

Evaluating efficacy of fence markers in reducing Greater Sage-grouse collisions

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Conservation Problem

- Sage-grouse populations are likely in decline
- Evidence Sage-grouse collide with fences
 - Stevens et al. 2012
 - Christianson 2009
- Some evidence marking may reduce collisions



Greater sage-grouse and fences: Does marking reduce collisions? - 142 ft... <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/store/10.1002/wsb.142/asset/1>
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Original Article

Greater Sage-Grouse and Fences: Does Marking Reduce Collisions?

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ABSTRACT Collision with infrastructure such as fences is widespread and common for many species of grouse. Greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) fence-collision has been documented and fence-marking methods have been recommended for mitigating prairie grouse collision in rangeland habitats. We tested a marking method in greater sage-grouse breeding habitat and modeled collision as a function of fence marking and control covariates, in Idaho (USA) in 2010. Our results suggested collision risk decreased with fence marking, increased with lek-count indices of local abundance, and decreased with increasing distance from lek. We found an approximate 83% reduction in collision rates at marked fences relative to unmarked fences. Our results also suggested marking may not be necessary on all fences, and mitigation should focus on areas with locally abundant grouse populations and fence segments <2 km from known leks. Nonetheless, collision still occurred at marked fences <500 m from large leks and moving or removing fences may be necessary in some areas if management is to eliminate collision. © 2012 The Wildlife Society.

KEY WORDS avian collision, *Centrocercus urophasianus*, collision mitigation, fence management, greater sage-grouse, Idaho, infrastructure marking, prairie-grouse.

Previous Research

Observed 83%
reduction in collisions
when fences were
marked
Used vinyl markers with
reflective tape

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Stevens, B.S., K.P. Reese, J.W. Connelly, and D.D. Musil. 2012. Greater sage-grouse and fences: does marking reduce collisions? *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, 36(2): 297-303.

Previous Research

Collision risk influenced by:

- Post type
- Width of fence panel (>4m between posts)
- Region
- Fence density
- Distance to leks
- Topography

Stevens, B.S., J.W. Connelly, and K.P. Reese. 2012. Multi-scale assessment of greater sage-grouse fence collision as a function of site and broad scale factors. *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, 76(7): 1370-1380.



Multi-Scale Assessment of Greater Sage-Grouse Fence Collision as a Function of Site and Broad Scale Factors

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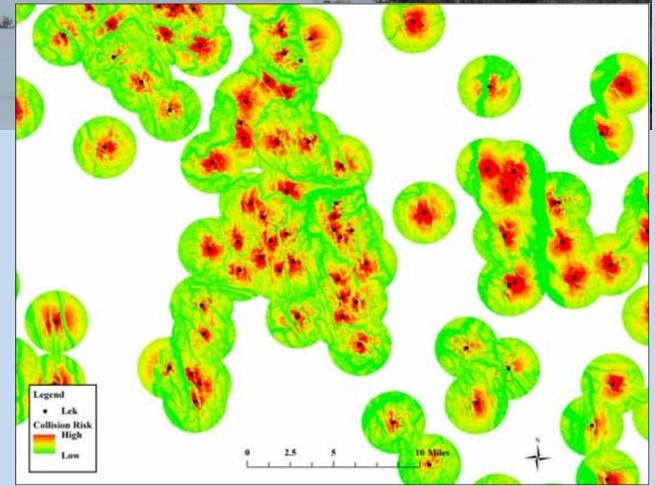
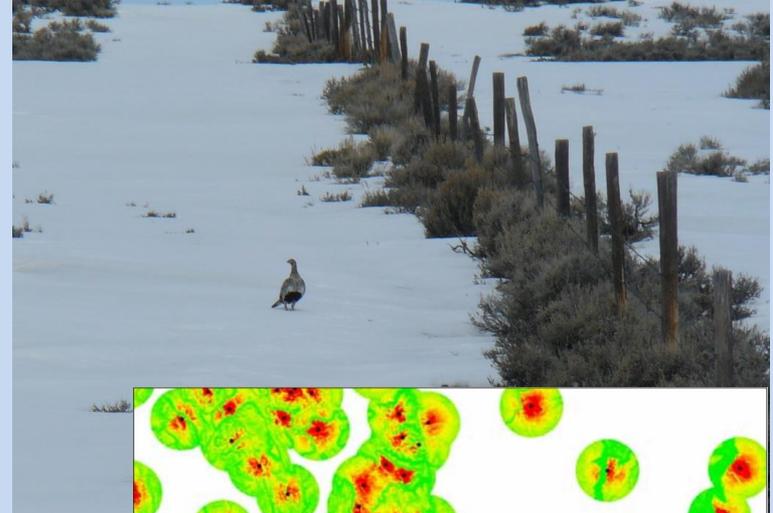
KERRY P. REESE, *Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, P.O. Box 441136, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83844, USA*

ABSTRACT Previous research in Europe and North America suggested grouse are susceptible to collision with infrastructure, and anecdotal observation suggested greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) fence collision in breeding habitats may be prevalent. However, no previous research systematically studied greater sage-grouse fence collision in any portion of their range. We used data from probability-based sampling of fences in greater sage-grouse breeding habitats of southern Idaho, USA, to model factors associated with collision at microsite and broad spatial scales. Site-scale modeling suggested collision may be influenced by technical attributes of fences, with collisions common at fence segments absent wooden fence posts and with segment widths >4 m. Broad-scale modeling suggested relative probability of collision was influenced by region, a terrain ruggedness index (TRI), and fence density per square km. Conditional on those factors, collision counts were also influenced by distance to nearest active sage-grouse lek. Our models provide a conceptual framework for prioritizing sage-grouse breeding habitats for collision mitigation such as fence marking or moving, and suggest mitigation in breeding habitats should start in areas with moderate-high fence densities (>1 km/km²) within 2 km of active leks. However, TRI attenuated other covariate effects, and mean TRI/km² >10 m nearly eliminated sage-grouse collision. Thus, our data suggested mitigation should focus on sites with flat to gently rolling terrain. Moreover, site-scale modeling suggested constructing fences with larger and more conspicuous wooden fence posts and segment widths <4 m may reduce collision. © 2012 The Wildlife Society.

KEY WORDS avian collision, *Centrocercus urophasianus*, fence management, greater sage-grouse, Idaho, infrastructure collision, modeling collision risk.

Our Research Objectives

- 1) Evaluate effectiveness of different types of fence markers
- 2) Investigate local and landscape-scale factors impacting collision risk
- 3) Validate collision risk model



Study Area

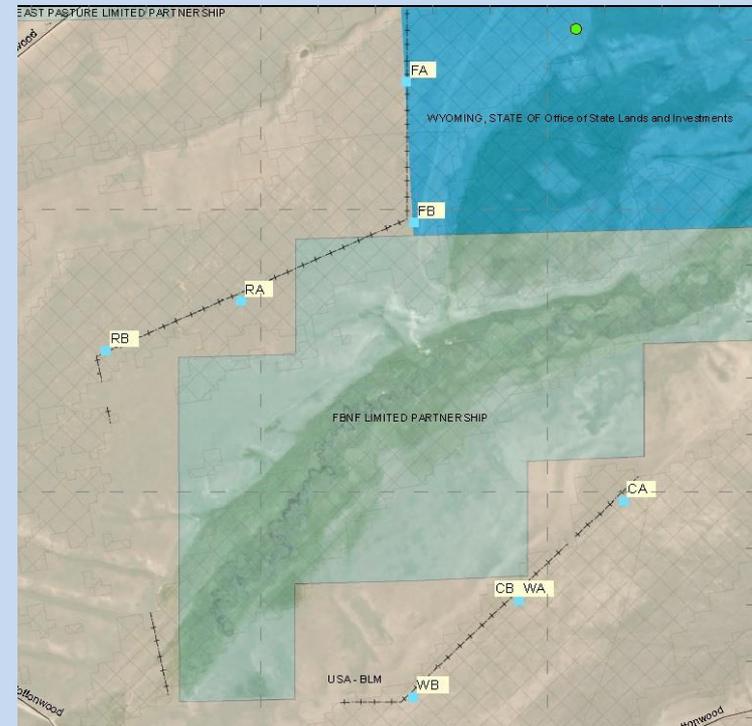
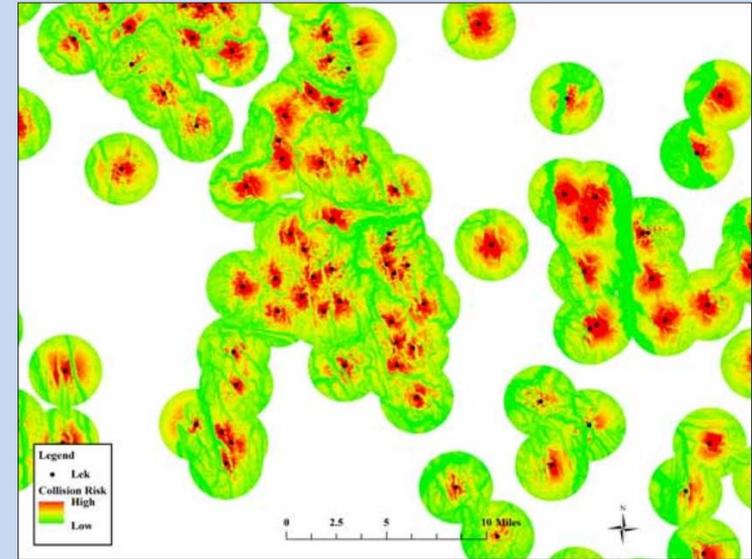
Sublette County, Wyoming

- Area of high sage-grouse density
- Evidence of collisions
- Relatively easy public access
- Cooperative landowners



Study Design

- Fence layer from Pinedale BLM
- Randomly elected 26 leks in Sublette County
 - Minimum 2km of fencing in high & medium risk areas w/in 3km radius of lek
- Randomly assigned treatments to 500m stretches of fencing



Methods

- Installed markers in October of 2013 and March of 2014
 - 3 marker types and unmarked “control” stretches
 - Placed markers on top wire
 - ~ 3' apart

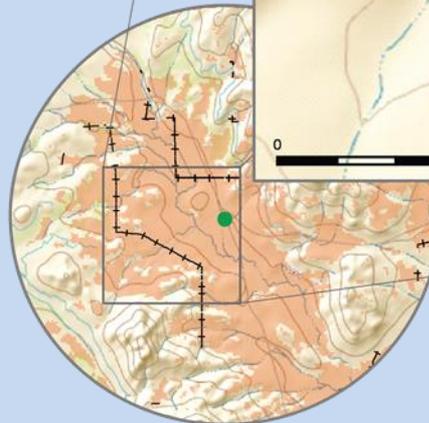
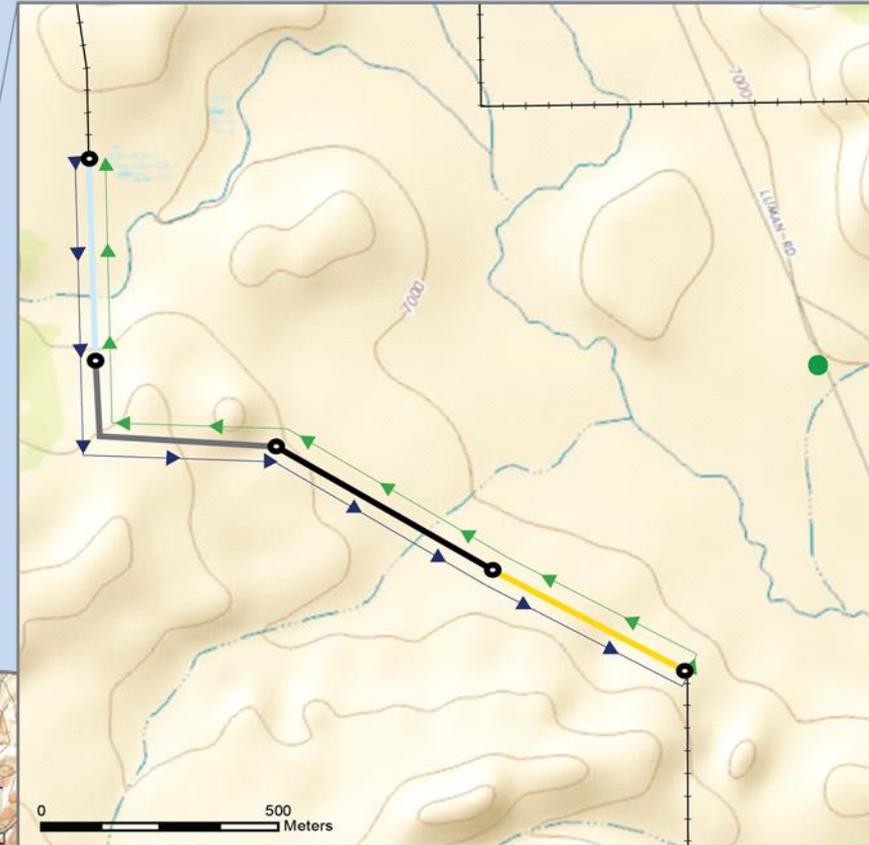


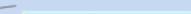
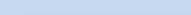
Methods (cont'd)

- Covariate collection
 - Took measurements at 6 points along each fence segment (100m apart)
 - Vegetation height
 - Fence height
 - Lek information provided by WYGD
 - Collision risk map (Stevens et al. 2012)

Methods (cont'd)

- Walking surveys
 - March and April
 - 2014 and 2015
- Conducted 2 visits during each survey
- Surveyed fencing at each site ~ 5 to 6 times/year



- | | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|---------------------------|
|  | Flysafe markers |  | Visit 1 |
|  | White markers |  | Visit 2 |
|  | Reflective markers |  | High & Moderate Risk Area |
|  | Control |  | Lek site |
|  | Untreated fence line | | |

Methods (cont'd)

- Only included “confirmed” strikes in analyses ($n = 64$)
 - Feathers had to be stuck in fence
 - Removed possible predation, preening, or perching events



Analysis

- Multi-scale occupancy analysis
 - Local and landscape-scale factors affecting risk of collision
 - Used multiple “visits” within a survey to account for incomplete detection
 - Only included “new” collisions
- Placed covariates on detection, local occupancy (fence segment), and landscape occupancy (lek)
- Sequential model selection
 - p , Ψ , θ

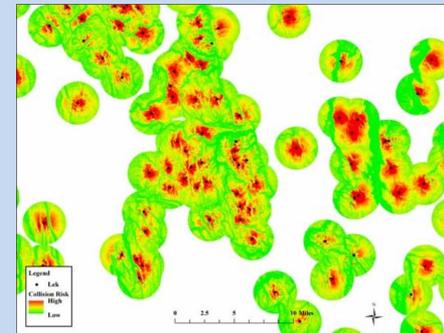
Analysis (cont'd)

- Detection (p) Covariates
 - Survey effects
 - Observer effects
 - “Trap” effects
 - Cloud Cover
 - Snow Cover



Analysis (cont'd)

- Small-scale Occupancy Covariates
 - Year
 - Marker type
 - Marker vs. Control
 - Fence exposure angle
 - Distance of fence to nearest lek
 - Height of fence exposed
 - Proportion of fence in high risk area
 - Fence post type



Analysis (cont'd)

- Large-scale Occupancy Covariates
 - Year
 - # of occupied leks within 4km of focal lek
 - Sum of lek counts within 4km of focal lek



Results

- 64 confirmed collisions
 - 2014 = 15
 - 2015 = 49
- 50 of 64 collisions on top wire
- 96 likely/possible collisions removed



Results

- Detection – constant
 - 0.935 (SE=0.026)
- Large-scale occupancy
 - 0.750 (SE=0.123)
 - Increased with sum of nearby lek counts
 - Higher in 2015
 - Null model was most supported

Results - Small-scale occupancy

- Post type
 - Both: $\beta = 1.49, SE = 0.36$
- Distance to nearest lek: $\beta = -1.11, SE = 0.24$
- Marked: $\beta = -0.85, SE = 0.36$
- 2015: $\beta = 0.98, SE = 0.44$
- Fence exposure: $\beta = 0.03, SE = 0.01$

Results - Small-scale Occupancy Marker Effectiveness

- Markers collectively reduced collision risk
 - All: Decreased risk of collision by ~58%
 - White: Decreased risk of collision by ~58%
 - Reflective: Decreased risk of collision by ~63%
 - Flysafe: Decreased risk of collision by ~50%

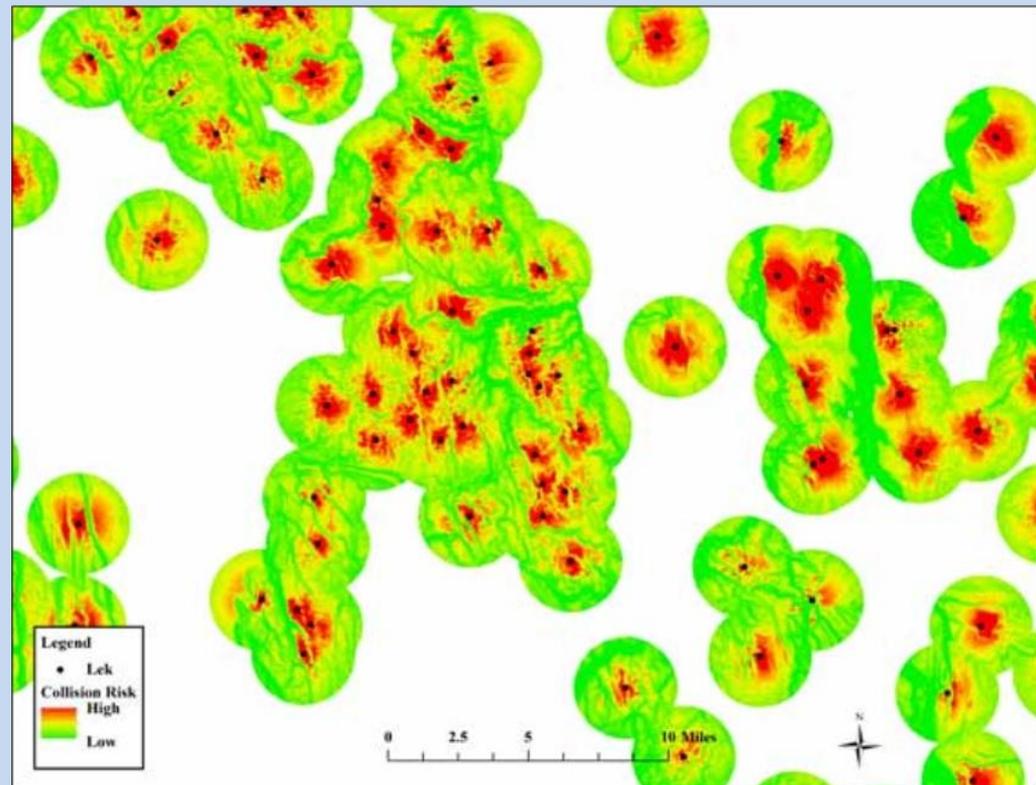
Results - Small-scale Occupancy

- Amount of exposed fence affects collision risk
 - 15cm less exposed fence = 40% reduction in collision risk



Results - Small-scale Occupancy Collision risk map

- No evidence that collision risk is different between high- and medium-risk areas



Management Implications

- Markers did reduce collision
 - Use white PVC markers
 - Least expensive, easy to install
 - Almost as good as reflective
 - Better than Flysafe
- Mark fences near leks with high counts
- Mark/remove fences with T-posts
- Target marking efforts on fences with short vegetation by the fence
- Might not want to base marking efforts on collision risk map (high vs. medium risk)

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