

By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

One more desk is filled at the Imperial USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office. Travis Runia, a Farm Bill Biologist, is actually employed by Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory.

He will be providing technical assistance and program support to the NRCS on habitat conservation programs such as WHIP, CRP and EQIP.

Runia, 25, will also provide support in incorporating fish and wildlife habitat considerations in landowner conservation plans in the area.

Another facet of his job is to assist with wetland delineation, environmental compliance evaluation and other wildlife assistance.

In addition, Runia will assist the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the NRCS State Biologist in conducting biological assessments.

The Sibley, Iowa native received his Masters of Science in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from South Dakota State University in 2006. He will obtain his Masters of Science in the same field this spring.

In 2006 Runia worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Waubay National Wildlife Refuge in South Dakota. More recently, he performed a field research project in South Dakota on the influence of large scale land use on the distribution of sharp-tailed grouse and prairie chickens.

Runia said CRP was beneficial for both species in that area.

The biologist's first day on the job was Monday. When not working he enjoys hunting, fishing, boating, wildlife photography and "anything outdoors."

His family resides in Iowa.