M.S. Graduate Research Assistantship
Dept. of Natural Resource Ecology and Management, Iowa State University
Iowa Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit

Project description: We are seeking a M.S. student to investigate the use of restored wetlands by nongame breeding birds. The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is one of the most significant habitat restoration programs in Iowa and has added more acres of wetland habitat than any other program since 1993. With this project, we aim to describe the use of WRP sites in the Prairie Pothole Region in Iowa by nongame breeding birds, including species of conservation concern, and evaluate the site characteristics that are associated with the diversity and abundance of birds. Results will inform best practices for prioritizing sites for future WRP engagement as well as management of existing sites to support breeding wetland-dependent birds. This project will be conducted in partnership with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Duties and responsibilities: Fieldwork will include managing a crew of three technicians, conducting avian point counts at wetlands throughout north-central Iowa, and conducting vegetation surveys. The student will have freedom to develop research questions within the scope of the project but is expected to use multispecies occupancy modeling to estimate the effects of site characteristics on bird use. The student will enroll Fall 2021 and field work will be conducted from May to August in 2022 and 2023.

Qualifications: B.S. in Wildlife Sciences, Biology, Ecology, or a related field. The ideal candidate is a respectful and inclusive team member, has interest in developing quantitative skills, and works well both independently and on a team. Preference will be given to candidates with experience identifying birds by sight and sound, conducting avian point counts, coordinating fieldwork, and managing a field crew. Previous experience with data management, statistical analysis, R programming, and written or oral presentation of scientific results is helpful but not required. GRE scores are not required. Candidates must have a valid driver’s license and clean driving record.

Funding: Salary is approximately $25,000 per year. The student will receive health insurance and a waiver of one half of graduate tuition. Temporary housing will be provided during the field season (May-August 2022 and 2023).

To apply: Please email a single pdf document containing 1) a one-page cover letter describing your background, interest in this position, and career goals; 2) your CV or resume; 3) unofficial transcripts from a US-accredited undergraduate institution; and 4) contact information for three professional references to Dr. Anna Tucker (tuckera@iastate.edu) with the subject line “WRP MS Assistantship.” If selected, you will be required to submit official transcripts and three letters of recommendation to the ISU Graduate Admissions Office. Review of applicants will begin immediately and will continue until May 31, 2021. We strongly encourage applicants from underrepresented or historically excluded groups to apply.