

# Calling Birders And Naturalists

## Come join the Prairie and Parkland Marsh Monitoring Program

The seemingly countless marshes that characterize the Prairie Provinces are the primary reason for the region being identified as the most important waterfowl production area within North America. Naturally, the region is also valuable to a host of other wetland-associated birds. In the past century, there have been extensive landscape-level changes which have resulted in the widespread loss and degradation of wetland habitats. In response to habitat conservation needs, the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture (PHJV) was established in the late 1980s to provide leadership to achieve healthy and diverse bird populations through conservation partnerships.

To improve conservation efforts for several species of wetland-associated birds, we need to improve our knowledge of species distribution, and patterns of species occupancy in relation to habitat characteristics. In partnership with the PHJV, Bird Studies Canada (BSC) began the Prairie & Parkland Marsh Monitoring Program (PPMMP) in 2008. Support is generously provided by: Ducks Unlimited Canada, Environment Canada, The Institute for Wetland and Waterfowl Research, Manitoba Sustainable Development Innovations Fund, and Wildlife Habitat Canada. In Manitoba there are active study locations near the following communities: Cardale, Erickson, Fairfax, Pope and Wawanesa. We hope to expand to 7 other communities in southwest Manitoba in the future.

### ***Opportunities exist to participate with the program as a marsh bird monitor!***

BSC is seeking enthusiastic individuals that have bird identification skills to conduct marsh bird surveys at these locations. Marsh monitoring is a fun activity that gives people an opportunity to experience a group of birds that are often overlooked.

***Thank YOU for helping us to better understand marsh birds!***

*Soras (right) are commonly encountered during marsh bird surveys.*



Marsh bird surveys involve recording all birds detected during a 15-minute period at a specified survey location. Participants will survey a route of ~6-8 survey stations, which in most cases will require walking a few kilometers over uneven terrain. Marsh birds are most active during the morning and evening, so surveys are conducted between sunrise and 10am or between 6pm and sunset to coincide with peak bird activity. The survey targets 10 focal species (including rails, bitterns, and grebes), but many other wetland-associated birds are documented. Participants need to be able to identify 60 species of birds by sight and ~60% of these birds by sound.

Training materials will be provided, but some prior experience with bird identification is necessary. Surveys are conducted between May 22<sup>nd</sup> and June 31<sup>st</sup>. Participation in this program can require as little as 12 hours per year, but we encouraged folks to do as many surveys as they wish.

***To participate, or to simply learn more about the program, please contact Katherine Brewster at:***

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