of its population by 2043. Their decline is due to the conversion of prairie to cropland and pastures. Studies indicate that limited livestock grazing is beneficial to Sprague's Pipits, which evolved in an environment grazed by plains bison (also known as buffalo) (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019). Grazing limits the growth of shrubs and stimulates new growth of grasses, excessive grazing however, eliminates the pipit's habitat. Conservation of large areas of native grasslands is key for the survival of Sprague's Pipit (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019).



**Fact:** Male Sprague's Pipit mark their territory in part with song flights, performed up to 300 feet in the air over a relatively small (less than a quarter-acre) area and maintain it by chasing neighboring males in flight (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2019).

**SARA Status:** threatened; **ESA:** threatened

## 6.0 Grasslands

*“Temperate grasslands are one of the world’s great biomes, occupying 8% of the earth’s surface. However, after cradling human needs for centuries they are the most endangered, the most altered, and yet the least protected biome on the planet.”*

– Bob Peart, Temperate Grasslands Conservation Initiative (TCGI) (Manitoba Important Bird Areas Program)

More must be done to protect prairie grasslands. There are 42 bird species in North America that breed solely on grasslands (Manitoba Important Bird Areas Program). That means their survival as a species is directly linked to the state of the grassland ecosystems. According to the *Landowners’ Guide to Grassland Bird Conservation* written by the Manitoba Important Birds Area Program, in the Great Plains alone, 97% of tallgrass prairie, 71% of mixed grass prairie, and 48% shortgrass prairie had been lost by 2003, with much remaining areas of native prairies degraded. Within Manitoba, there is a mixture of (mostly) mixed-grass prairie (10% remaining in Manitoba) and tallgrass prairie (4% in Manitoba) (Manitoba Important Bird Areas Program). Climate change is also impacting grasslands, causing increased extreme weather events, further declines in food supplies, droughts, and decreased breeding success among birds.

### What are grasslands?

Grassland ecosystems are created and maintained by natural processes and features. There are 7 primary factors which might do this:

- Grazing patterns (of bison or “buffalo” pre-colonization and livestock, post-colonization);
- Fire cycles;
- Climate (moderate rainfall and temperature);
- Types of grass (Main mixed-grass species include wheatgrass, spear grass, little bluestem, and blue grama; main tallgrass species include big bluestem, little bluestem, and Indian grass);
- Soil type;
- Tree and shrub distribution; and,
- Physical factors (mountain ranges, forest expanse).

The two primary drivers throughout the history of grassland ecosystems have been natural fire and the grazing of large herds of bison (Manitoba Important Bird Areas Program).

### What can be done to support grasslands ecosystems?

The eradication of bison (also called buffalo), was a tactic used by colonizers to starve and assimilate the Dakota people and other Indigenous peoples of the Great Plains, while also preparing the land for westward expansion. The eradication of bison and creation of permanent settlements (e.g. farms, reserves, towns and cities) altered the land so incredibly, it can be difficult to imagine there is anything we can do to protect and save the remaining grasslands. There are things we can do to help however, and in turn save the birds that rely on the grasslands for their survival. Their survival also helps us – for example, a single swallow can eat up to 1000 mosquitos a day and other grassland birds eat insects, pests, and rodents (Manitoba Important Bird Areas Program). Here are some examples of how we can save grassland habitats.

- Prescribed burning: halts woody growth from encroaching; increases grass diversity (not the year following, but 2 years after prescribed burn); prevents larger, more uncontrollable

fires later; and improves habitats for many birds. Prescribed burning should be done in the springtime (easier to control and when birds aren't nesting) or in the fall (after the breeding season). Fall burns produce more flowering plants and grasses, while spring burns remove more woody vegetation and help perennial grass species that grow late in the season and provide better forage. Burning should occur over several years or decades in small amounts at a time.

- Mowing shrubs: threatened bird species in our area avoid shrubby areas. Be careful to leave some thorny shrubs to mature into trees for Loggerhead Shrikes.
- Bring in bison/ cattle grazing: bison and cattle need grassland birds as much as grassland birds need them. Bison need to be "rotated" to new areas for better foraging and nutrition/ enhanced feed. Rotating helps produce better feed in areas.
- Square shaped fields: increased field edges (rectangular shapes) draw in more predatory animals and scares the birds away from making a habitat there, keep shrubs at the field's edge to provide shelter for livestock. Shrubs can be kept near the edge of fields to provide shelter for livestock, while leaving open habitat for birds in the center of fields. Some bird species are also habitat size-sensitive, meaning they need patches of grassland of a certain size to be successful during the nesting season.
- Hay later: haying is not bad for birds as long as it does not occur during nesting season.
- Ward off invasive species.
- Avoid building oil and gas infrastructure in the centre of grasslands.

We can also support the survival of grasslands birds by controlling the amount of wild or loose cats and dogs in our communities, which hunt and kill birds and may scare them away from ideal nesting areas.



## 7.0 References & Photo Credits

### References

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The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. (2019). (C. University, Producer) Retrieved from All About Birds: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/>

The following are links to additional information about the birds referenced in the Dakota Field Guide & Storybook. The numbers correspond to the numbers referenced beside each bird name.

1. [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American\\_Goldfinch](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Goldfinch)
2. [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Barn\\_Swallow](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Barn_Swallow)
3. [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-billed\\_Magpie](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-billed_Magpie)
4. <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Bobolink>
5. [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brewers\\_Blackbird](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brewers_Blackbird)
6. [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brown-headed\\_Cowbird](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Brown-headed_Cowbird)
7. [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Clay-colored\\_Sparrow](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Clay-colored_Sparrow)
8. [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Common\\_Grackle](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Common_Grackle)
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CENTRE FOR INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

P.O. Box 26092 RPO Maryland  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 3R3

[yourcier.org](http://yourcier.org)  
[earth@yourcier.org](mailto:earth@yourcier.org)

