Appendix H

Protected Species

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
South Dakota Ecological Services Field Office
420 South Garfield Avenue, Suite 400
Pierre, SD 57501-5408
Phone: (605) 224-8693 Fax: (605) 224-1416
https://www.fws.gov/office/south-dakota-ecological-services

In Reply Refer To: 06/01/2026 19:02:12 UTC
Project Code: 2026-0096918
Project Name: Big Stone to Brookings to South Dakota/Minnesota Border Project (June 1, 2026)

Subject: List of threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location or may be affected by your proposed project

To Whom It May Concern:

The enclosed species list identifies threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat, that may occur within the boundary of your proposed project and/or may be affected by your proposed project. The species list fulfills the requirements of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

New information based on updated surveys, changes in the abundance and distribution of species, changed habitat conditions, or other factors could change this list. Please feel free to contact us if you need more current information or assistance regarding the potential impacts to federally proposed, listed, and candidate species and federally designated and proposed critical habitat. Please note that under 50 CFR 402.12(e) of the regulations implementing section 7 of the Act, the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. This verification can be completed formally or informally as desired. The Service recommends that verification be completed by visiting the IPaC website at regular intervals during project planning and implementation for updates to species lists and information. An updated list may be requested through the IPaC system by completing the same process used to receive the enclosed list.

The purpose of the Act is to provide a means whereby threatened and endangered species and the ecosystems upon which they depend may be conserved. Under sections 7(a)(1) and 7(a)(2) of the Act and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 402 *et seq.*), Federal agencies are required to utilize their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of threatened and endangered species and to determine whether projects may affect threatened and endangered species and/or designated critical habitat.

A Biological Assessment is required for construction projects (or other undertakings having similar physical impacts) that are major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment as defined in the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)

(c)). For projects other than major construction activities, the Service suggests that a biological evaluation similar to a Biological Assessment be prepared to determine whether the project may affect listed or proposed species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat. Recommended contents of a Biological Assessment are described at 50 CFR 402.12.

If a Federal agency determines, based on the Biological Assessment or biological evaluation, that listed species and/or designated critical habitat may be affected by the proposed project, the agency is required to consult with the Service pursuant to 50 CFR 402. In addition, the Service recommends that candidate species, proposed species and proposed critical habitat be addressed within the consultation. More information on the regulations and procedures for section 7 consultation, including the role of permit or license applicants, can be found in the "Endangered Species Consultation Handbook" at:

https://www.fws.gov/media/endangered-species-consultation-handbook

Migratory Birds: In addition to responsibilities to protect threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), there are additional responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) to protect native birds from project-related impacts. Any activity resulting in take of migratory birds, including eagles, is prohibited unless otherwise permitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)). For more information regarding these Acts see https://www.fws.gov/law/bald-and-golden-eagle-protection-act, https://www.fws.gov/media/endangered-species-act-1, and/or https://www.fws.gov/law/migratory-bird-treaty-act-1918.

It is the responsibility of the project proponent to comply with these Acts by identifying potential impacts to migratory birds and eagles within applicable NEPA documents (when there is a federal nexus) or a Bird/Eagle Conservation Plan (when there is no federal nexus). Proponents should implement conservation measures to avoid or minimize the production of project-related stressors or minimize the exposure of birds and their resources to the project-related stressors. For more information on avian stressors and recommended conservation measures see https://www.fws.gov/birds/bird-enthusiasts/threats-to-birds.php.

In addition to MBTA and BGEPA, Executive Order 13186: *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, obligates all Federal agencies that engage in or authorize activities that might affect migratory birds, to minimize those effects and encourage conservation measures that will improve bird populations. Executive Order 13186 provides for the protection of both migratory birds and migratory bird habitat. For information regarding the implementation of Executive Order 13186, please visit https://www.fws.gov/law/migratory-birds

Please be aware that bald and golden eagles are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 703-712, as amended), as well as the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668 et seq.). Projects affecting these species may benefit from the development of an Eagle Conservation Plan (ECP), see guidance at this website (https://www.fws.gov/node/266177). An ECP can assist developers in achieving compliance with regulatory requirements, help avoid “take” of eagles at project sites, and provide biological support for eagle permit applications. Additionally, we recommend wind energy developments adhere to our Land-based Wind Energy Guidelines for minimizing impacts to migratory

birds and bats.
We have recently updated our guidelines for minimizing impacts to migratory birds at projects that have communication towers (including meteorological, cellular, digital television, radio, and emergency broadcast towers). These guidelines can be found at:

https://www.fws.gov/story/incidental-take-beneficial-practices-communication-towers
http://www.towerkill.com

According to National Wetlands Inventory maps, (available online at https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/national-wetland-inventory) wetlands exist adjacent to the proposed construction corridor. If a project may impact wetlands or other important fish and wildlife habitats, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347) and other environmental laws and rules, recommends complete avoidance of these areas, if possible. If this is not possible, attempts should be made to minimize adverse impacts. Finally if adverse impacts are unavoidable, measures should be undertaken to replace the impacted areas. Alternatives should be examined and the least damaging practical alternative selected. If wetland impacts are unavoidable, a mitigation plan addressing the number and types of wetland acres to be impacted, and the methods of replacement should be prepared and submitted to the resource agencies for review.

Please check with your local wetland management district to determine whether Service interest lands exist at the proposed project site, the exact locations of these properties, and any additional restrictions that may apply regarding these sites. The Offices are listed below. If you are not sure which office to contact, we can help you make that decision.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Huron Wetland Management District, Federal Building, Room 309, 200 4th Street SW, Huron, SD 57350; telephone (605) 352-5894. Counties in the Huron WMD: Beadle, Buffalo, Hand, Hughes, Hyde, Jerauld, Sanborn, Sully.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lake Andes Wetland Management District, P O Box 18, Pickstown, South Dakota, 57367; telephone (605) 487-7603. Counties in the Lake Andes WMD: Aurora, Brule, Charles Mix, Davison, Douglas.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Madison Wetland Management District, P.O. Box 48, Madison, South Dakota, 57042, telephone (605) 256-2974. Counties in the Madison WMD: Bon Homme, Brookings, Clay, Deuel, Hamlin, Hanson, Hutchinson, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Turner, Union, Yankton.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sand Lake Wetland Management District, 39650 Sand Lake Drive, Columbia, South Dakota, 57433; telephone (605) 885-6320. Counties in the Sand Lake WMD: Brown, Campbell, Edmunds, Faulk, McPherson, Potter, Spink, Walworth.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Waubay Wetland Management District, 44401 134A Street, Waubay, South Dakota, 57273; telephone (605) 947-4521. Counties in the Waubay WMD: Clark, Codington, Day, Grant, Marshall, Roberts.

You are welcome to visit our website (https//www.fws.gov/office/southdakota-ecological-services) or to contact our office/staff at the address or phone number above for more information.

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. The Service encourages Federal agencies to include conservation of threatened and endangered species into their project planning to further the purposes of the Act. Please include the Consultation Code in the header of this letter with any request for consultation or correspondence about your project that you submit to our office.

Note: IPaC has provided all available attachments because this project is in multiple field office jurisdictions.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List
- USFWS National Wildlife Refuges and Fish Hatcheries
- Bald & Golden Eagles
- Migratory Birds
- Wetlands

OFFICIAL SPECIES LIST

This list is provided pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and fulfills the requirement for Federal agencies to "request of the Secretary of the Interior information whether any species which is listed or proposed to be listed may be present in the area of a proposed action".

This species list is provided by:

South Dakota Ecological Services Field Office
420 South Garfield Avenue, Suite 400
Pierre, SD 57501-5408
(605) 224-8693

This project's location is within the jurisdiction of multiple offices. However, only one species list document will be provided for all offices. The species and critical habitats in this document reflect the aggregation of those that fall in each of the affiliated office's jurisdiction. Other offices affiliated with the project:

Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office
3815 American Blvd East
Bloomington, MN 55425-1659
(952) 858-0793

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Code: 2026-0096918

Project Name: Big Stone to Brookings to South Dakota/Minnesota Border Project (June 1, 2026)

Project Type: Transmission Line - New Constr - Above Ground

Project Description: Otter Tail Power Company and Xcel Energy are developing the Project in South Dakota, with Xcel Energy leading permitting efforts. The Project is a 765 kV transmission line that would connect the existing Big Stone Substation to the Brookings County Substation and then cross the South Dakota/Minnesota border. The Project is part of the Midcontinent Independent System Operator's Long Range Transmission Plan (LRTP) portfolio approved in December 2024, which was developed to address future reliability needs, integrate renewable generation, and strengthen the regional grid over the coming decades. The Project is the South Dakota portion of what is also referred to as LRTP-22. The Project would consist of the new construction of a 765 kV transmission line through Grant, Deuel, and Brookings Counties, South Dakota. The Project also includes expansions of the existing Big Stone and Brookings Substations, as well as 345 kV lines connecting the existing and expanded substations. The Project will connect generation- rich areas to high-demand areas, improving reliability and efficiency across the Upper Midwest. The current version of the proposed route is included with this submission.

Project Location:

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: https://www.google.com/maps/@44.77374295,-96.49995461681502,14z

Counties: Minnesota and South Dakota

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT SPECIES

There is a total of 9 threatened, endangered, or candidate species on this species list.

Species on this list should be considered in an effects analysis for your project and could include species that exist in another geographic area. For example, certain fish may appear on the species list because a project could affect downstream species.

IPaC does not display listed species or critical habitats under the sole jurisdiction of NOAA Fisheries[1], as USFWS does not have the authority to speak on behalf of NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

See the "Critical habitats" section below for those critical habitats that lie wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction. Please contact the designated FWS office if you have questions.

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1. NOAA Fisheries, also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce.

MAMMALS

NAME	STATUS
Northern Long-eared Bat *Myotis septentrionalis* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9045	Endangered
Tricolored Bat *Perimyotis subflavus* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10515	Proposed Endangered

BIRDS

NAME	STATUS
Rufa Red Knot *Calidris canutus rufa* There is **proposed** critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1864	Threatened

FISHES

NAME	STATUS
Topeka Shiner *Notropis topeka (=tristis)* Population: Wherever found, except where listed as an experimental population There is **final** critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4122	Endangered

INSECTS

NAME	STATUS
Dakota Skipper *Hesperia dacotae* There is **final** critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1028	Threatened
Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus* There is **proposed** critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9743	Proposed Threatened
Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee *Bombus suckleyi* Population: No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10885	Proposed Endangered
Western Regal Fritillary *Argynnis idalia occidentalis* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/12017	Proposed Threatened

FLOWERING PLANTS

NAME	STATUS
Western Prairie Fringed Orchid *Platanthera praeclara* No critical habitat has been designated for this species. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1669	Threatened

CRITICAL HABITATS

THERE ARE NO CRITICAL HABITATS WITHIN YOUR PROJECT AREA UNDER THIS OFFICE'S JURISDICTION.

YOU ARE STILL REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IF YOUR PROJECT(S) MAY HAVE EFFECTS ON ALL ABOVE LISTED SPECIES.

USFWS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE LANDS AND FISH HATCHERIES

Any activity proposed on lands managed by the National Wildlife Refuge system must undergo a 'Compatibility Determination' conducted by the Refuge. Please contact the individual Refuges to discuss any questions or concerns.

The following FWS National Wildlife Refuge Lands and Fish Hatcheries lie fully or partially within your project area:

FACILITY NAME	ACRES
DEUEL COUNTY WATERFOWL PRODUCTION AREA https://www.fws.gov/our-facilities?$keywords="%5C%22DEUEL+COUNTY+WATERFOWL+PRODUCTION+AREA%5C%22"	0

BALD & GOLDEN EAGLES

Bald and Golden Eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act [2] and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) [1]. Any person or organization who plans or conducts activities that may result in impacts to Bald or Golden Eagles, or their habitats, should follow appropriate regulations and consider implementing appropriate avoidance and minimization measures, as described in the various links on this page.

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1. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940.
2. The Migratory Birds Treaty Act of 1918.
3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

There are Bald Eagles and/or Golden Eagles in your project area.

Measures for Proactively Minimizing Eagle Impacts

For information on how to best avoid and minimize disturbance to nesting bald eagles, please review the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines. You may employ the timing and activity-specific distance recommendations in this document when designing your project/activity to avoid and minimize eagle impacts. For bald eagle information specific to Alaska, please refer to Bald Eagle Nesting and Sensitivity to Human Activity.

The FWS does not currently have guidelines for avoiding and minimizing disturbance to nesting Golden Eagles. For site-specific recommendations regarding nesting Golden Eagles, please consult with the appropriate Regional Migratory Bird Office or Ecological Services Field Office.

If disturbance or take of eagles cannot be avoided, an incidental take permit may be available to authorize any take that results from, but is not the purpose of, an otherwise lawful activity. For assistance making this determination for Bald Eagles, visit the Do I Need A Permit Tool. For assistance making this determination for golden eagles, please consult with the appropriate Regional Migratory Bird Office or Ecological Services Field Office.

Ensure Your Eagle List is Accurate and Complete
If your project area is in a poorly surveyed area in IPaC, your list may not be complete and you may need to rely on other resources to determine what species may be present (e.g. your local FWS field office, state surveys, your own surveys). Please review the Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles, to help you properly interpret the report for your specified location, including determining if there is sufficient data to ensure your list is accurate.

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to bald or golden eagles on your list, see the "Probability of Presence Summary" below to see when these bald or golden eagles are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1626	Breeds Dec 1 to Aug 31
Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1680	Breeds Jan 1 to Aug 31

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read "Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles", specifically the FAQ section titled "Proper

Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

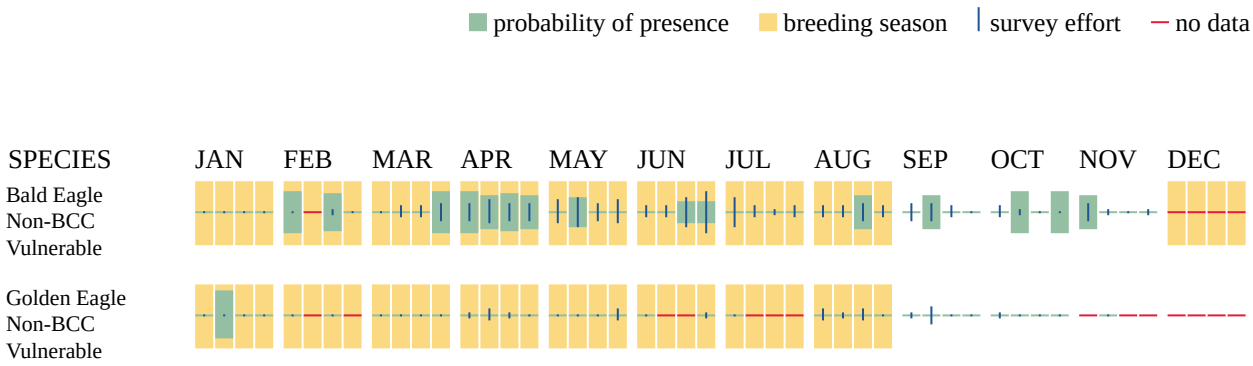
Probability of Presence (■)

Green bars; the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during that week of the year.

Breeding Season (■)
Yellow bars; liberal estimate of the timeframe inside which the bird breeds across its entire range.

Survey Effort (|)
Vertical black lines; the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps.

No Data (–)
A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.



Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Eagle Management https://www.fws.gov/program/eagle-management
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds
- Nationwide avoidance and minimization measures for birds https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/nationwide-standard-conservation-measures.pdf
- Supplemental Information for Migratory Birds and Eagles in IPaC https://www.fws.gov/media/supplemental-information-migratory-birds-and-bald-and-golden-eagles-may-occur-project-action

MIGRATORY BIRDS

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) [1] prohibits the take (including killing, capturing, selling, trading, and transport) of protected migratory bird species without prior authorization by the Department of Interior U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

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1. The Migratory Birds Treaty Act of 1918.
2. The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940.
3. 50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)

For guidance on when to schedule activities or implement avoidance and minimization measures to reduce impacts to migratory birds on your list, see the "Probability of Presence Summary" below to see when these birds are most likely to be present and breeding in your project area.

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
American Golden-plover *Pluvialis dominica* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10561	Breeds elsewhere
Baird's Sparrow *Centronyx bairdii* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/5113	Breeds May 20 to Aug 15
Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1626	Breeds Dec 1 to Aug 31
Black Tern *Chlidonias niger surinamenisis* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3093	Breeds May 15 to Aug 20
Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythropthalmus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9399	Breeds May 15 to Oct 10
Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9454	Breeds May 20 to Jul 31

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9406	Breeds Mar 15 to Aug 25
Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10567	Breeds May 1 to Jul 31
Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* This is not a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) in this area, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from certain types of development or activities. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/1680	Breeds Jan 1 to Aug 31
Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum perpallidus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8329	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 20
Henslow's Sparrow *Centronyx henslowii* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3941	Breeds May 1 to Aug 31
Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9482	Breeds elsewhere
Le Conte's Sparrow *Ammospiza leconteii* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9469	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 15
Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9679	Breeds elsewhere
Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9481	Breeds May 1 to Jul 31
Northern Harrier *Circus hudsonius* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/8350	Breeds Apr 1 to Sep 15

NAME	BREEDING SEASON
Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9561	Breeds elsewhere
Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9398	Breeds May 10 to Sep 10
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres morinella* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) only in particular Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs) in the continental USA https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10633	Breeds elsewhere
Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9480	Breeds elsewhere
Western Grebe *Aechmophorus occidentalis* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6743	Breeds Jun 1 to Aug 31
Willet *Tringa semipalmata* This is a Bird of Conservation Concern (BCC) throughout its range in the continental USA and Alaska. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/10669	Breeds Apr 20 to Aug 5

PROBABILITY OF PRESENCE SUMMARY

The graphs below provide our best understanding of when birds of concern are most likely to be present in your project area. This information can be used to tailor and schedule your project activities to avoid or minimize impacts to birds. Please make sure you read "Supplemental Information on Migratory Birds and Eagles", specifically the FAQ section titled "Proper Interpretation and Use of Your Migratory Bird Report" before using or attempting to interpret this report.

Probability of Presence (■)

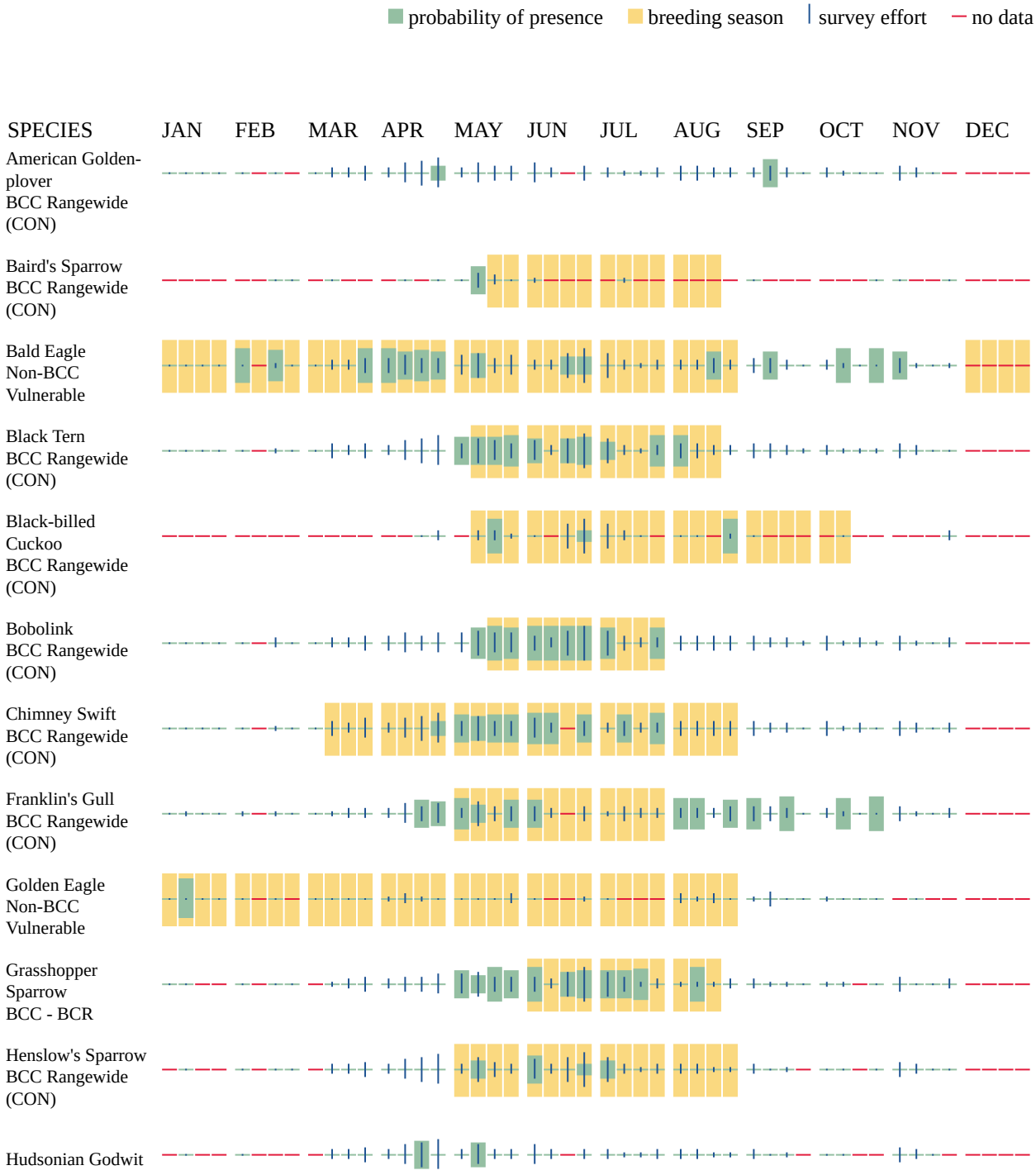
Green bars; the bird's relative probability of presence in the 10km grid cell(s) your project overlaps during that week of the year.

Breeding Season (■)
Yellow bars; liberal estimate of the timeframe inside which the bird breeds across its entire range.

Survey Effort (|)

Vertical black lines; the number of surveys performed for that species in the 10km grid cell(s) your project area overlaps.

No Data (–)
A week is marked as having no data if there were no survey events for that week.



Additional information can be found using the following links:

- Eagle Management https://www.fws.gov/program/eagle-management
- Measures for avoiding and minimizing impacts to birds https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/avoiding-and-minimizing-incidental-take-migratory-birds
- Nationwide avoidance and minimization measures for birds
- Supplemental Information for Migratory Birds and Eagles in IPaC https://www.fws.gov/media/supplemental-information-migratory-birds-and-bald-and-golden-eagles-may-occur-project-action

WETLANDS

Impacts to NWI wetlands and other aquatic habitats may be subject to regulation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, or other State/Federal statutes.

For more information please contact the Regulatory Program of the local U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District.

Please note that the NWI data being shown may be out of date. We are currently working to update our NWI data set. We recommend you verify these results with a site visit to determine the actual extent of wetlands on site.

WETLAND INFORMATION WAS NOT AVAILABLE WHEN THIS SPECIES LIST WAS GENERATED. PLEASE VISIT HTTPS://WWW.FWS.GOV/WETLANDS/DATA/MAPPER.HTML OR CONTACT THE FIELD OFFICE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

Agency:	Barr Engineering
Name:	Jess Butler
Address:	4300 MarketPointe Drive
Address Line 2:	Suite 200
City:	Minneapolis
State:	MN
Zip:	55435
Email	jbutler@barr.com
Phone:	9528322694

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF
GAME, FISH AND PARKS
523 EAST CAPITOL AVENUE | PIERRE, SD 57501

June 12, 2026

Jessica Butler
Barr Engineering Co
4300 Market Pointe Drive, Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55435

RE: Big Stone to Brookings to South Dakota/Minnesota Border

Dear Ms. Jessica Butler or whoever it may concern.

Thank you for contacting the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) regarding the proposed construction of a new 765-kilovolt (kV) transmission line extending from the existing Big Stone South Substation near Big Stone City, South Dakota, through the Brookings Substation near Brookings, South Dakota, as well as 345 kV lines connecting the existing and expanded substations.

You conducted a finalized search of the South Dakota Nongame Conservation Database, formerly the South Dakota Natural Heritage Database, for the above-referenced project on 6/1/2026. This database tracks species at risk, including those legally designated as threatened or endangered, as well as rare species. Rare species are those with restricted distributions, specialized habitat requirements, declining populations, or populations that are isolated due to geographic or climatic factors. Please note that many areas of South Dakota have not been surveyed for rare or protected species, and the absence of a species from the database does not preclude its presence.

Additionally, GFP met with staff from PowerOn Midwest and Barr Engineering Co on 5/4/2026 and 5/13/2026 to discuss mitigation techniques and survey recommendations.

Based on the information provided from these meetings and from the database search, no significant impacts to fish and wildlife resources are anticipated. We expect this determination to remain unchanged provided the following recommendations are considered during project planning and construction:

Fish Recommendations

- Several streams within the project area contain Topeka shiner (*Notropis topeka*; federally endangered) and , as well as support several additional rare fish species identified within the database search.
- If any work is proposed within streams, or if fish passage could be blocked during construction, fish surveys should be completed beforehand and fish should be relocated from affected areas as necessary. Please coordinate with GFP if this is needed.

Wetland and Riparian Habitat Recommendations

- Avoid placing towers within streams or riparian areas adjacent to streams.
- Disturbance to riparian and wetland areas should be kept to an absolute minimum.
- If riparian vegetation is removed, it should be quantified and replaced on-site. Seeding with native species should occur immediately following construction to reduce erosion and sedimentation.
- Power structures located within one-half mile to one mile of a water body should include perch and nest deterrents, as well as effective insulating covers over energized equipment. Line markers to reduce avian collisions should be considered in areas known for bird migration or travel corridors, particularly near wetlands and river crossings.

Grassland Habitat and General Habitat Recommendations

- Avoid further fragmentation of native prairie and intact grassland habitat. There are several high-quality grassland areas within the project area. Transmission lines should be routed outside intact grasslands whenever possible and placed within existing rights-of-way (ROWs), this will also help reduce the impact on rare plant species.
- A site-specific sediment and erosion control plan should be developed for the project.
- Any disturbed grassland habitat should be reseeded with native species following construction.

Grouse Recommendations

- To minimize disturbance to lekking grouse, avoid construction activities adjacent to known leks from March 25 through April 30 when feasible. If construction must occur during this period, activities should begin after 10:00 a.m. when possible.

Migratory Bird and Nesting Recommendations

- The Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) published "Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines" and "Reducing Avian Collisions with Power Lines: State of the Art" in 2012. We recommend following applicable APLIC guidance.
- If tree clearing is necessary, particularly between May 1 and August 1, trees should be inspected for active bird nests prior to removal. Active nests of state-protected birds (SDCL 41-11-10) and federally protected birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act

(MBTA) may not be moved, disturbed, or destroyed until nesting activity has concluded (SDCL 41-11-7).

- We recommend raptor surveys within the same season as project construction to ensure the onsite conditions match the time of construction. If surveys encounter bald eagle nests, or other nests protected under the MBTA, we recommend coordinating with USFWS and SDGFP for proposed buffer distances for infrastructure placement.

Bat Tree-Clearing Recommendations

- Tree clearing should be avoided from June 1 through August 15 to prevent impacts during the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*; federally endangered) pup-rearing season. During this time, most bat species may have non-volant young, and tree removal can be detrimental. If tree clearing during this period cannot be avoided, surveys should be conducted to determine whether bat roosts are present. If bat roosts are identified, please notify GFP as soon as possible to discuss appropriate next steps.
- If you suspect that the northern long-eared bat or tricolored bat (*Pipistrellus subflavus;* proposed federally endangered) are using trees that need to be removed, please coordinate with USFWS.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this project. Please keep GFP involved in future correspondence regarding project planning and implementation. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at 605.394.6052.

Sincerely,

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