

Alberta Conservation Association
2024/25 Project Summary Report

Project Name: SHARP – Species Habitat Assessments and Ranching Partnership

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Partnerships

Alberta Community Bat Program

Alberta Native Bee Council

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 two producers to complete detailed range and riparian assessments that led to the development of a Habitat Conservation Strategy (HCS) for their property (~ 3,358 acres).
- We collaborated with two producers to redistribute cattle to avoid overgrazing, improve water quality, and encourage grazing away from sensitive riparian areas with the implementation of two portable watering units.

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 HCSs 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 two new producers in central Alberta to complete a HCS on their property totalling approximately 3,358 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 33 rangeland health assessments, and eight riparian health assessments.

We partnered with these producers to help with cattle distribution to avoid overgrazing, improve water quality, and encourage grazing away from sensitive riparian areas with the implementation of two portable watering units.

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 nine 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 Kris Kendell monitoring the installation of an Autonomous Recording Unit designed to bat species. Photo: Amanda Rezansoff



Photo 2. Western tiger salamander. Photo: Kris Kendell