



Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer Job Description

Title: Midewin Bird Monitor

Purpose: All ecological monitors at Midewin play a vital role in monitoring various species and habitats throughout restored and remnant habitats at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. The data collected by volunteers is used to evaluate management needs and effectiveness, resulting in better ecological management practices. Bird monitors help directly with part one of our mission to conserve, restore, and enhance the native populations and habitats of fish, wildlife, and plants.

Duties and Responsibilities: Designated areas will be assigned and monitors will be asked to survey the area 3-5 times over the breeding season (mid-May to mid-July). Monitors will record all bird species they recognize by sight or song. Monitors must do their best to cover the entire assigned area, which could be up to 300 acres. Care should be taken to avoid double counting birds. A new data sheet must be filled out for each visit. Digital photos of any unknown birds may be emailed to Midewin's Ecologist, Bill Glass for identification. Data sheets and hours of service must be submitted to the volunteer coordinator at the end of monitoring season.

Department and Location: Under the direction of Midewin's Ecologist, volunteer time and data is contributed to Midewin's Restoration Team. Assigned monitoring areas may be anywhere within Midewin's property of 19,000 acres.

Qualifications: Monitors must have some experience with bird identification and provide their own binoculars. Being able to identify birds by song isn't necessary, but is helpful. Over time you'll get know the birds by both sight and sound. Birds are most active during morning hours, so monitors should be available in between sunrise and 10am. Monitors are responsible for their own transportation. This type of work is often easier and safer with a partner, so this should be highly considered (especially for monitors without a cell phone).

Time Commitment: Monitors gain more experience every year and therefore data gets more thorough and accurate, so a multiple year commitment is preferred but not required. Monitors are asked to survey their assigned area 3-5 times over the breeding season (mid-May to mid-July). These surveys should be spread over the full season. Monitors seem to spend 1-3 hours each visit in order to thoroughly cover their area.

Training: All monitors are required to complete the in-house orientation that will cover safety, protocols, and available training materials. This usually takes place in early May. New monitors may choose to partner with a more experienced monitor until they are comfortable taking on an area of their own. However this program was designed to accommodate a 'learn as you go' approach, so amateurs are certainly welcome.

Good resources for bird songs on the internet include:

<http://www.birdjam.com/learn.php>, recorded by Lang Elliott, the primary bird song recorder for the Eastern Stokes Guide

<http://www.naturesongs.com/birds.html> North American Bird Sounds

<http://sirismm.si.edu/testperl/nasongkey.pl> Guide to North American Bird Songs and Sounds

Working Conditions/Physical Effort: *Monitors are covered by the Volunteer Agreement (Form 301a) only while monitoring birds on their assigned area, or assisting another bird monitor, during breeding bird season.*

Monitors may work in variable conditions including:

- Exposure to outdoor weather conditions & allergens
- Walking on uneven ground and/or tall vegetation
- May be working near hazardous plants or insects

Benefits: Working outside is a pleasant activity and is very therapeutic. Volunteer monitors further the citizen scientist movement by contributing valuable data. Monitors can observe long-term progress towards the ecological restoration of Midewin. Midewin's volunteer staff receives ongoing recognition from their supervisor and other staff. Volunteers that contribute 6 or more hours are invited to an annual volunteer recognition banquet in November. Midewin's volunteer staff receives the bimonthly Prairie Telegraph. Volunteers may be featured in the telegraph, newspaper articles and/or US Forest Service success stories. Awards can be received for outstanding, innovative and/or long term, core volunteers.

Related Opportunities to inquire about include:

- The annual One Day Bird Blitz which takes place in mid June between 6am – Noon.
Space is limited in the following bird surveys because only small teams are necessary:
- A point count survey of grassland birds takes place over the course of three consecutive days in early June from 6:00am-Noon. As a group, monitors record all bird sightings and songs within a range at designated points.
- The Upland Sandpiper and Loggerhead Shrike surveys take place over the course of 2 ½ days in May (between 6am – Noon)

Please contact the Volunteer Coordinator about this opportunity.