

What can we do to increase our Sage Grouse Populations while preserving our Western Heritage? Read below: *A brief internet review.*

Wildlife group wants ravens declared pests

Last Updated: Wednesday, April 15, 2009 | 1:14 PM CT [Comments33](#)[Recommend8](#)

[CBC News](#)



The raven population in Saskatchewan is

growing, experts say. (CBC)

Ravens may be renowned in poetry, horror movies and aboriginal folklore, but in Saskatchewan they're not getting much love these days.

Rural communities, trappers and the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation are lobbying the province to take the crow-like birds off the list of protected species and declared pests.

That would allow people to kill ravens, the same way they are currently allowed to kill crows, magpies and gophers.

Those who consider the raven's pests note the bird's population is up and they are destroying crops. There are also complaints they're damaging fur-bearing animals in traps and could be injuring livestock.

"There are lots of stories of ravens poking at the eyes of newborns and that sort of thing," said Darrell Crabbe, a spokesman for the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation.

The SWF has repeatedly asked the province to take ravens off the protected species list, but the province has refused, saying there's not enough evidence the birds are doing damage, Crabbe said.

However, studies have shown that ravens are just as harmful or even more harmful than crows to ground-dwelling birds, Crabbe said.

"They're a very, very intelligent bird and take advantage of every opportunity and start to prey specifically on ground-nesting birds," he said. "Obviously their numbers have increased dramatically and we should be taking steps to control those population levels." Farmers can now

get special permits to kill ravens, but only if the birds are doing significant damage to livestock or crops.

Note: Scientists around the world recognize that Ravens are major predators of ground-nesting birds. US scientists recognize they prey on Sage Grouse Nests. Why are we protecting them and now considering protecting Sage Grouse?

Read more:

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/saskatchewan/story/2009/04/15/ravens.html#ixzz0jCGiMBNA>

Scottish Natural Heritage Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

The Northern Raven

What can be done about raven predation on lambs in Scotland?

Management measures are the most effective means of deterring raven predation. This means, where possible, housing ewes giving birth, or close shepherding in lambing parks. Lambing on the open hill or unattended lambing parks, is more likely to lead to problems. Under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981), licenses can be issued to take a small number of birds that are causing serious damage. The licensing authority is Scottish Government Rural Inspection Payments Division (SGRIPD). Applications should be made to the local agricultural office. For other reasons, either Scottish Government or, in some cases, SNH may be the licensing authority.

Hungry ravens kill fourteen calves in central Sweden

Published: 13 May 09 15:19 CET

An aggressive conspiracy of ravens is wreaking havoc on farmers in central Sweden, having killed more than a dozen animals in the last 3 months.

Note: if Ravens are killing lambs in Scotland and baby calves in Sweden aren't they probably killing infant Deer and Antelope in the US?

THREATENED TORTOISES FACE RISING DANGER FROM PEOPLE.

Ravens are a culprit along with man. Only about five out of 100 tortoise hatchlings will survive to adulthood. The young tortoises have thin shells and are vulnerable to a growing raven population.

Note: this article out of California shows another protected species being preyed on by an uncontrolled Raven population. Actually there are many articles concerned about tortoise predation by Ravens.

Migratory bird treaty act

Our current migratory bird treaty act is actually a compilation of four different treaties. The treaties are between US/Canada (December 8, 1916), US/Mexico (March 15, 1937 and then again **March 10, 1972**), US/Japan (September 19, 1974) and US/USSR (October 31, 1978). Each one protected different types of birds. Raptors were added as a whole on the amendment to the treaty with Mexico, which became in effect on March 10, 1972

So, in 1972 the Raven became a protected species. Isn't that about when we noticed our Sage Grouse populations were starting to decline? Note that this was also when Hawks were protected. We have many more hawks in the last 40 years!

Common Raven

Diet

Adult ravens have a varied diet. They will eat a wide number of foods, including insects, berries, fruit, **other birds** **eggs**, dead animals, wolf or dog feces, and human-produced foods such as bread. They also may kill small birds and mammals, including young rabbits and rats, but do so mainly as opportunists.

Nesting

Much Raven behavior is related to mating and reproduction. Juveniles begin to court at a very early age, but may not bond for another 2-3 years. Aerial acrobatics and displays of intelligence and ability to provide food are key behaviors of courting Ravens. Once paired, Ravens tend to nest together for life, usually in the same location. The pair will build a nest on a cliff ledge or a tall tree (or a building ledge in cities).

Breeding pairs must have a territory of their own before they begin nest-building and reproduction, and the territory and its food resources will be defended against others. The nest is made of large sticks and twigs lined with a softer material, such as deer fur. The female will lay from three to seven pale bluish-green, brown-blotched eggs. Both parents keep the eggs warm, and take turns feeding the chicks. As with many birds, pairing does not necessarily mandate sexual monogamy, and raven habits show fluidity in this regard.

Note: can the eggs be destroyed if the species is protected?

The article below from "Los Angeles Times"

Species Protection Relies More on Killing Predators

The strategy is growing as habitats shrink. Federally protected western snowy plovers are prime examples.

October 02, 2005 | Jeff Barnard, Associated Press Writer

COOS BAY, Ore. — Biologists Dave Lauten and Kathy Castelein were thrilled this spring to find four new western snowy plover nests on a stretch of bulldozed sand where they had spread countless buckets of oyster shells to create new habitat for the threatened shore birds.

"Then the ravens found them," said Lauten, who with Castelein works for the Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center to build up snowy plover numbers on the southern Oregon Coast.

Some University Studies in Nevada

The Effects of Raven Removal on Sage Grouse Nest Success

Peter S. Coates and David J. Delehanty

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ABSTRACT: We measured the effects of common raven removal on the nest success of greater sage grouse. One cause of sage grouse population decline is thought to be reduced nest success due to egg depredation by ravens. Ravens are nest predators that have substantially increased in abundance in response to current human land-use practices. In many areas, wildlife managers use egg baits treated with DRC-1339 to reduce raven numbers in sage grouse habitat. The effects of raven removal on grouse nest success and identification of any compensatory nest predators are largely unknown. During 2002 and 2003, USDA WS removed ravens from an experimental area in Nevada, within which we deployed miniature, camouflaged video cameras with time-lapsed recorders at sage grouse nests. Using continuous video monitoring throughout the incubation period, we determined the identity and observed the behavior of sage grouse nest predators. Sage grouse nest success during 2002 and 2003 was 74% (n = 19), with no depredations of sage grouse nests or sage grouse nest visitations by ravens. We also observed the behavior of animals that encountered nests, and we identified possible biases with estimating raven "take" from the attrition of egg baits. We found video cameras to be effective devices for identifying predators. These results may be useful in formulating future predator removal activities for sage grouse management.

In conclusion, it is probable that direct raven removal increased sage grouse nest success in NE Nevada. This is consistent with experimental research of raven removal impacts on sage grouse nest success in Oregon (Batterson and Morse 1948). The majority of management plans recommend restoring habitat as a means of minimizing the predator-prey interactions. Due to the time lag between the beginning and completion of restoring sagebrush steppe communities and the rapidly declining rate of sage grouse abundance, it may be important to incorporate raven damage management activities for endangered populations until habitat quality is sufficient at concealing nests from predators.

Other Reasons Sage Grouse populations can decrease

Parasites & Diseases

Local populations may occasionally be affected by parasites or disease. However, there is no evidence to suggest that annual fluctuations in sage-grouse numbers are linked to such pathogens. Batterson and Morse (1948) reported a sage-grouse population crash in Oregon in 1919-1920 when dead and dying grouse were common throughout the preferred portions of their range. Schroeder et al. (1999) list the various parasites that infect sage-grouse and **coccidiosis** is the most commonly reported disease (i.e., diarrhea is the clinical sign) caused by protozoan organisms (*Eimeria* spp.). In 2003, **West Nile Virus caused mortalities of sage-grouse in Wyoming ($n = 16$), Montana ($n = 2$), and Alberta ($n = 5$) with at least 23 sage-grouse found dead (Naugle et al. 2004). This included 9 of 15 radio-marked birds and 7 other sage-grouse in northeastern Wyoming that died of the virus.** West Nile mortalities have not been observed in southwestern Wyoming where >100 sage-grouse have been radio-tagged. At this time, sage-grouse show no resistance to WNV and mortality is assumed to be 100% (Naugle et al. 2004). Total mortality from WNV has been markedly reduced in 2004 (thought to be the result of cooler weather), but the disease has been confirmed in dead sage-grouse from Colorado ($n = 1$), and Mono Lake California ($n = 3$).

Then there are Studies that indicate there is a positive relationship between higher Cattle Numbers and Higher Sage Grouse Numbers

Anthropogenic and Natural Determinants of the Population of a Sensitive Species: Sage Grouse in Nevada

Gerrit Cornelis van Kooten, Alison Eagle and Mark Eiswerth

No 2004-08, [Working Papers](#) from [University of Victoria, Department of Economics, Resource Economics and Policy Analysis Research Group](#)

Abstract: This paper uses Nevada data to conduct regression analyses of the relationship between sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) population sizes and potential causal factors. This is policy-relevant because of current petitions for listing this species under the Endangered Species Act. A key feature is that, although monitoring of sage grouse has occurred for many decades, data collection methods and level of monitoring effort have not been consistent. To account for this feature we use, as dependent variables, standardized measures such as population counts and harvest (hunting success) per unit of effort. Preliminary findings suggest that such measures have been particularly sensitive to whether or not humans used strychnine for predator control, with normalized measures of grouse populations higher in years when strychnine was employed. **Our results also suggest a positive association between the number of cattle on the range and normalized measures of grouse population.** This is a controversial finding as some studies suggest a negative impact of cattle grazing on grouse. Our data do not include indications of the timing and precise nature of grazing practices and so should be interpreted with caution. To read the complete 33 page document use the link noted below:

<https://web.uvic.ca/~repa/publications/REPA%20working%20papers/WorkingPaper2004-08.pdf>

Predators of Greater Sage-Grouse nests identified

by video monitoring

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Received 23 February 2008; accepted 25 August 2008

ABSTRACT. Nest predation is the primary cause of nest failure for Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), but the identity of their nest predators is often uncertain. Confirming the identity of these predators may be useful in enhancing management strategies designed to increase nest success. From 2002 to 2005, we monitored 87 Greater Sage-Grouse nests (camera, $N = 55$; no camera, $N = 32$) in northeastern Nevada and south-central Idaho and identified predators at 17 nests, with Common Ravens (*Corvus corax*) preying on eggs at 10 nests and American badgers (*Taxidea taxus*) at seven. Rodents were frequently observed at grouse nests, but did not prey on grouse eggs. Because sign left by ravens and badgers was often indistinguishable following nest predation, identifying nest predators based on egg removal, the presence of egg shells, or other sign was not possible. Most predation occurred when females were on nests. Active nest defense by grouse was rare and always unsuccessful. Continuous video monitoring of Sage-Grouse nests permitted unambiguous identification of nest predators. Additional monitoring studies could help improve our understanding of the causes of Sage-Grouse nest failure in the face of land-use changes in the Intermountain West.

In Summary: our government needs to decide what species they feel are most important to protect because, as this quick Search shows, there is no question that Ravens are causing more damage to species than they are contributing to. We know Sage Grouse nests are targeted by Ravens and Crows and there are plenty of studies that document as much. Badgers are also found to be major predators. Give credit where credit is due and if we truly want to increase the Sage Grouse population we need to be able to legally control Ravens and Crows as well as other predators. Some studies of history not shown in this review also document that there were not many Sage Grouse recorded by early day travelers through the Great Basin in the late 1800's. The records of BLM and the Department of Agriculture clearly show that when we had more livestock, Cattle and Sheep, on the public lands we had more Sage Grouse. Again, a quick review of history shows that as predator

control was taken out of the picture (loss of 1080 in 1972) and the Raven was made a protected species our Sage Grouse population has declined. When we had more livestock on the public lands we had fewer fires and more good habitat provided for Sage Grouse. How about an innovative approach like not hunting Sage Grouse for two years while we actively control our Raven, Crow and other known predator populations? What can be done to allow this to happen at least on a study basis using funds allocated for Sage Grouse ?

Paul Bottari, President Society for Preservation of Western Heritage- Wells, Nevada.