

Native Prairie Speaker Series

Title: Using new technologies to track terns in the prairies and beyond

Speaker: Ann McKellar, PhD, Research Scientist, Science and Technology Branch, Environment and Climate Change Canada / Government of Canada

Summary: Waterbirds are important indicators of wetland health, but many species are under threat worldwide due to habitat loss and degradation, water regulation, agricultural intensification, and human disturbance. Species that breed colonially, especially at inland sites, are often overlooked from a conservation and management perspective because they tend to breed in remote locations and are poorly tracked by existing surveys and research efforts. Understanding movement patterns and population structure of these species is a critical first step to uncovering when and where populations are most limited and developing management strategies. In this talk, I will outline data gaps that exist for three species of colonially-nesting terns that breed in the prairies and describe work that our group has done with partners from across the species' ranges to inform population trends, migratory connectivity, and population structure, with the ultimate goals of identifying threats and informing management and conservation efforts.

About the Presenter:

Dr. Ann McKellar is a Research Scientist with Environment and Climate Change Canada's Science and Technology Branch, where her research program aims to understand the drivers of population change in prairie migratory birds and Species at Risk. She is based in Saskatoon, where she is also an Adjunct Professor at the University of Saskatchewan. Prior to joining the Science and Technology Branch in October 2021, Ann worked for 8 years as a Waterbird & Shorebird Biologist for the Canadian Wildlife Service. Some of her current and past projects include tracking migratory birds throughout their annual cycle using various technologies (Motus Wildlife Telemetry, light-level geolocators, stable isotopes) and testing the use of drones to monitor waterbirds in the prairies. Before joining CWS, Ann completed her PhD at Queen's University on American Redstarts, and worked as a postdoc at the University of Columbia – Missouri, where she studied demography and movement of the Endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

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