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ESLT is Helping Bi-State Sage-Grouse. Join Them!

Bi-State sage-grouse on the border of California and Nevada are a genetically distinct population of sage-grouse, and are a loved species here in the Eastern Sierra. Due to habitat loss, these birds are at risk of decline. So this September, volunteers are encouraged to join Eastern Sierra Land Trust (ESLT) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as they undertake projects that help this species.

Perhaps the greatest threat to sage-grouse habitat and survival in the Bi-State is the encroachment of pinyon and juniper trees into sagebrush habitat. These tree species are native to the higher rocky hillsides, but they’ve crept into shrub systems due to human’s impact on natural fire patterns. Sage-grouse, pygmy rabbits, and other animals in the sage-steppe did not evolve with these invading trees. Conifer trees provide perches for predators and also modify their surroundings, changing the sagebrush ecosystem to woodland. What’s more, a single pinyon or juniper tree removes 35 gallons of water per day from the sagebrush system, which increases the pace of change from healthy sagebrush steppe to invasive woodland.

Over the years, ESLT and their conservation partners have taken part in different projects to improve sage-grouse habitat on the Eastside. These projects include installing fence tags on barbed wire fences, adding perch deterrents to fence posts, and removing pinyon and juniper trees encroaching on sagebrush ecosystems. ESLT works with Sage-Grouse Initiative, Audubon Society, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and others to accomplish this work.

Many of these projects have taken place on working farms and ranches. Partly due to California and Nevada ranchers’ stewardship, the Bi-State sage-grouse tend to thrive together with livestock. Ranchlands often provide an ideal combination of sagebrush and wet meadow ecosystems, creating perfect conditions for sage-grouse to raise their chicks.

ESLT has an opportunity for volunteers to join them as they improve Bi-State sage-grouse habitat this September. They and the BLM will be partnering up on September 6th and 7th for two days of sage-grouse habitat enhancement near Bridgeport and Bodie. If you’re interested in joining, please reach out to Marie Ring at marie@eslt.org or call her at (760) 873-4554.

Eastern Sierra Land Trust works with willing landowners to conserve vital lands in the Eastern Sierra for their scenic, agricultural, natural, recreational, historical and watershed values. To learn more about ESLT’s ongoing work and how to get involved, please visit www.eslt.org.





Photo caption 1: In 2018, the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service awarded ESLT the National Conservation Leadership Partner of the Year award for leadership in conservation programs that benefit fish, wildlife, and native plants. Photo by Bob Wick, BLM.



Photo caption 2: This September 6th and 7th, volunteers are encouraged to join ESLT and BLM as they improve habitat for Bi-State sage-grouse near Bridgeport and Bodie. To get involved, contact Marie Ring at marie@eslt.org or at (760) 873-4554.