



Craig Bihrie

Northern pintail

## LEVEL II

### NORTHERN PINTAIL

Perhaps the most elegant of duck species, the pintail is long and slender throughout. It's long, pointed tail distinguishes it from most others.

**Habitat and range:** Primarily east of Missouri River, less in the west. Use a variety of wetlands to feed on plant matter and invertebrates such as aquatic insects. Nest in uplands away from water.

**Why:** Long-term waterfowl surveys show it has declined 66 percent in North Dakota. The decline is staggering for this duck that largely breeds in our state.



Ed Bry

Canvasback

### CANVASBACK

A large diving duck characterized by a long, pointed, black bill on a sloping, dark red head accented by a red eye. Females are a drabber brown. Named for the weaving pattern of gray and white on its back and sides, resembling canvas fabric.

**Habitat and range:** Primarily east of Missouri River, with a few in the west. Found in semi-permanent wetlands and other deep waters, especially where wild celery is present. Nest over water in dense stands of vegetation.

**Why:** Long-term waterfowl surveys show it has declined 33 percent in North Dakota.



Chris Grondahl

Redhead

### REDHEAD

Differentiated from canvasback by a rounded, brighter red head, blue bill, yellow eye, and darker gray body. Females are a drabber brown.

**Habitat and range:** Primarily east of Missouri River, with a few in the west. Found in semi-permanent wetlands and other deep waters where they nest over water in emergent vegetation. Redhead females often lay eggs in nests of other diving ducks.

**Why:** Long-term waterfowl surveys show it has declined 32 percent in North Dakota.

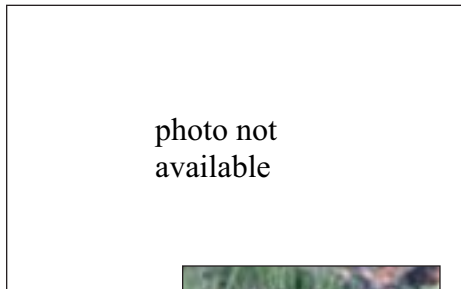


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### NORTHERN HARRIER

A medium-sized hawk identified by a white rump on both the pale gray male and slightly larger, brown female. Also called marsh hawk for its habit of flying low over marshes and prairie looking for small mammals and birds.

**Habitat and range:** Statewide, but primarily Missouri Coteau and drift prairie. Nests in upland grasses usually near water.

**Why:** Harriers are fairly common in North Dakota, but populations are unstable due to loss of grassland and wetland habitat.

Northern harrier



Ed Bry

Golden eagle

### GOLDEN EAGLE

Slightly smaller than the bald eagle, this bird has feathered legs, brown eyes, black beak, and a smaller head, which turns golden as an adult. Bald eagles like water, golden eagles prefer open prairies.

**Habitat and range:** West of Missouri River, particularly the badlands. Most nests built on cliffs overlooking grasslands, others constructed in trees. Nests of sticks and other vegetation may be 8-10 feet across and 3-4 feet deep.

**Why:** Status of golden eagles in North Dakota is unknown. Birds are sensitive to nest disturbance. Humans are also a threat.



Craig Bihrie

Bald eagle

### BALD EAGLE

Easily identified by white head and tail on a dark brown body.

**Habitat and range:** Statewide. Nest primarily along Missouri River in large cottonwood trees, but have been seen along the Red River and Devils Lake in the last few years. Eagles winter in North Dakota along Missouri River, and reports of migrating eagles occur across the state.

**Why:** Listed as a federal endangered species in 1978, however, this bird has been downgraded to threatened due to recent population increases. Even if removed from listing, birds must continue to be monitored.

## PRAIRIE FALCON

Similar in size and shape to peregrine falcon. Prairie falcon is brown, sports a thin “mustache” and a white breast speckled with brown spots.

**Habitat and range:** West of Missouri River, predominantly the badlands. A falcon characteristic of wide expanses of native prairie and cropland, intermixed with streams and isolated buttes.

**Why:** This falcon is of concern due to loss or destruction of breeding habitat in southwest North Dakota. Historical reports indicate prairie falcons were once more numerous, nesting on nearly every high butte.

## SHARP-TAILED GROUSE

As its name implies, a narrow, pointed tail sets this grouse apart from all others. Every spring males gather on dancing grounds, or leks, where they entice females with captivating dance moves and cooing from inflated purple air sacs.

**Habitat and range:** Statewide and present year-round. Found on prairies that may contain scattered patches of small trees or shrubs such as buffaloberry.

**Why:** North Dakota comprises a significant portion of this bird’s breeding range. Although still common in the state, it has declined since pre-settlement times.

## GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN

A short, rounded tail and a completely barred body. Also gather on leks in spring, but these males flaunt large yellow-orange air sacs and long feathers on each side of the throat.

**Habitat and range:** Two populations, one in the southeast around Sheyenne National Grasslands and another in Grand Forks County, although scattered sightings occur. Prefer native tallgrass prairie, but will use a variety of other grasslands.

**Why:** Apparently did not occur in North Dakota prior to the 1870s. Following settlers, populations boomed from around 1880 to 1930. Rare since, the prairie chicken is making a comeback, although not entirely recovered.

## GREATER SAGE GROUSE

The largest grouse species, males weigh in at over 6 pounds, with a wingspan of 38 inches.

**Habitat and range:** Limited to extreme southwest North Dakota, particularly where there is sagebrush to feed on during winter. Sagebrush also provides nesting cover.

**Why:** Its range has shrunk substantially in North Dakota. Once occurred east of the Little Missouri River, now believed vanished from there. This species is declining nationwide due to loss of sagebrush habitat and other human-produced factors.

## PIPING PLOVER

White belly and a narrow, black breastband adorn this small shorebird. When agitated, whistles a soft *peep peep peep*.

**Habitat and range:** Missouri Coteau and drift prairie, also along Missouri River. Prefer barren, sandy or gravelly beaches and sandbars, or alkaline wetlands on which to lay a clutch of four eggs in scratched-out, shallow depressions.

**Why:** Listed as a federal threatened species in 1985. Alteration of natural stream flows of Missouri River negatively affect plover habitat. Also vulnerable to pesticides, accidental trampling, and predators.

## AMERICAN AVOCET

An unmistakable shorebird, featuring a bold body of black and white, orange head and neck, a long, thin up-curved bill, and long pale blue legs. Often seen sweeping its bill from side-to-side through water or mud in search of crustaceans.

**Habitat and range:** Statewide, with densities high in central North Dakota. Found on ponds or lakes with exposed, sparsely-vegetated shorelines where they nest in the open near water.

**Why:** North Dakota provides important stopover habitat for many migrating birds, such as the avocet, which has shown a negative population trend.

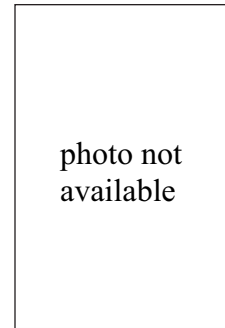


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Prairie falcon



Craig Bihrie

Sharp-tailed grouse



Craig Bihrie

Greater prairie chicken



Ed Dry

Greater sage grouse



Chris Grondahl

Piping plover



Craig Bihrie

American avocet



Chris Grondahl

Least tern

### LEAST TERN

Most unique on this small tern is a bright yellow bill with a black tip. Yellow legs and a white forehead also accent this gray and white bird.

**Habitat and range:** Missouri River. Lay 2-3 eggs in scratched-out shallow bowls on sparsely-vegetated sandbars. Feed on small fish by diving into water.

**Why:** Listed as a federal threatened species in 1985. Alteration of natural Missouri River stream flows has destroyed sandbar habitat and altered tern prey base.



Chris Grondahl

Short-eared owl

### SHORT-EARED OWL

A medium-sized owl, yellowish-brown, with a spotted upperside and subtle ear tufts. Flight has distinct moth-like appearance.

**Habitat and range:** Statewide. An owl easily seen because it's active during the day, cruising over prairie, marshes and fields in search of small mammals. Nest on the ground in prairies, hayfields, or even stubble fields.

**Why:** Short-eared owl population is cyclic, dependent on prey populations. Reduction of open prairie breeding habitat is negatively affecting the population.



Ed Bry

Burrowing owl

### BURROWING OWL

A small ground-dwelling owl, with long legs, spotted, dark brown and buffy breast, white throat below a relatively flat head, and large yellow eyes.

**Habitat and range:** West of Missouri River. Once occurred statewide except for the Red River Valley. Depend greatly on ground squirrels or prairie dogs as they nest in unused burrows dug by the mammals. Prefer short-grass prairie or grazed mixed-grass prairie so predators can be easily seen.

**Why:** Decline in ground squirrel population east of Missouri River has reduced number of burrows for owls to inhabit, severely constricting its range.



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Red-headed woodpecker

### RED-HEADED WOODPECKER

A flashy red head and neck give this woodpecker its name. Black upper back and tail, and white on rear of wings and upper rump.

**Habitat and range:** Statewide, but primarily along the Missouri River, Little Missouri River and Red River. Found in natural stands of mature deciduous trees along river bottoms, shelterbelts, wooded areas of towns and farmsteads, and sometimes over prairie. Nest in snags.

**Why:** Historic literature indicates this species was once more common than today. Populations have always fluctuated, but numbers have declined due to loss of habitat and development along rivers.



Chris Grondahl

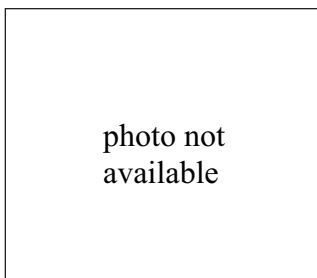
Loggerhead shrike

### LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE

The smaller of the two shrike species, and the only one to breed in North Dakota. A gray body, black wings, with a white wing patch, black eye mask and white throat adorn this robin-sized bird.

**Habitat and range:** Statewide, particularly western North Dakota and badlands. Prefers open country, with thickets of small trees, shrubs, and shelterbelts adjacent to cropland, native prairie and roads. It impales its prey of insects, small birds, snakes, and mammals on barbed wire or thorny branches.

**Why:** Declining throughout the nation, but the reason is unclear. Many are killed by vehicles as birds pluck insects from roads.



Sedge wren

### SEDGE WREN

A tiny, brown songbird weighing 1/3 of an ounce, has a short, stiff tail, streaked back, and orange-buff rump. Secretive and flushes away quickly. Bobs forward and flicks up tail when agitated.

**Habitat and range:** East of Missouri River. Prefers wet meadows of tall grasses and sedges, with scattered shrubs. Weave nests of dry grasses 1-2 feet off the ground.

**Why:** Loss, destruction, or degradation of both wetland and prairie habitat is negatively affecting this species.

### DICKCISSEL

Similar in shape and size to a house sparrow. Sport a longer bill, yellow breast, yellow around eyes and rufous shoulders. Males have a distinct black "V" below a white throat.

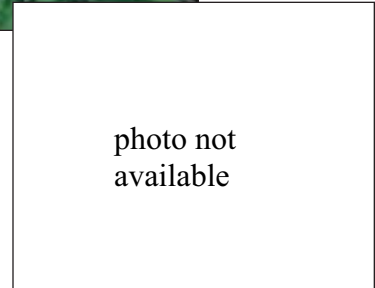
**Habitat and range:** Statewide, more common in southern half of state. Characteristic of alfalfa, sweet clover, and other brushy grasslands.

**Why:** Threats appear in wintering habitat in South America, particularly Venezuela. More than a million birds may congregate on agricultural fields, making easy targets for poisoning. Important that North Dakota continues to produce a strong breeding population because of large losses on wintering grounds.



Dickcissel

USFWS



### LE CONTE'S SPARROW

One of the smallest sparrows, it is pale, yellow-brown, with fine streaks along the breast and sides, white stripe on crown, and a small bill. Song is a soft, hissing *tik a t-sshhhhhhhhh-t*.

**Habitat and range:** Statewide, highest density in Missouri Coteau and drift prairie. Preferred habitat is fens, but also wet meadows and marshes of sedge grasses.

**Why:** Loss of wetlands through draining, filling, or other destruction and degradation is biggest threat.

Le Conte's sparrow

### BOBOLINK

Unique in that it has a black belly and a white back and rump, because most birds have dark backs and light bellies. A yellow nape accents this striking bird. Females are yellow-buff overall. Song is a bubbling *bob-o-link bob-o-link*.

**Habitat and range:** Statewide, densities highest east of Missouri River. Use a variety of grasslands including tallgrass prairie, hayland, and retired cropland.

**Why:** Loss, destruction, or degradation of prairie habitat negatively affects this species.



Bobolink

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### COMMON SNAPPING TURTLE

North Dakota's largest turtle species, it can reach 30 inches in length and weigh over 60 pounds. Brown or gray overall, but its shell may be green from algae. Aggressively snaps its beak-like mouth if agitated, as its name implies.

**Habitat and range:** Statewide. Prefer warm water in lakes or rivers with plenty of aquatic vegetation and muddy bottoms.

**Why:** Harvest for their meat is largely unregulated. However, little is known about this rather common species that rarely leaves the water except to lay eggs.



Common snapping turtle

Craig Bhirle

### SHORT-HORNED LIZARD

A 3-4-inch lizard, with numerous horns and spikes on its relatively flat, grayish body. Squirts blood from the corners of its eyes into a predator's mouth when threatened, leaving an unappealing taste.

**Habitat and range:** Western edge of North Dakota. Prefer semiarid, short-grass prairie in rough terrain where females give birth to live young.

**Why:** An imperiled or vulnerable species in surrounding states that was once listed as a federal candidate species.



Short-horned lizard

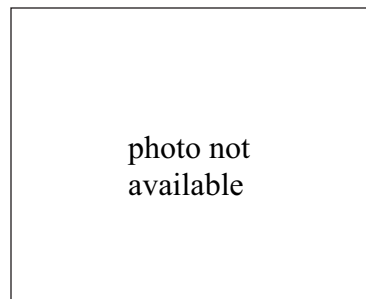
Chris Grondahl

### REDBELLY SNAKE

North Dakota's smallest snake at only 8-10 inches. Belly is bright red, but may vary from orange to yellow. Back is typically brownish.

**Habitat and range:** Drift prairie and Red River Valley. Inhabits woodlands where it forages in the margins for slugs and small earthworms at night.

**Why:** Little is known of this secretive species that keeps hidden during the day under forested cover. Vulnerable throughout most of its western range.



Redbelly snake

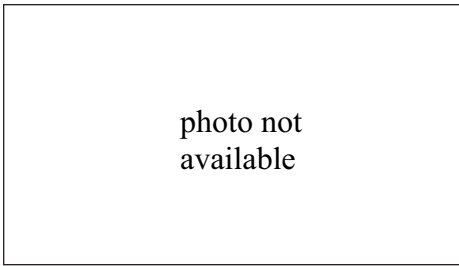


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Pygmy shrew

**PYGMY SHREW**

Only four inches long, with nearly a third of that being tail, the pygmy shrew is North Dakota's smallest mammal. It has a reddish-brown to gray coat, with a lighter underside. Unlike many small mammals, shrews are active year-round.

**Habitat and range:** Red River Valley and along northern tier of drift prairie. Appear to prefer forested areas, pygmy shrews are tolerant and can be found in many habitats.

**Why:** While little is known about this tiny mammal, its population is considered vulnerable in North Dakota.



Craig Bihrie

Richardson's ground squirrel

**RICHARDSON'S GROUND SQUIRREL**

Medium-sized ground squirrel also know as the flickertail. Coat is typically brown with black and cinnamon mixed in. Live in colonies in a burrow system containing nesting and food storage chambers.

**Habitat and range:** East of Missouri River. Prefer open grasslands, cultivated fields and pastures.

**Why:** Conversion of native grasslands for agriculture and development the greatest concern to North Dakota's state mammal.

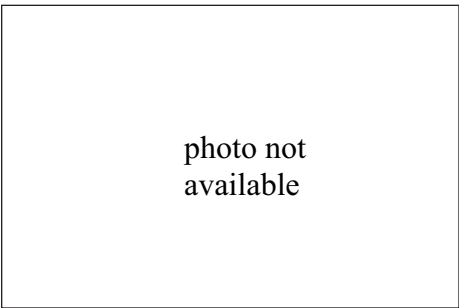


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Swift fox

**SWIFT FOX**

Smallest member of the canine family sports a yellowish-tan coat, with some gray along the back. Underside is white. Distinctly large ears for body size, and a long, bushy black-tipped tail.

**Habitat and range:** Believed to be extirpated from North Dakota. Once found throughout the state, it prefers short or mixed-grass prairie tracts.

**Why:** Populations initially reduced by over-trapping and poisoning to control predators, but now the greatest threat is the loss of large tracts of prairie habitat.



River otter

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**RIVER OTTER**

Large member of the weasel family that grows up to 4 feet in length. Fur is usually dark brown on back, with a lighter belly and throat. A very good swimmer that features a long, muscular tail.

**Habitat and range:** Semi-aquatic species once found in all major rivers in the state, but now is rare. Prefers rivers and stream near wooded areas, using logs and stumps for dens.

**Why:** Loss of riparian habitat along rivers is the greatest threat. Otters are also sensitive to pollution and will leave a system if it becomes too dirty.



Black-footed ferret

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**BLACK-FOOTED FERRET**

Named for black fur on its legs, this mink-sized member of the weasel family is most distinguishable by the black "mask" covering its eyes.

**Habitat and range:** No longer present in North Dakota, but once lived exclusively in prairie dog towns. Utilized prairie dogs for food and their abandoned burrows as shelter.

**Why:** Large prairie dog towns ferrets need to survive were lost as prairie dog populations were controlled. Listed as a federal endangered species, it was last reported in North Dakota in early 1950s.



Craig Bihrie

Paddlefish

**PADDLEFISH**

North Dakota's largest fish, it can reach 7 feet in length and weigh more than 100 pounds. Has smooth skin, with no scales and a large paddle-shaped snout over a large, toothless mouth with no teeth, and very small black eyes.

**Habitat and range:** Missouri and Yellowstone rivers.

**Why:** Loss of suitable breeding habitat due to damming of Missouri River System.

### PALLID STURGEON

One of North Dakota's largest fish, growing to 6 feet in length. Light gray in color, with a lighter underside. Small black eyes set on a large shovel-shaped head. Four barbels on underside of head, with the two inner barbels shorter than the outer. Top side of body is covered in large scales called scutes.

**Habitat and range:** Missouri River and parts of Yellowstone River. Prefers fast current areas with firm sand or gravel bottom.

**Why:** Listed as a federal endangered species. Its main threat is loss of habitat due to damming and channelization of Missouri River System.

### SILVER CHUB

Member of minnow family that is olive on top and bright, silver-white on sides. Slender, compressed body up to 9 inches in length. Fins are darker in color, with a white edge. Large eyes on upper half of head.

**Habitat and range:** Found in Red River and tributaries. Usually found in deeper pools and sandy backwaters in large rivers.

**Why:** Rare to North Dakota. Little is known on its status or habits in North Dakota rivers.

### NORTHERN REDBELLY DACE

Small member of the minnow family, with dark on top and two black lines that run along its side. The upper line is thin and breaks into spots at tail, while lower line continues the length of fish. Belly is red, white, yellow or a combination of the three.

**Habitat and range:** Found in tributaries of Missouri River including Heart, Knife and Cannonball rivers. Populations in Rush and Sheyenne rivers in eastern North Dakota have declined. Prefer slower stretches of rivers, with clear water and some vegetation.

**Why:** Loss of suitable habitat due to land use practices around rivers and streams is a concern.

### FLATHEAD CHUB

Member of chub family, reaching a foot in length. Broad, flat head, tapering to a point. Dusky brown on top, with silvery sides. Large, sickle-shaped fins on back and belly. Barbel in corner of mouth.

**Habitat and range:** Found in a number of Missouri River tributaries including Little Missouri, Knife, Heart and Cannonball rivers. Prefer warm, slow-moving rivers with high sedimentation.

**Why:** Population loss attributed to channelization and impoundments, which reduce sedimentation.

### TROUT-PERCH

Only member of this family that lives in North Dakota. Light yellow body, with rows of dusky brown spots along its back, and white spots on underside of head. Also has a small, fleshy fin on its back near the tail.

**Habitat and range:** Red River and tributaries, and recorded in Souris River. Found in deep pools in rivers or streams, usually in sandy-bottom sections.

**Why:** Imperiled in much of its northern range because of a loss of suitable habitat.

### THREERIDGE

Shell up to 4 inches across, usually yellow-green or brownish in color. Three distinct ridges run from the hinge to edge of shell.

**Habitat and range:** Red and Sheyenne rivers. Can be found in areas with mud, sand, or gravel bottoms.

**Why:** Land-use changes in and around rivers have disturbed mussel beds. This mussel is of commercial value, but is protected from harvest in North Dakota.



*Pallid sturgeon*



*Silver chub*



*Northern redbelly dace*



*Flathead chub*



*Trout-perch*



*Threeridge*

Chris Grondahl



*Wabash pigtoe*

**WABASH PIGTOE**

Triangular-shaped shell is a light yellowish brown. Outside of shell feels as if it is covered in a rough cloth-like material. Shell up to 2 1/2 inches across.

**Habitat and range:** Red River, and occurs in greatest numbers in Sheyenne River. Found in beds of gravel, sand, or mud.

**Why:** Changes in land-use practices in and around rivers have contributed to its decline.

Chris Grondahl



*Mapleleaf*

**MAPLELEAF**

Squarish shell up to 3 inches in diameter. Yellow-green in smaller shells to brown in larger shells. Surface of shell usually covered with small wart-like bumps.

**Habitat and range:** Red River and possibly the Sheyenne River. Can be found in sand, mud or gravel bottoms.

**Why:** Changes in land-use practices in around rivers have contributed to its decline. This mussel is of commercial value, but is protected from harvest in North Dakota.

Chris Grondahl



*Black sandshell*

**BLACK SANDSHELL**

Shell elongated and typically flattened. Up to 4 1/2 inches across at its greatest width. Shell is smooth, shiny and generally dark in color.

**Habitat and range:** Red and lower Sheyenne rivers in riffles or areas of swift current, with a gravel or sand bottom.

**Why:** Changes in land-use practices in and around rivers have contributed to its decline.

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*Creek heelsplitter*

**CREEK HEELSPLITTER**

Three-inch shell relatively thin, flattened, and elongated. Yellow with green rays extending from back along top. Larger shells darker.

**Habitat and range:** Found in sandy-bottomed headwaters of Pembina, Forest, Wintering and Sheyenne rivers.

**Why:** Changes in land-use practices in and around rivers have contributed to its decline.

Chris Grondahl



*Pink heelsplitter*

**PINK HEELSPLITTER**

Dark green to dark brown shell typically rectangular and up to 4 inches in diameter. Edge near hinge extends from shell resembling a wing.

**Habitat and range:** Found in mud or gravel bottoms in Red and Sheyenne rivers.

**Why:** Changes in land-use practices in and around rivers have contributed to its decline.