



Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer Position 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 for identification. Volunteer hours must be entered online in Volgistics *after each individual survey within 48 hours*. Paper data sheets 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 very helpful. Over time you'll get to know the birds by both sight and song. Birds are most active during morning hours, so monitors must be available between sunrise and 10am in order for data to be comparable and consistent. Monitors are responsible for their own transportation. This work is easier and safer with a partner and 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 at the Welcome Center. Additional responsibilities could become applicable or available to this position in the future that might require additional training and/or certification. These additional responsibilities will be determined by the program managers and offered to selected volunteers. New monitors will be partnered with an experienced monitor for the first season. New monitors need to keep in mind they will be coordinating schedules with their experienced partner(s).

Smart phone Apps are available such as the Audubon Birds, Peterson Birds, iBird Pro, Sibley eGuide, etc. with information and recorded mating calls.

Resources are on Midewin's bird monitor webpage <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/midewin/workingtogether/volunteering/?cid=stelprdb5365263>

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) while performing duties described by this position description during the season(s) listed or scheduled shifts.* Monitors must read, sign and consent to the U.S. Forest Service Job Hazard Analysis, which includes emergency plans, safety requirements and recommended best practices. 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 insect.

Benefits: Working outside is a pleasant activity and is very therapeutic. Volunteer monitors contribute valuable data and 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 three or more individual volunteer visits in the fiscal year will receive an invitation 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.
- 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)
- **Lead Bird Monitors** have additional responsibilities that can include leading communication throughout the season, announcing position related off-site training opportunities or presentations, training new monitors, organizing data and/or writing short articles.