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## **BIRDS, HERPS, AND SMALL MAMMALS! OH, MY! HELP FWP FIND RARE AND ELUSIVE SPECIES (POSTER AND ORAL PRESENTATION)**

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In 2014, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) expanded their Nongame Program to include a Wildlife Biologist specializing in nongame species work in every region. Although each region has different priorities, the goals within the Nongame Program are universal: (1) Keep common species common, (2) Reverse population declines for species of concern, and (3) Foster awareness and enhance public knowledge and appreciation of nongame species. Our efforts are guided by the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) which prioritizes work on habitats and species of greatest conservation need. These efforts include anything from developing habitat conservation projects to surveying single species. Within the SWAP there are a number of species considered Species of Greatest Inventory Need because they lack sufficient data to determine their status. Often these species are rare, elusive, or difficult to observe. Consequently, we seek the help of others to provide incidental observations in addition to our structured survey efforts. Some of our high priority species include: (1) black rosy-finch, a small high-alpine songbird, (2) greater short-horned lizard, a cryptic reptile dependent on sparse habitat, (3) black-tailed jack rabbit, a lesser-known lagomorph found in open country habitat, and (4) black swift, the largest of the swift species, nesting secretively in shallow caves and behind waterfalls. People interested in assisting with surveys should contact the appropriate FWP nongame lead. By working together, we can provide managers and regulatory agencies with vital information to make well-informed decisions about our valued resources in Montana.