American Bird Conservancy
Conservation Specialist

Position Summary:

Title: Conservation Specialist
Supervisor: ABC’s Northern Plains Conservation Coordinator
Location: Buffalo, South Dakota
Submission Deadline: Open until the position is filled

This position is responsible for delivering technical assistance and developing conservation plans for ranches on private lands that emphasize sustainable use and management of grasslands. The position will assist landowners in a four county area in northwest South Dakota. The focus is on enhancing management at scales that facilitate persistent long-term behavioral changes that benefit grasslands, birds, and other focal species. The position will be responsible for recruiting landowners willing to participate in ranch bird survey programs designed to quantify the benefits of ranching for grassland birds (all data confidential to the landowner). The ranch bird survey programs have been in place since 2015.

This position is part of a collaborative effort among American Bird Conservancy (ABC), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks (SDGFP), and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This position will be an employee of ABC, supervised by ABC’s Northern Plains Conservation Coordinator, and with daily instruction and leadership provided by the NRCS District Conservationist. The position will be based in the Buffalo, SD NRCS office.

Primary Duties:

- Provide conservation technical assistance (range conservation, grassland bird and wildlife focus) and develop conservation plans that enhance management across entire ranches or significant portions of ranches. Technical assistance includes landowner consultation, on-site visits, evaluating and identifying wildlife resource concerns, assistance in developing conservation plans for multiple land uses, designing practices, assisting with project implementation, and monitoring results.
- Recruit landowners willing to participate in WWF’s ranch bird survey program and associated duties (maintaining relationships with >30 ranchers, periodic ranch visits and report-back meetings with landowners, assisting with workshops, etc.) with WWF’s Sustainable Ranching Initiative.
- Provide outreach on available SDGFP programs to assist landowners with habitat management for upland and riparian species.
- Recruit landowners to participate in SDGFP landowner incentive programs.
- Communicate program requirements, complete site visits to determine eligibility, and develop contracts/plans for applicants enrolling in USDA Farm Bill conservation programs and other partner conservation programs for the protection, restoration and enhancement of grassland bird and wildlife habitat.
- Conduct bird surveys, e.g. grouse, pheasant, and curlew, as requested by SDGFP and ABC.
- Develop and sustain cooperative working relationships with landowners, conservation groups, conservation districts, public agencies, and other resource professionals.
• Develop technical proficiency in partner programs, such as Customer ToolKit and Pro Tracts.
• Actively participate in community, outreach, and conservation events and work with partners to influence sustainable grasslands management efforts.
• Function as a partner position – representing the missions of ABC, WWF, SDGFP, and NRCS
• Perform other related duties as assigned.

Position Requirements:

• Bachelor’s degree or higher from an accredited college or university preferably in Range and Wildlife Management, Wildlife Ecology, or closely related field in Natural Resource Management. Transcripts required.
• Knowledge of USDA Farm Bill programs and other partner landowner incentive programs or ability and willingness to learn. Experience with of NRCS’s 9-Step Conservation Planning Process beneficial.
• Demonstrate understanding of ecological and environmental principles required for management of natural resources for multiple-uses, including (but not limited to) wildlife habitat, livestock, water management, ecosystem services. For example, knowledge or experience in range science, grazing systems, agricultural landscapes, wildlife ecology, wetland and grassland management including the ability to utilize various habitat management tools in the development of management plans.
• Knowledge of grassland birds and ecology as relevant to the Northern Great Plains, especially South Dakota, or ability and willingness to learn.
• Experience working with private landowners as well as partners (NRCS, state wildlife agencies, Conservation Districts, NGOs, etc.).
• Demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate (both written and orally) with both scientific and non-scientific audiences.
• Proficient computer skills are required and applicant should have experience with Microsoft Outlook, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.
• Ability to identify or have the ability/willingness to learn to identify South Dakota flora and fauna, including grassland birds.
• Demonstrate an understanding of the professional and ethical responsibility that is imperative when collaborating with landowners and partners.
• Ability to work with diverse clientele as a team member and independently with little supervision.
• Ability to use a GPS and GIS mapping software. Experience in ArcMap and Toolkit would be beneficial.
• Able to obtain USDA Federal Security Clearance.
• Valid driver’s license. Occasional use of personal vehicle required (mileage reimbursement provided).
• Willing and able to travel on a regular basis, year round, and occasionally overnight.
• Willing and able to conduct bird surveys which typically start before sunrise. Personal vehicle use required. Position will need to provide their own binoculars.
• Willing and able to work a varying schedule to accommodate landowner meetings, outreach events, partner meetings, etc. Most of the work will be during standard work hours but some nights and weekends will be necessary as well.
• Willing and able to perform administrative work in a controlled environment/office setting for a seven- to eight- hour workday.
• Physical ability to: stand and walk for extended periods of time over rough terrain; lift and move material weighing up to 50 pounds; work in all types of weather conditions in remote locations and associated wildlands hazards and often alone.

Salary and Term of Employment:
• Commensurate with experience, up to $42,000/year plus benefits
• 21-month position (March 2018 – December 2019) with a possibility of extension

Benefits:
• Benefits include medical, dental, and 403(b) plan.
• Paid vacation days (15), holidays (10+), and sick leave.

To Apply:
Applicants should submit a cover letter, resume, and copy of academic transcripts to Merrie Morrison, VP of Operations by
Please apply online at Bamboohr.com: https://abcbirds.bamboohr.com/jobs/view.php?id=17

If you have trouble, please send your cover letter and resume as one document to HR@abcbirds.org

If selected for an interview, a minimum of three professional references will be required from the candidate

Due to the volume of applications, we are not able to respond to inquiries via phone.