

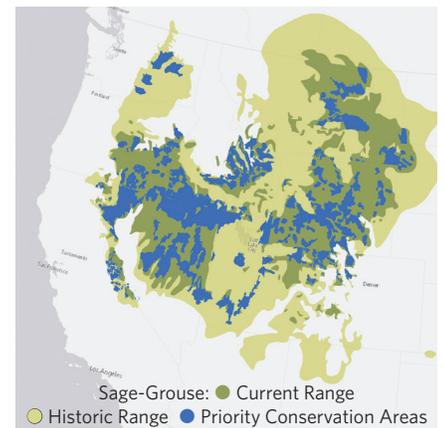
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Greater Sage-Grouse in the Rocky Mountains

CONSERVING SAGE-GROUSE IN THE HEART OF THE WEST

The greater sage-grouse is the largest grouse in the Americas, making its home in the West's clean-scented high deserts and plains. At one time, the bird could be found in 13 states and three Canadian provinces, numbering as high as 16 million birds. Today, approximately 200,000 remain.

The sage-grouse lives in the heart of the American West with 350 other species of wildlife and plants. The Nature Conservancy has been working for decades with private and public partners to conserve this legacy bird and its Western habitat, to the benefit of the future generations who will inherit this land.



© Holly Copeland/TNC

What's Good for the Grouse ...



© Scott Copeland

A recent study in Wyoming suggests that sage-grouse conservation efforts benefit other species, like mule deer.

Declining throughout the West, mule deer use sagebrush to winter and migrate to their summer range.

“We were able to show that conservation measures for sage-grouse in the Green River Basin doubled existing habitat conservation for migrating mule deer,” said Holly Copeland, Conservancy scientist and study co-author.

Studies like this are helping scientists and land managers better understand how efforts to conserve one species—like the sage-grouse—will enable them to maximize resources for an even greater conservation impact. It's called *umbrella-based conservation*.

www.esajournals.org/doi/full/10.1890/ES14-00186.1

Copeland, H. E., H. Sawyer, K. L. Monteith, D. E. Naugle, A. Pocewicz, N. Graf, and M. J. Kauffman. 2014. Conserving migratory mule deer through the umbrella of sage-grouse. *Ecosphere* 5(9):1-16.

Private Landowners Key to Saving the Sage-Grouse



Local ranchers are helping protect sage-grouse breeding ground in Montana. © TNC

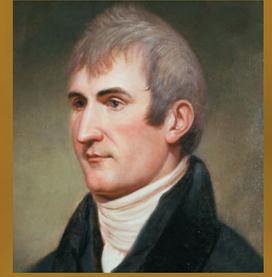
Twice a year, hundreds of sage-grouse make the species' longest migration, traveling more than 100 miles each way. At the heart of this journey is a large intact grassland and sagebrush landscape in Bitter Creek, Montana—their breeding ground.

The Conservancy and local ranchers are partnering to ensure this unique habitat and dwindling population of sage-grouse not only endure but thrive.

To date, more than 9,000 acres of the Carroll Ranch are under conservation easement. The Conservancy expects to add a 16,000-acre easement in winter 2015. Together, these easements will protect about one-third of the breeding habitat on private land, while connecting hundreds of thousands of acres of surrounding public land.

“The cock of the Plains is found in the plains of Columbia and are in Great abundance from the entrance of the S. E. fork of the Columbia [Snake River] to that of Clark’s river [Deschutes River].”

—Meriwether Lewis, 1806



© Charles Peale



The golden eagle, pronghorn antelope, burrowing owl and badger are among the numerous animals that share habitat with the sage-grouse. Shown left to right: © William Burkett, © Chris Pague/TNC, © Michael Fuhr/TNC, © Paul Berquist



© Sage Grouse Initiative

DAVE NAUGLE | SGI Science Advisor and Wildlife Professor | University of Montana

“Society demands accountability in conservation investments, and the NRCS-led Sage Grouse Initiative regularly partners with The Nature Conservancy scientists to evaluate the biological outcomes of Farm Bill implementation. Most recently Conservancy science showed that core area policy and conservation easements in Wyoming reduce by two-thirds the sage-grouse losses that would have occurred, and these protective measures also conserved 75 percent of habitats for migratory mule deer.”



© Bebe Crouse/TNC

LEE CORNWELL | Owner, Cornwell Ranch | Montana

“I’ve been through three sod-busting cycles and I don’t want to see that again. Our easements with The Nature Conservancy just make sense for the land and our family. We can secure a future for our livestock and agriculture, for the family and for the wildlife.”



© Wyoming Game & Fish Department

TOM CHRISTIANSEN | Sage-Grouse Program Coordinator | Wyoming Game & Fish Department

“Nature Conservancy scientists have made important contributions to the conservation of greater sage-grouse in Wyoming through their rigorous evaluations of broad-scale management initiatives. Such evaluations are critical to determining the effectiveness of our management.”

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The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. [nature.org/sagegrouse](https://www.nature.org/sagegrouse)