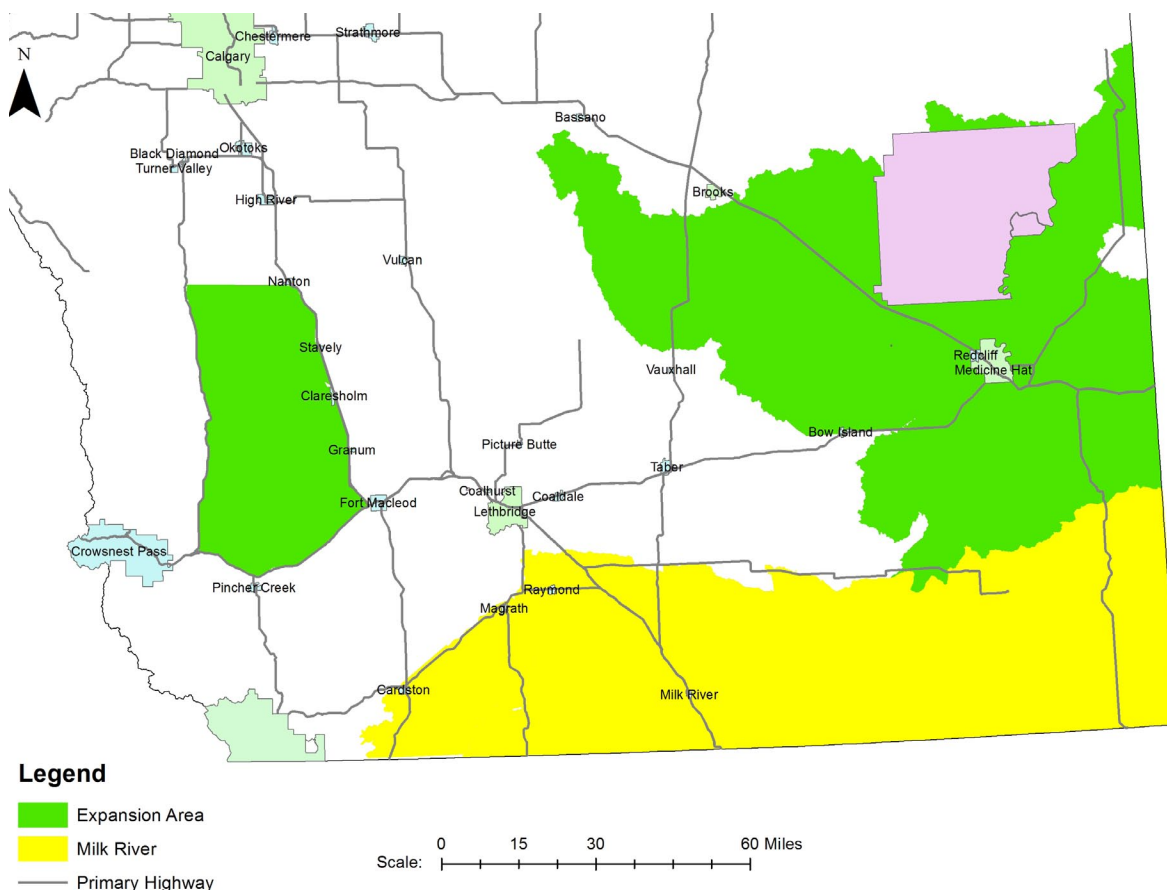


MULTISAR is Growing!

The MULTISAR Program has always recognized the valuable role that cattle ranchers play in maintaining our native grasslands and the species that call those grasslands home. Without a strong cattle industry, much of our native grasslands would be under greater threat of fragmentation and loss, which in turn would place greater pressures on the species that rely on them. That is why in 2016, MULTISAR was pleased to expand the program into two additional areas of the province: one a large area around Medicine Hat, and the other between Highway 2 and Highway 22 around the Porcupine Hills (see map below). This expansion was made possible due to support from the Canadian Cattlemen's Association through funding they received from the Species at Risk Partnership on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL) program from Environment and Climate Change Canada. It also brought together additional partners, including Cows and Fish, Alberta Beef Producers, and the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef. Members of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Alberta Beef Producers, and Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef now sit on MULTISAR's advisory board and meet twice a year.

Expansion into the South Saskatchewan River Basin will allow MULTISAR to collaborate with additional producers and provide them with the same tools and opportunities that producers in the Milk River Watershed have had since 2004. These tools include detailed range health assessments, riparian health assessments (via Cows and Fish), wildlife assessments, as well as funding to implement on the ground enhancements that can benefit both wildlife habitat and the ranching operation. Two new biologists, Adam Moltzahn and Megan Jensen, have been hired to work with producers in the new areas and will play key roles in the expansion. Producers interested in learning more about the MULTISAR program can contact the Program Coordinators Brad Downey (403) 382-4364 or Katheryn Taylor (403) 381-5318.



Journal entries

Adam Moltzahn - *With the financial assistance of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, MULTISAR was able to expand into the South Saskatchewan watershed and work collaboratively with those ranchers on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. Although challenging at times, the opportunity to hear, see, and identify new songbirds on these western properties was a rewarding experience.*



Megan Jensen - *As another field season wraps up, I can't stop thinking about what a wonderful summer the MULTISAR team has had. With the addition of two new wildlife seasonals, and two new wildlife biologists, of which I am included, this has been a dynamic, fun filled summer. Staying in field camp always leads to the most interesting of times. Lots of laughter, games, and of course hard work. In the past, we have stayed in some unique places that we shared with furry friends or trailers that needed a stick because the toilet just wouldn't flush sometimes (don't ask). We have always made the best of what we had and enjoyed our time together. This summer, we were extra lucky! The field camp was actually a beautiful home nestled in a valley that was surrounded by rolling native grass coulees. Situated beside this field "camp" is a creek that slowly flowed by adding to the ambiance of our new living quarters. The sunsets were amazing.*



Despite this tranquility, we still had surveys to do, it wasn't all relaxing. The drive to our field site was around an hour and a half on a two track grass trail. The MULTISAR team always finds ways to be competitive and this enables us to do the very best we can. Everyday we asked each other who found what and we would analyze who the luckiest team member was. I still remember the day that Adam Moltzahn, the other new biologist, struts into our home after surveys and shows his winnings for the day proclaiming he had found "the best and the longest snake skin!" Well, it wasn't even five minutes later that Colin Starkevich, one of our wonderful wildlife seasonals, came waltzing in with what he also believed to be the best and biggest snake skin. They both beamed with pride thinking they had successfully beat each other out. That's when it was time to measure up and see who the best man, so to speak, was in this situation! I don't think we could decide who's snake skin was "better", but what we could decide is how blessed we are each and everyday we get the honour to work in Alberta's native prairies that is still ripe with diversity and wildlife.

of a biologist

Kristen Rumbolt Miller - *My most memorable moment from the 2016 field season happened on a landholder property in the Porcupine Hills. One morning, my co-worker, Megan, and I were standing quietly at a survey location, readying ourselves to start our survey by tuning our ears into what birds were singing around us. We were standing on a large hill and in the valley below, Megan noticed what we thought were deer standing in the grass. Looking through my binoculars to confirm that the figures were in fact mule deer, I was shocked to instead see three cougars, a mother with two kittens that looked to be almost fully grown. What was more amazing was that they were completely oblivious to our presence, at least for a moment, before I used louder than intended choice words to announce to Megan that what we were looking at weren't in fact deer. As I did this, I watched as the mother cougar turned and looked at us! My heart raced, knowing that we had been seen and wondering what her move was going to be. I felt relieved when she moved away and disappeared into the trees, with her kittens in tow. Having never before seen a cougar, seeing three at once was a treat I won't soon forget.*



Kristen Rumbolt Miller

Adam Moltzahn - *With MULTISAR's expansion into the South Saskatchewan watershed, our team had the opportunity to work several early mornings in areas adjacent to the mountains. At these properties, we saw wildlife, plants, and landscapes found nowhere else in southern Alberta. However, we also got to experience random and frequent weather system changes, such as gentle breezes to hurricane-like winds and from sunny skies to snowfall, within a matter of minutes. Based on a first time mistake, I learned quickly to pack the gloves, toque, and extra layers when working near the mountains, especially in May and June.*



Adam Moltzahn

Meet our Staff

Megan Jensen

Megan Jensen has been a member of the MULTISAR team since 2011, she started as a seasonal Wildlife Technician while attending Lethbridge College. After completing her diploma in Renewable Resource Management, she began pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree with Athabasca University. During this time, she continued to work with us throughout the summers and then accepted a 6 month contract from October 2015- March 2016 with Alberta Conservation Association's Pronghorn Project. As of April 2016, Megan is one of two new Wildlife Biologists to join the MULTISAR team on a full time basis. Despite not having a rural background, she fully appreciates Alberta's native prairies and the inextricably intertwined relationship they have with the ranching community.



Adam Moltzahn

Adam Moltzahn is a wildlife biologist for the MULTISAR program with the Alberta Conservation Association. He worked seasonally on MULTISAR during the summers of 2010 and 2011, but started working as a full-time, permanent biologist since April of 2016. Along with his older brother Lee, Adam was raised in the small, rural community of Nobleford where he would spend his summers camping, hiking, and fishing in the nearby Rockies. Nowadays, Adam continues to go fishing, camping, and hiking, but he loves to travel, snowboard, and spend his time outdoors as much as possible. Adam feels privileged to be a part the MULTISAR team and to be working collaboratively with landholders in the South Saskatchewan watershed.



Katheryn Taylor

Katheryn Taylor obtained a Masters of Science degree in Biology from the University of Lethbridge on the effects of cattle grazing on riparian song birds. Since that time, she has had the opportunity to work on various projects being conducted by researchers at the University of Lethbridge, has had the benefit of working with Cows and Fish as a riparian health technician (and developing plant ID skills!), and finally, in developing a deeper understanding of the issues facing native prairies and the many wonderful people working to save them as the coordinator for the Alberta Prairie Conservation Forum (PCF). Katheryn first learned about MULTISAR through the PCF, and when the opportunity arose to become part of the team in 2015, she jumped at the chance. Katheryn grew up in Lethbridge, and has a deep appreciation of the prairie landscape and the people who live and work in it.





S h o w m e t h e m o n e y !



Shining the spotlight on financial incentives for environmental projects on agricultural land

In the Spotlight: Growing Forward 2

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AF) are offering agricultural producers financial assistance (33-75% of the cost) through 25 different programs. Many of them require you to have an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) before you apply but the EFP process has been simplified to make this step easier. Two programs that are especially relevant to ranchers are summarized below:

On-Farm Stewardship Program

Eligible projects include riparian area fencing and management, watering systems, wetland restoration, wintering site relocation, shelterbelt establishment and pesticide management, among others. You can begin work once you have applied but there is no guarantee you will be reimbursed.

On-Farm Water Management Program

First you have to develop an approved Long-Term Water Management Plan with an AF Water Specialist (no cost) that will identify water sources and other opportunities such as water meters, well decommissioning, well pit conversions and water well depth measuring equipment. Then you can complete your project and apply for reimbursement of funds (33-50% of costs).

For more details visit:

www.growingforward.alberta.ca/GF2Search/index.htm?role=Farmer-Rancher-Producer

In the Spotlight: Ducks Unlimited Canada

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) offers assistance and incentives to landowners in the grasslands and aspen parkland regions of southern and central Alberta where the presence of wetlands and native lands are part and parcel of your operation. Their field specialists can assess your farm or ranch to determine whether you will qualify for a combination of direct incentives like conservation easements, wetland restoration services, and rangeland services. DUC also offers a series of extension opportunities like on-farm wildlife planning services, forage seed incentives and winter cereals programs and incentives.

For more information visit www.ducks.ca/resources/landowners/ or call 1-866-479-3825

Check out our new video!

In 2016, MULTISAR took a film crew out to show not only what MULTISAR does and why we do it, but also to showcase some of our cooperator's ranches and the rich native biodiversity (of both plants and wildlife) that exist on them. These ranches are perfect examples of how well cattle, people, and wildlife can co-exist while maintaining healthy native grasslands at the same time.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhRoRkAG_kk

Species Profile: Ord's Kangaroo Rat

Description: The Ord's Kangaroo Rat is a nocturnal rodent similar in size to the pet store gerbil, but unrelated to the Norway rat. Named after its kangaroo-style of locomotion, this small mammal hops away from predators on its large hind limbs. From spring to fall, the kangaroo rat emerges from its burrow at night to search for mates and to collect plant seeds to be consumed at a later time. In the winter, the kangaroo rat remains underground and will undergo torpor; which involves a metabolic rate and body temperature reduction in response to food cache depletion in the burrow. In general, kangaroo rats in Alberta do not live beyond one year¹.

Status: The Ord's Kangaroo Rat is currently listed under the Alberta General Status program as At Risk, and listed as Endangered under the province's Wildlife Act. Under the federal Species at Risk Act, the kangaroo rat is also listed as Endangered. Seasonal and annual fluctuations in population size is common for this species due to high mortality and high birth rates¹.

Habitat: Ord's Kangaroo Rats rely heavily on natural habitats such as blowouts, active sand dunes, and open, grassy areas with sandy soils and scrubby vegetation cover. However, this rodent will utilize man-made sites, including fireguards, fallow fields, and roads, where sandy soils are exposed and vegetation cover is limited¹.

Threats: The stabilization of sand dune habitats by native and non-native vegetation creates less than ideal open, sandy habitats. Natural predation and starvation during the winter months can cause further declines of a naturally fluctuating population. Activities associated with industrial development could lead to habitat degradation, rat mortality, and changes in rat behaviour. The conversion of sandy habitats into cropland is unlikely, but remains a possibility¹.

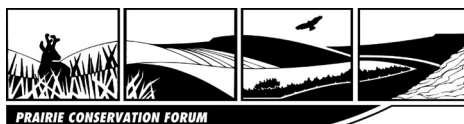
Beneficial Management Practices for Ord's Kangaroo Rat:

- Moderately graze active sand dunes, blowouts, and other sandy habitats annually to remove some vegetation cover and to prevent the stabilization of sandy soils.
- Avoid the use of pesticides, herbicides, and other chemicals in areas occupied by kangaroo rats.
- Avoid cultivating sandy habitats, and reduce the use of heavy machinery near kangaroo rat burrows.
- Reduce all night-time traffic, artificial light, noise, and other activities in areas near or inhabited by kangaroo rats².

Find out more about Ord's Kangaroo Rat, threats, and current recovery efforts by reviewing the Alberta Ord's Kangaroo Rat Recovery Plan 2013-2018 at <http://aep.alberta.ca/>.

1 Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. 2013. Alberta Ord's Kangaroo Rat Recovery Plan, 2013-2018. Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Species at Risk Recovery Plan No. 31. Edmonton, AB. 23 pp.

2 Kissner, K.J. 2009. Beneficial Management Practices for Ord's Kangaroo Rats in Alberta. Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Fish and Wildlife Division, Alberta Species at Risk Report No. 125. Edmonton, AB. 42 pp.



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