

Introduction

Hi, I'm Brian Dickerson.

I'm a wildlife biologist with the Rocky Mountain Research Station here in Rapid City, South Dakota.

I'm working on a project with the Black-backed woodpecker here in the Black Hills area

as it's been recently petitioned to be listed as threatened or endangered as a distinct population segment.

Some genetic work has been done that shows that the birds here in the Black Hills area are not interbreeding with the main population in the Boreal Forest north of us.

Blackback Woodpecker

The Black-backed woodpecker is a small bird about the size of a Robin. It has an all black back.

It specializes in highly disturbed areas of the forest such as wildfires and mountain [inaudible] outbreaks.

Rocky Mountain Research Station

My role in the project is to support the Rocky Mountain Research Station scientists

in the design of the studies that we do and the implementation.

I will help mentor or train graduate students that come in and seasonals as well

as participate in the field work.

In the field, we do point count surveys where we go to a designated point and passively listen

for the bird for 5 minutes and then use a game collar to play a drum call that, you know,

we can pick up detections of the bird that we may not have during the passive survey.

Point Count Surveys

The most interesting thing about this project is that due to the recent petition,

we know that the results of our population estimate here will be used in the decision

on whether or not this bird gets listed here in the Black Hills.

One of the most interesting times I had researching this bird in the field was a time

when me and the scientist that I was working with were out taking observations

and all of a sudden, we had six Black-backed woodpeckers just going all around us.

And you just don't see that.

You know I've been out in the field researching these birds for six years and covering hundreds

of miles and I've never seen anything like that since.

It was really cool.