

Two Field Guides to Enhance the Understanding And Appreciation of the Flora of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch Complex; and Enhance the Understanding And Appreciation of the Wildlife of Grant-Kohrs Ranch Complex

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OBJECTIVE AND RATIONALE:

Introduction

Con Warren, former ranch owner/operator of the now Grant-Kohrs Ranch NHS, was an avid birder and friend to wildlife. Through the development of a field guide of common plants we will invite visitors interested in both flora and fauna onto the historic site to explore the the great diversity of plants, the habitats they comprise, and the rich history of ranching in the United States. Artifacts such as an old magpie trap, birding list, and other memos will be available to assist staff with linking to a group of potential visitors that have yet to explore this historic site.

The Grant-Kohrs Ranch is a unique entity within the National Park System. Not only was the history of early day ranching been preserved, but the various habitats that comprised the ranch in the late 1800s are intact. These habitat types include short grass prairie, wet meadow, riparian, ponds, and mud flats. The success of both the flora and fauna depends on a healthy system that includes biotic integrity, hydrologic function, and soil stability. These factors have provided for over 300 plant species and a diversity of healthy habitats types in a relatively small area of 1,600 acres. The Grant-Kohrs Ranch is in a unique position to allow those interested in plants and animals to see a large number of species by walking in a relatively small area and begin to understand the significance of this park unit.

Final Products:

A Field Guide to the Common Plants by Life Form and Habitats of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch NHS. This guide is a ‘companion guide’ to the previously developed RM-CESU funded guide “A Field Guide to the Common Birds by Habitat Type and Basic Color (2005).” The guide is more than the typical field checklist of plants that many national parks, historic sites, and refuges make available to the public. This 25 page guide describes both native and non-native plant species, along with an organized key to allow visitor to identify plants at the Ranch. There are a number of color photos at the end of the guide to allow for identification on site.

A Field Guide to the Wildlife and Habitats of the Great-Kohrs Ranch NHS. This project developed a guide to the common wildlife species of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch.

The guide is more than the typical field checklist of wildlife that many national parks make available to the public. This guide is to be a “user friendly” tool to the identification of wildlife that a visitor might expect to see when exploring the Grant-Kohrs Ranch with historical references to this park unit. This 20-page wildlife guide is organized by mammals, fish, invertebrates, reptiles/amphibians common to Grant-Kohrs Ranch. This guide complements previously completed guides on the birds and plants of the ranch.

All three of the visitor guides to the biota of the park are available in the visitors center of the Grant-Kohrs Ranch NHS. The guides contain a map of the self-guided tours that one can walk. Each habitat will be described so that the user understands that different plant species and animal species require. The guides are used with school groups in which trained knowledgeable staff will accompany students at the ranch. These tours are designed to introduce students to one habitat type (with respective dominant species) per field trip. These guided field trips will be conducted in the fall, winter and spring so that students can understand the seasonal variations that take place on the Grant-Kohrs Ranch.

Evaluation:

The Enhanced Field Guides will have a perforated evaluation sheet that can be removed and left at the visitor's center when they leave the ranch. This evaluation will ask if the guide was understandable, useful, and easy to use.

An additional evaluation will be part of the guide field trips for school students. This will be a more detailed evaluation and will be a pre/post instrument.