

Alberta Conservation Association
2023/24 Project Summary Report

Project Name: SHARP – Species Habitat Assessments and Ranching Partnership

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Partnerships

Alberta Community Bat Program

Alberta Wildlife Federation – Minister’s Special Licence Program

ALUS Canada

Canadian Cattle Association

Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef

Environment and Climate Change Canada – Habitat Stewardship Program

Government of Alberta

Landholders

Key Findings

- We partnered with one producer to complete detailed range and riparian assessments that led to the development of a Habitat Conservation Strategy for their property (approximately 2,080 acres). These efforts helped the producer redistribute cattle to avoid overgrazing, improve water quality, and encourage grazing away from sensitive riparian areas with the implementation of a portable watering unit.
- We partnered with an existing producer to install wildlife friendly fencing to help facilitate ungulate movement from the removal of an old, dilapidated fence posing a barrier to wildlife movement and an entanglement risk to ungulates.

Details

Livestock producers play an important role in sustaining wilderness areas, preserving ecosystem function, and fostering biodiversity. On well-managed rangelands, grazing animals support plant health, improve soil quality, and preserve open space for wildlife habitat.

Species Habitat Assessments and Ranching Partnership (SHARP) is a voluntary and collaborative habitat stewardship initiative to support producers who want to maintain the unique grazing and ecosystem values on their property. Together with the producer, we develop habitat conservation strategies (HCS) after first completing range and riparian health assessments as well as wildlife surveys. We evaluate and then balance the needs of target species along with the long-term objectives of the landholder. This results in mutually agreed-on actions that benefit both wildlife and the operation. As cost-shared enhancements are undertaken, we develop a monitoring plan to assess their progress and effectiveness.

This year, we collaborated with one new producer in central Alberta to complete a HCS on their property totalling approximately 2,080 acres. We identified 99 different wildlife species on this property, including 18 species that are considered provincially *Sensitive* or higher under Alberta's General Status evaluation process. We also completed 36 rangeland health assessments, three riparian health assessments, and 60 visual assessments.

We partnered with this producer to help with cattle distribution to avoid overgrazing, improve water quality, and encourage grazing away from sensitive riparian areas with the implementation of a portable watering unit. We also partnered with an existing producer to install wildlife friendly fencing to help facilitate ungulate movement from the removal of an old, dilapidated fence posing a barrier to wildlife movement.

Long-term relationships built on mutual respect and trust between conservation groups and landholders are key to effective on-the-ground conservation efforts. Using a collaborative, voluntary approach allows us to partner with producers and implement habitat enhancements that benefit both wildlife and their ranching operations. To date, SHARP has partnered with eight producers, and we hope to form new ranching partnerships within Alberta's northern grasslands, foothills, aspen parkland, and boreal forest regions, where forest grazing is interspersed.

Photos



Photo 1. Alberta Conservation Association biologist, Terri Perron, conducting an early morning songbird point count survey. Photo: Amanda Rezanoff



Photo 2. Wood frog. Photo: Kris Kendell