

## 2013 BFO Sage-brush Obligate BLM Sensitive Migratory Bird Nest Search Protocol

### First phase:

Conduct a point count survey or transect identifying species presence and abundance covering the entire area of disturbance. This area needs to be staked in the field so there is no confusion between what was surveyed and what will be mowed. Start at first light (30 minutes before sunrise) and finish no later than 30 minutes after sunrise. The purpose is to identify whether or not the area is occupied/used by migratory birds and by what species.

### Methods:

- ❖ Point counts should be a **minimum** of 10 minutes in duration for linear disturbances (e.g. pipelines) and 20 minutes for large polygon areas (e.g. well pads) with an initial 3 minutes of quiet sitting before beginning the count, the observation radii must cover the entire area to be disturbed and overlap previous points.
- ❖ Observe behaviors that indicate nesting such as food deliveries, begging etc.
- ❖ Mark potential nest locations with notes or sketch.
- ❖ Follow up on observations of nesting behavior and locate nests AFTER completing the 10 minutes.
- ❖ Report the data on your own field data form or in an excel spreadsheet.
- ❖ Include species list of all identified species.

### Second phase if necessary:

The objective of this second survey phase is to find active nests in the area surveyed during the first phase. Conduct nest searches in 5 meters wide or less continuous belt transects observing all areas which will receive surface disturbance. Record nests incidentally found outside of survey area.

### Methods:

- ❖ If in the precipitation zones 15 inches and higher use the rope-drag technique consisting of two observers slowly walking parallel to bird survey transects while gently brushing a 30 m rope along the top of the vegetation. Nests are detected when adult birds flushed off the nest as the rope touches the nesting substrate or surrounding vegetation (Earl 1950; Erickson 2011).
- ❖ Examine shrubs branch structure, canopy and base for nesting Brewer's sparrows, sage sparrows, sage thrashers and others which typically have cup shaped nests built in the shrub.
- ❖ Record all nests found on a data form: record species, how many chicks or eggs are present and an estimate on time to fledge, nest locations, dates, and the details of migratory bird detections within the survey zone.
- ❖ Attach credentials and experience of all surveyors.

Ref. Winter, Maiken; Hawks, Shawn E.; Shaffer, Jill A.; and Johnson, Douglas H., "Guidelines for Finding Nests of Passerine Birds in Tallgrass Prairie" (2003). *USGS Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center*. Paper 160.

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/usgsnpwrc/160>

MARTIN, T.E., AND G.R. GEUPEL. 1993. Nest monitoring plots: Methods for locating nests and monitoring success. *J. Field Ornithol.* 64:507-519.

RALPH, C.J., G.R. GEUPEL, P. PYLE, T.E. MARTIN, AND D.F. DESANTE 1993. *Field methods for monitoring landbirds*. USDA Forest Service publication, PSW-GTR 144, Albany, CA.