



François Blouin

Wildlife Biology Consultant
National Technical Lead for
CFGa Nature Fund Project

Bio

François Blouin grew up on a dairy farm in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. He is a wildlife consultant with a M.Sc. in Biology and has worked for over 23 years on species-at-risk management and biodiversity conservation in the Prairies. In addition to holding a position of biodiversity information manager for four and half years with the Government of Manitoba, and later participating in various field research projects on species at risk in the Prairies, he has coordinated two Alberta-based habitat stewardship programs: Operation Grassland Community (Alberta Fish and Game Association) and MULTISAR (Government of Alberta and Prairie Conservation Forum). During that time, he worked with agricultural producers to identify species-at-risk habitats on their land and find beneficial habitat management solutions that are also compatible with their operation. François has been the main consultant in the development of the online Habitat and Biodiversity Assessment Tool for the Alberta Environmental Farm Plan (EFP).



Canadian Forage & Grassland Association
Association Canadienne pour les Plantes Fourragères

CFGa NATURE FUND PROJECT MEET THE PROS

Role in CFGa Nature Fund Project

Using the process developed by the Alberta EFP, François is assisting participating provinces with adapting the on-line Habitat and Biodiversity Assessment Tool to their local situation. As the technical lead, François provides the documentation and structure necessary to create the background databases for the online tool, answers related questions, makes recommendations to assist in adapting it to the local context and provides suggestions for data acquisition and processing. François also provides some pre-processing of geographic information required to summarize potential species-occurrence data per selected management units, which results in one of the core tables used by the tool. He participates on the provincial steering committees and provides advice on decisions that need to be made in terms of area of implementation, selection of management units, groups of species to focus on, data user agreements, data privacy, update requirements, tool operability, output, etc.

Project description

The CFGa Nature Fund Project provides the opportunity to put the best available conservation information into the hands of the land stewards who are working towards the preservation or enhancement of habitat for native species within Canada's agricultural landscape. The centerpiece of the project is the Habitat and Biodiversity Assessment Tool, an online tool developed in Alberta that enables interested agricultural producers to integrate the needs of multiple native species in the management of their land.

The Habitat and Biodiversity Assessment Tool provides an opportunity for landowners, farmers and livestock producers to access a broad list of management options based on their location and the habitat types present on their land. As an access point to information, it allows each user to review a range of management options that can help foster the per-



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sistence of native plants or animals, including those at risk, by maintaining or improving the quality of habitat on their agricultural land. In addition, the online tool provides confirmation of the positive effects that many current management practices have on the quality of habitat for local native species.

Under the leadership of the CFGA, the online tool is being adapted and customized for use in provinces across Canada as a source of conservation information for all of those interested in habitat stewardship. The project will continue to be developed for release in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia in 2021.

Link to forages and grasslands

Most wild species are found on lands that have been impacted by human development and are threatened by one or multiple factors such as habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation, human disturbance, pollution or contamination, over harvesting or persecution, diseases, climate change and competition with introduced species. Agricultural lands, especially perennial tame or native grasslands, provide either large tracts of habitat or stepping stones between them and allow many wild species to continue to persist. With the right knowledge of wild species habitat requirements and of some of the techniques that can be used to achieve optimal habitat quality, some tweaking to current land management practices can be suggested, often at little or no costs to the agricultural producer.

Why is it important

This project provides agricultural producers with the knowledge of what species have the potential to occur on their land based on the known or expected distribution of species, the geographic location of the farm/ranch and on the habitat types and features that are found on it. With that knowledge, conservation opportunities for wild species can be suggested to the producers who can then decide on what, if anything, is compatible and desirable within their operational constraints and objectives.

In the end, the project provides farm- or ranch-specific awareness of wild species, sound environment practices to assist with their conservation and recovery and the organizations or stewardship groups that could assist with implementing them.

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