



LESSER PRAIRIE CHICKEN

A bird of the shortgrass prairie, lesser prairie chickens like shinnery oak and dry grassland areas. They eat insects, leaves, flowers, acorns, seeds, and grain. With its brilliant yellowish-red air sacs, males make a booming sound that can be heard up to two miles away. The male makes these sounds to mark out his territory on the prairie, attract females and to keep other males away. At one time this bird was very abundant but they have disappeared from more than 90 percent of their former range, mostly due to loss of habitat. The Prairie Chicken Areas south of Portales, NM were purchased beginning in 1940 to provide habitat for preserving and restoring the lesser prairie chicken. The Lesser Prairie Chicken is listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act and a Species of Greatest Conservation Need. NMDGF biologists conduct yearly population and habitat surveys to monitor the status of these iconic western species.