

## SWIFT FOX CONSERVATION TEAM ACTION ITEMS FOR 1999 (KANSAS)

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3.1.1 Kansas completed its third and final year of the track survey (details provided in past annual reports). The survey has proven to be a reliable means of determining the presence of swift fox in areas where:

- 1) roads are abundant
- 2) tracking conditions are good (lots of substrate to see tracks)
- 3) weather conditions are good.

We had poor luck finding tracks last year due to poor dry and windy conditions making track ID very difficult and questionable. This method is much harder to apply to large expanses of grasslands where sand and oil stations may be more appropriate and reliable indicators of presence or absence. We still however added 9 NEW townships to our list of current locations.

3.1.2 same as above. The tracking method currently used will provide information on changes in the distribution of swift fox populations (annual or periodic trends).

3.1.3 pelt tagging has been in place in Kansas since 1994. Due to poor pelt prices, few swift foxes are tagged. Most foxes (~90%) are taken incidentally to coyote trapping (see annual reports), and are discarded in the field due to the difficulties and time required to acquire pelt tags. Hence tagging is not financially worth the effort to the furharvester and valuable information is lost due to the current tagging procedures. Potential changes would be to require furdealers to tag pelts and turn in data sheets to the state in addition to their annual fur transaction record books as opposed to restricting pelt tagging to KDWP employees. I will be proposing this change this coming year.

5.1.1. Swift foxes in Kansas are unique in that they occupy both rangeland and cropland (wheat stubble, winter wheat, corn, sunflower, plowed fields, etc) habitats throughout the short grass prairies. Annual reports for the past three years have provided information on the proportion and types of habitats associated with the presence of swift fox throughout the surveyed areas.

5.1.2. Gap analysis projects are near completion and will provide detailed habitat survey information. Expect final product is expected for 2000.

5.1.3. will be addressed as soon as 5.1.2 is completed. hopefully before Dec. 2000. The data acquired in Kansas throughout years of research has indicated that habitat is less important than previously believed in limiting swift fox distribution. Although short vegetation is important, and substrate where dens can be easily dug, food, predation, certain human disturbances (roads) are more likely to limit swift fox distribution and potential colonization.

8.1.1. KDWP has provided data to universities involved in the GAP projects and has continued distributing information on survey results to other universities and federal agencies.

9.1.3 Important improvements in CRP programs have taken place in the past 2 years , where planted grasses for CRP lands favor more natural species typical of short grass prairie ecosystems. This effort was pioneered by both state and federal agencies to benefit short grass prairie ecosystems. However, substantial still needs to be addressed since a landowner can still plant tall grass prairie to benefit e.g . pheasants, as opposed to native short grass prairie species.