

**Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP)
MSL Commission Report
February 11, 2015**

Goal One – Content - MSL acquires and manages relevant quality content that meets the needs of Montana library partners and patrons.

- The Botany Program is in the process of exchanging botany data with Region 1 of the U.S. Forest Service. This data exchange will allow the MTNHP to obtain current data for particular Forest sensitive plants found on USFS managed lands in Montana. The exchange will also allow the USFS to have particular plant data that is in the MTNHP database and was collected on USFS managed lands by non-federal employees.
- During 2014, MTNHP Zoology and Information Services staff added an additional 124,239 observations to the animal point observation database; there are now 1,569,459 animal point observation records. Similarly, information has been added for an additional 7,952 structured animal surveys; the central database now contains a total of 168,461 structured animal survey locations. During 2014, 202,000+ records were reviewed for final acceptance into the point observation databases. An additional 187,920 observation records (12% of all records in the database) still need to be reviewed for final acceptance into the database.
- MTNHP websites were updated to include the latest information on Yellow-billed Cuckoo <http://fieldguide.mt.gov/speciesDetail.aspx?elcode=ABNRB02020> and Red Knot <http://fieldguide.mt.gov/speciesDetail.aspx?elcode=ABNNF11020>, which were both recently listed as Threatened in Montana under the Endangered Species Act.

Goal Two – Access - MSL provides libraries, agencies, and its partners and patrons with convenient, high quality, and cost-effective access to library content and services.

- The Natural Heritage Program developed and released a new web application named the “Species Snapshot.” The user can view plant and animal species lists filtered by county, legislative district, National forests, BLM Field Offices, FWP Regions, and other areas. Data include the number of observations and species occurrences (SO's) for each species found in that area along with links to the MapViewer and Species of Concern lists. This new application provides a quick way to get a species list for a specific area.

- Andrea Pipp, MTNHP Botanist, has been reviewing and verifying the plant species photographed by various photographers who want to help populate the Plant Field Guide. About 30 vascular plants and 8 mosses that previously lacked photographs on the Plant Field Guide have been verified and populated on the Plant Field Guide. The Plant Field Guide is used by resource professionals, educators, and other public to get species specific information on a plant's status, identification, habitat, management, and distribution.
- The Natural Heritage Program added items to the MSL Geographic Information Map Gallery at http://mslapps.mt.gov/Geographic_Information/Maps/Gallery/Default.aspx to assist users in discovering the various tasks of the Natural Heritage MapViewer.

Goal Three – Training - MSL provides appropriate trainings and training resources so that the best use can be made of the resources offered.

- Karen Newlon, MTNHP Ecologist/Project Manager, in cooperation with Montana DEQ, participated in a webinar on accessing and using the Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure Wetland and Riparian Framework.
- Andrea Pipp is teaching an evening class and a field session on identifying shrubs in their dormant condition to the public. Wetland delineation, habitat, restoration, and other botanical projects require skills in accurately identifying plants. Many projects occur outside the growing season and learning the characteristics of shrubs when they have no leaves is a useful skill to learn.
- Bryce Maxell, Senior Zoologist, trained twelve Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, four Natural Resources Conservation Service, and two US Forest Service staff on Natural Heritage Program web information resources in Billings on January 13th.

Goal Four – Consultation and Leadership - MSL provides consultation and leadership to enable its patrons and partners to reach their goals.

- Heritage Zoology staff continue to provide consultation to a multi-agency collaborative effort to document the year-round distribution, activity, and conservation status of Montana's bats. In late December, Heritage staff provided a regional summary of acoustic information that has been gathered in recent years. To-date, almost 4 million bat acoustic recordings have been gathered and are being managed and analyzed by the Heritage Program.

Goal Five – Collaboration - MSL promotes partnerships and encourages collaboration amongst its partners and patrons so that their information needs can be met.

- The Natural Heritage Program hosted its annual Partners Meeting on December 3rd in Helena. The meeting was well attended with nearly 40 people

representing state, federal, university, and private partners. The meeting included an update and discussion of current budget issues with the program. The afternoon included a presentation on the first draft of a 5 year strategic plan for the program followed by valuable partner input on this first draft. In addition, several partner agencies updated the group on their current priorities and issues as well as their working relationship with MTNHP.

- Andrea Pipp and Karen Coleman, MTNHP Biological Data Systems Coordinator, are working with the Montana Department of Agriculture, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to develop an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) database. The AIS data will be uploaded to EDDMapSWest, a web-based interactive mapping application for documenting a variety of invasive species. The MTNHP will be the steward for the native species observation data that is collected on AIS survey projects.
- Bryce Maxell, Senior Zoologist, attended the Montana Bird Conservation Partnership meeting on November 19th, 2014 and gave presentations on recent statewide surveys for winter breeding owls and Harlequin Ducks that were conducted by a variety of state, federal, tribal, and private partners and coordinated by the Heritage Program.