



We've been pretty busy trying to monitor all our wetland sites before wetland activity kicks into high gear here in June. The mountain sites are still too cold to bring out the amphibians, but are supporting small number of ducks. Most sites in the prairies have very little water in them or have dried up already. The larger Prairie Potholes are supporting aquatic life, as well as, important stopover sites for migrating waterfowl that are breeding, nesting and feeding before they head into the central flyway.

We have Marie Bigby, Wetland Technican, back to assist me in the field, her knowledge in databases is an asset to our program, and inputting all out field data from the last two years into an Access Database is needed. Thanks to Francis Cochran for his specialized field methods on capturing amphibians, on wetland site, including, Robert "Bobcat" Azure and his snake handling ability.

Amphibian Surveys are coming along just fine, we identified adult Boreal Chorus Frogs, Northern Leopard Frogs and Plains Garter Snakes at several sites this spring already. On Tuesday, May 17, we discovered and captured some Boreal Chorus Frog Tadpoles, so these species are already beginning to develop. They are about the size of a BB from a pellet gun. Other sites where we could not see them, we can identify them from their calls they make.

Bird Surveys are getting good results also. The first ducks of the year usually are the, Northern Pintail, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Pelicans and Canada Geese. A few weeks later other species of ducks arrive, such as the Bufflehead, Horned Grebe, Ruddy Duck, Redhead Duck, Canvas Back and American Coot. It was interesting to find out that the shorebird species arrived later in the spring, after the ducks. Shorebird species identified were the Willet, American Avocet, Wilsons Phalarope, Marbled Godwit and Longbilled Curlew.

This past week we have identified the Western Grebe and Blackcrowned Night Heron. We also identified Birds of Prey, like the Osprey, Northern Harrier, Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle, Ferruginous, Prairie and Rough legged Hawks. Mortalities occured above the shoreline, where female ducks are nesting, evidence are broken eggs shells, duck carcasses, and predators that are seen in the area.

I have been invited to give a presentation of my work on wetlands, at the National River Rally to be held on May 20-24, 2005 at the Keystone Resort west of Denver Colorado. It will be interesting to see what kind of ski resort is there, so I better sharpen up my ski's.

I am involved in a steering committee made up of peers in the wetland field to plan a National Conference of our own which will be held in Denver Colorado in October. It will be called the Western Wetland Conference and involves 17 states in our arid and semi-arid region. Right now we are contacting speakers to give presentations at the conference, and the three main themes of the conference will be, Strategies for Wetland Protection, Gathering and Using Information and Water Variability and Considerations in the Arid and Semi-Arid West. The Montana Watercourse is organizing the conference, along with our multi-state, multi-sector steering committee.

From June 5-10, 2005, I will be attending the Society of Wetland Scientists, Annual Conference in Charleston, South Carolina. The Theme will be: Ecological, Landscape, and Regulatory Interactions in a Changing World. This geographic area contains by far, the largest extent of wetlands in the conterminus United States. The coastal plain is the last great place for trapping, storage, and transformations of sediment and nutrients before reaching critical estuarine habitats. Human alterations of landscapes have directly destroyed or impacted these wetlands, necessitating the need for innovative management and regulatory protection.

Our Fort Belknap Wetlands Program, has also been involved with the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, in Billings, Montana, to conduct some bird nesting surveys. Jim Hansen and Allison Puchniak, are the Native Species Coordinators and will be bringing two interns with them for a few weeks to assist in nesting surveys at selected wetland sites on the reservation.

Last year we collaborated with the North Dakota State University, on performing vegetative assessments on the prairie wetlands, and have just received the finished report developed from the field work performed last summer, by Shawn Dekeysier, Research Specialist, and his intern Christine Melass. Their knowledge of some of the prairie plants helped us a great deal, as we also helped them with some species, as well.

We have been contacted by the Montana Water Center in Bozeman, to see if we would like to work with them on related wetland projects. The Water Center has worked on the Whirling Disease Initiative and Wild Trout Initiative Projects, and we will be keeping in touch to find worthwhile projects that will benefit the people of the Fort Belknap Community. They have funding that can be used on wetland related projects. \$\$\$\$\$

Well that's all for now, as you can see we will be pretty busy this coming summer.