

## A Grower's Guide for Planting Wildlife Conservation Sunflower Plots

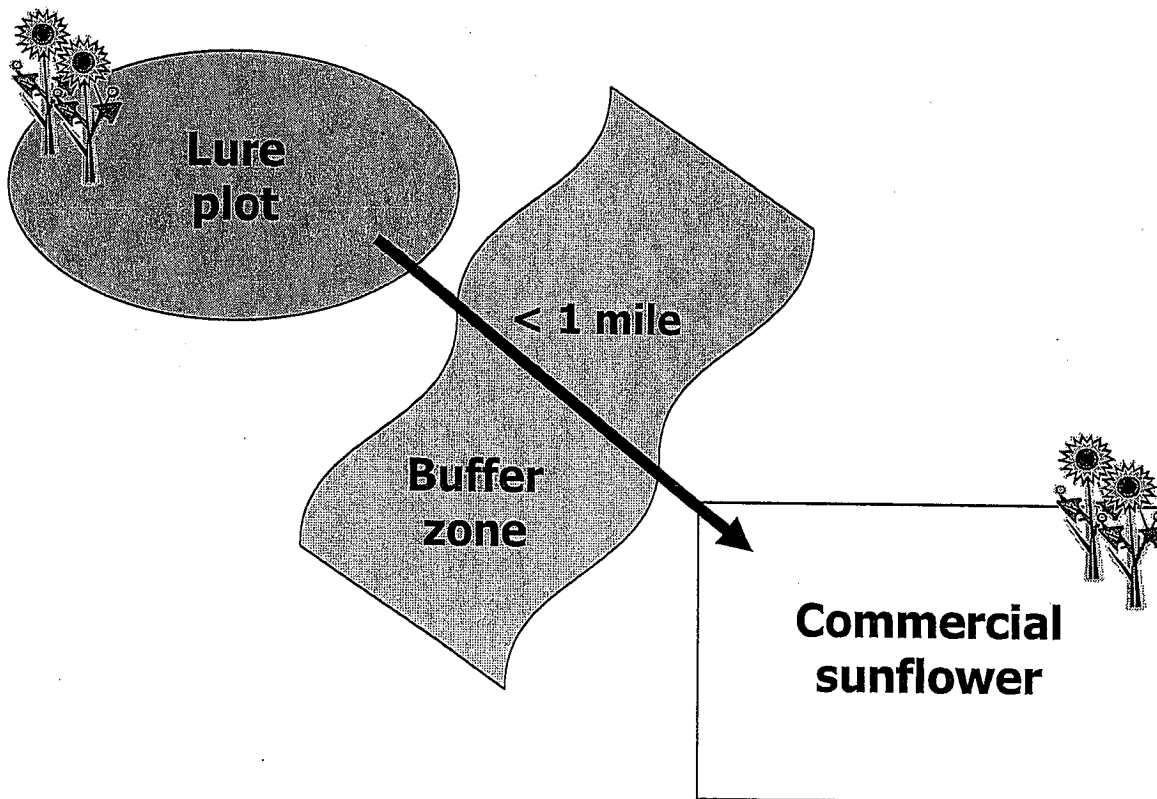
George M. Linz<sup>1</sup>, H. Jeffrey Homan<sup>1</sup>, Heath M. Hagy<sup>2</sup>, Jon M. Raetzman<sup>2</sup>,  
Linda B. Penry<sup>1</sup>, and William J. Bleier<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>USDA, Wildlife Services, National Wildlife Research Center, Bismarck, ND

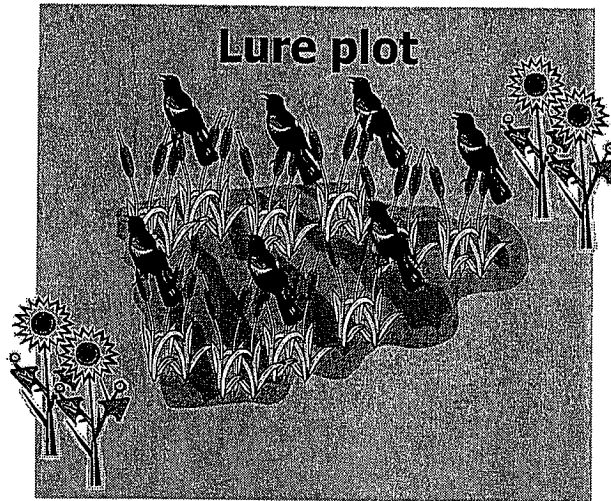
<sup>2</sup>North Dakota State University, Department of Biological Sciences, Fargo, ND

Wildlife conservation sunflower plots (lure plots) are used to protect high value oil and confectionery sunflower. Lure plots are used to draw blackbirds away from commercial fields to reduce sunflower damage. From 2004-2007, USDA Wildlife Services funded a pilot program for growers to plant 20-acre lure plots to test their effectiveness for reducing damage to nearby commercial fields. Damage in the plots ranged from 0% to 100%. We describe here the characteristics of the lure plots that received extensive bird damage. These characteristics provide examples for the proper use of lure plots.

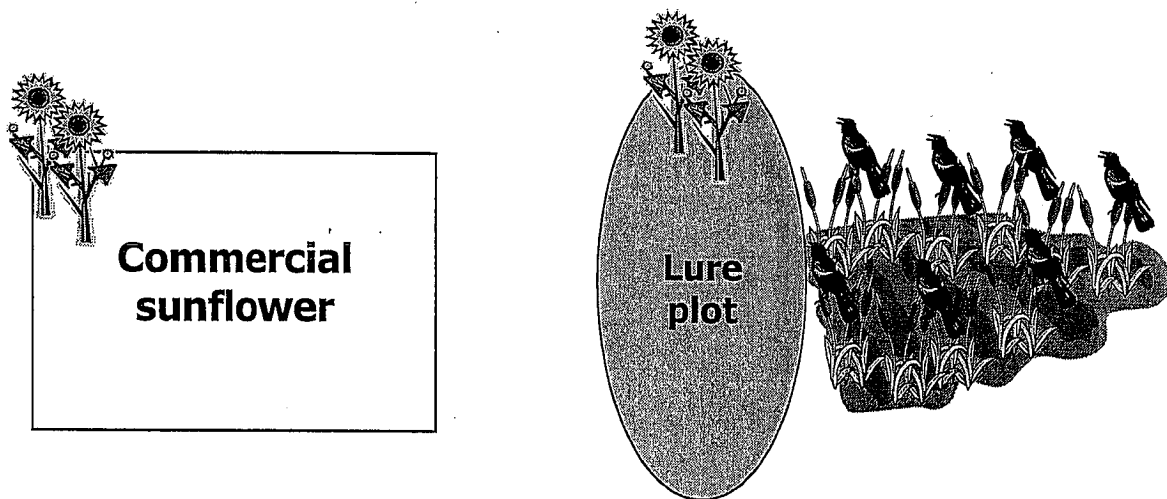
Lure plots should not be placed adjacent to commercial fields, but to be effective they should be within 1 mile.



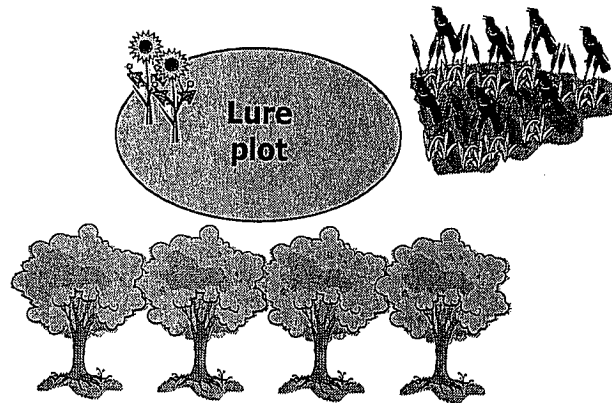
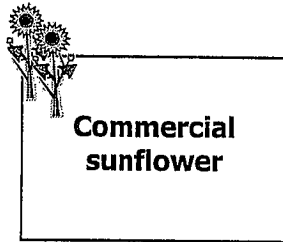
Place the plot near areas with historical blackbird use. Usually, a plot planted on the edges of wetlands with cattail is the best location.



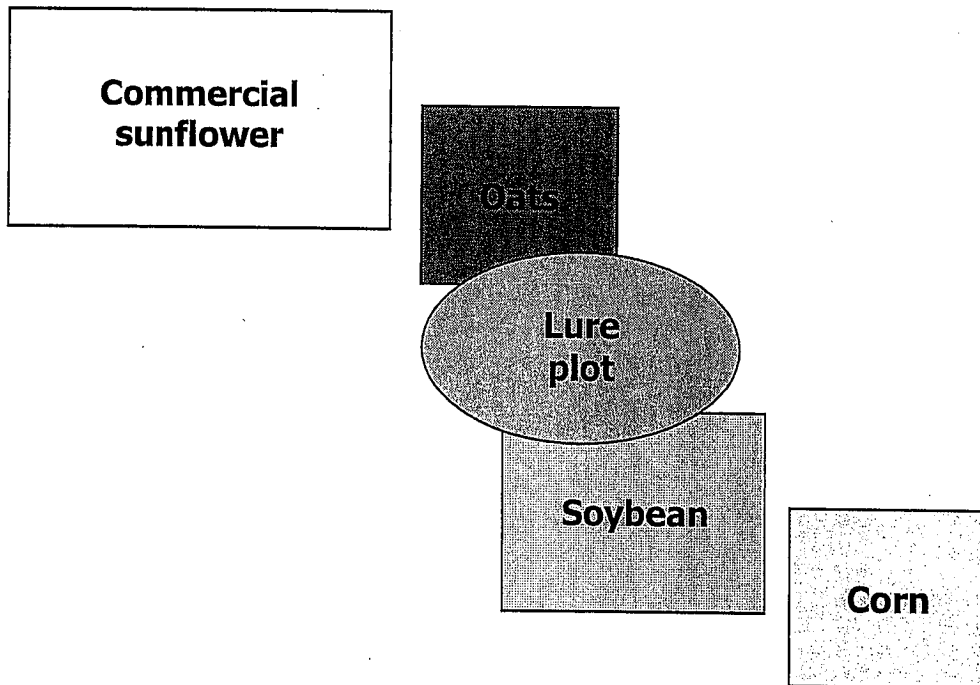
Plant an early maturing variety of oilseed sunflower that matures slightly ahead of the commercial fields. Always try to keep the lure plot in between the bird gathering area and the commercial field.



Keep the lure plot close, within a few hundred yards, of habitats where birds like to gather. Besides cattail-dominated wetlands, shelterbelts are another favorite gathering place.



The combination of land use and lure plot placement can act together to increase protection.



An effective integrated pest management plan should include cattail management to remove roost habitat, harassment with propane cannons, and the use of a preharvest dry down product, such as glyphosate, to avoid late season bird damage.

