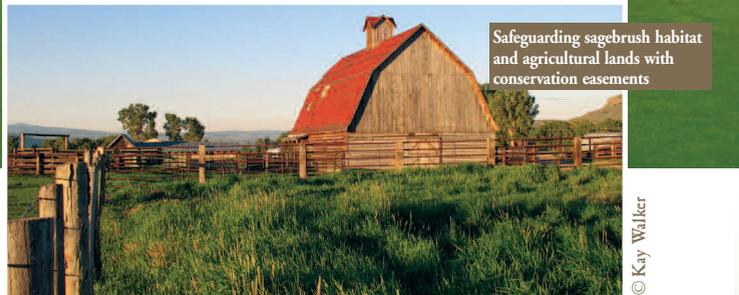




© Sandy Guerrieri



Safeguarding sagebrush habitat and agricultural lands with conservation easements

© Kay Walker

What is this special bird?

The Gunnison Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus minimus*) is a breed apart from other sage-grouse, as their genetic makeup, tailfeather pattern, mating call and smaller size attest. The chicken-sized birds inhabit the sagebrush hills up to about 9200 ft. in elevation. Once plentiful in several western states, Gunnison Sage-grouse have been declining since the 1950s. While small populations exist in several other areas, the largest remaining population is in the Gunnison Basin. Landowners, resource managers and conservationists are concerned about declining overall numbers and finding ways to reverse the decline.

Multiple needs, multiple concerns

Habitat is critically important to the Gunnison Sage-grouse. Their requirements are very specific, and human intrusion has made an impact on their terrain. Sage-grouse need sagebrush, riparian areas, and in winter, south facing slopes. Reservoirs (such as Blue Mesa), roads and housing developments have taken away some of their all-important leks, nesting, brood rearing and wintering habitats. Grazing by wild and domestic animals has affected sagebrush and grasses, which serve both as food supply and hiding cover. Powerlines provide raptor perches for eagles and hawks. Weather patterns, especially drought, have great bearing on habitat health. These and other patterns of human land use have created a predicament for the sage-grouse.



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For more information, visit the Gunnison Sage-grouse website at: www.western.edu/bio/young/gunnsg/gunnsg.htm, or contact:
Bureau of Land Management 970-641-0471, www.blm.gov
Colorado Division of Wildlife 970-641-7060, www.wildlife.state.co.us
Gunnison County Sage-Grouse Conservation Coordinator 970-641-7604, www.gunnisoncounty.org
Natural Resources Conservation Service 970-641-0494, www.co.nrcs.usda.gov
High Country Citizens' Alliance 970-349-7104, www.hccaonline.org
Sisk-a-dee 970-641-3959, www.siskadee.org



Using research and monitoring to gather valuable data

© Sandy Shea



Managing the range for habitat health

© Kelly Corn



Creating vital riparian areas with check dams

© Joe Capodice



Helping protect sage-grouse through responsible recreation

© Xavier Fane

What is being done?

Since 1995, community efforts have been focused on the Gunnison Sage-grouse. Representing government agencies, ranchers, biologists, environmentalists, land developers and concerned citizens, the local Working Group and Strategic Committee are committed to improving habitat and minimizing future impacts to sage-grouse. The *Gunnison Sage-Grouse Rangewide Conservation Plan* (2005) and the *Gunnison Basin Gunnison Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan* (1997) provide guidelines toward appropriate actions. In 2006, Gunnison County adopted regulations that seek to minimize development conflicts with sage-grouse.

Some of the actions supported by the conservation plans are:

- Improving research and monitoring techniques for more accurate science
- Initiating conservation easements to protect habitat in perpetuity
- Pursuing range management practices that protect and enhance sagebrush habitat
- Closing certain roads and areas during spring mating season to protect leks
- Providing guidance to developers and builders for projects in sage-grouse habitat.

An important part of the process is informing people about the Gunnison Sage-grouse and its special place in our environment. We believe that informed people will play a part in helping the sage-grouse thrive again.



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