Black-crowned Night-Heron - Nycticorax nycticorax

Abundance: Uncommon

Status: NSS3 (Bb) NatureServe: G5 S3B

Population Status: population size is restricted but extirpation is not imminent; only 10 nesting locations are known statewide

Limiting Factor: Habitat (and Human Activity): limiting factors are severe; as with all colonial nesting waterbirds, there is limited available habitat, which is not likely to increase without intensive management and cooperation with private landowners and other land management agencies; loss of wetlands for a variety of reasons is the primary impact; sensitive to human disturbance during nesting

Comment:

Introduction

The Black-crowned Night-Heron is very widespread and occurs in North and South America, Eurasia, and Africa. In North America, it breeds in southern Canada and throughout most of the US, and winters from Oregon south and southeast to Mexico and the Gulf coast. It occurs throughout most of Wyoming, and breeding has been confirmed in 10 general areas. The Black-crowned Night-Heron is considered an uncommon summer resident in Wyoming. It was documented breeding at 16 different sites from 1982 through 1994.

Habitat

The Black-crowned Night-Heron inhabits marshes, swamps, wooded streams, and shores of lakes and ponds. It nests in colonies in emergent vegetation or in shrubs near the edge of water.

Problems

- Impacted by a loss of suitable marsh nesting habitat.
- Nesting colonies are impacted by fluctuating water levels. Nests may be flooded by rising water, while water level subsidence can make nests accessible to mammalian predators.
- Sensitive to human disturbance during nesting, particularly just before and during egg-laying.
- Some populations in the Intermountain West have high DDT levels and exhibit low productivity.

Conservation Actions

- Continue inventory and monitoring efforts and implement the Monitoring Wyoming's Birds grid-based monitoring program to determine density and population trends.
- Maintain a minimum of 10 Black-crowned Night-Heron nesting colonies and 150 breeding pairs of Black-crowned Night-Herons in Wyoming.
- Maintain suitable marsh habitat in areas where this species nests.

Monitoring/Research

Monitor known nesting colonies a minimum of every three years to determine occupancy and estimate the number of nesting pairs.

Recent Developments

Drought-related habitat changes have degraded some of the historic nesting sites and reduced the number of nesting pairs detected during the past several years. A cooperative, 11-state colonial waterbird monitoring program was initiated in 2009 with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This will conclude in 2011, with an Atlas of all known nesting colonies in the 11 western stated produced in 2012.

References

Davis WE. 1993. Black-crowned Night-Heron (Nycticorax nycticorax). In: Poole A, Gill F, eds. The birds of North America. Nr 74. Philadelphia: Academy of Natural Sciences; Washington: American Ornithologists' Union.

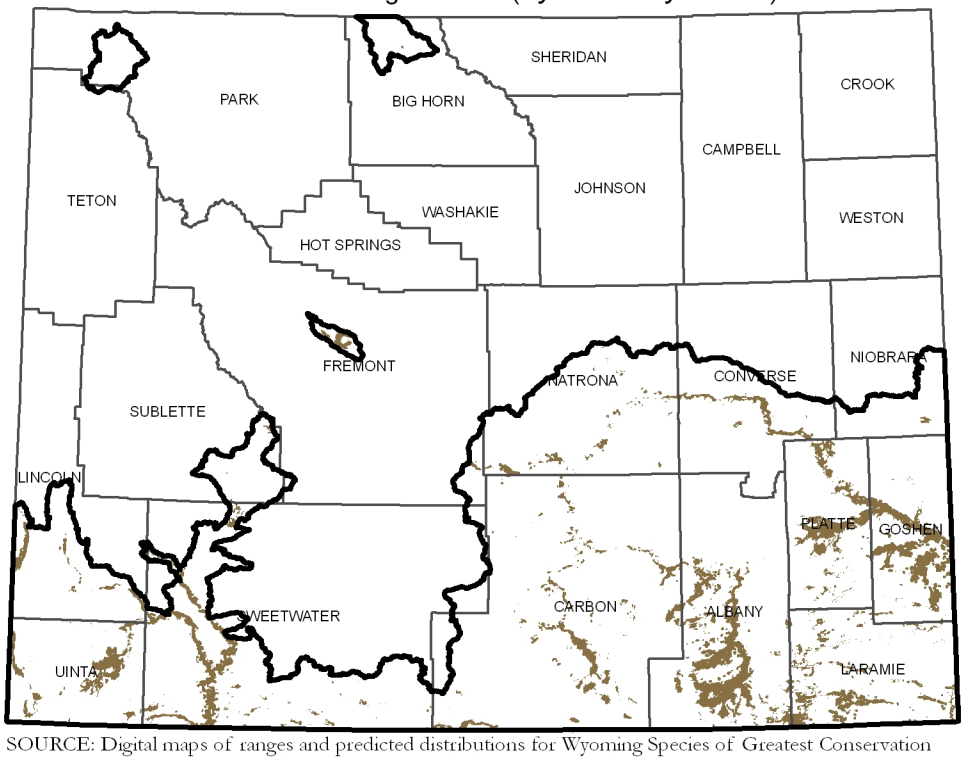
Findholt SL. 1985. Status and distribution of colonial nesting water birds in Wyoming. Nongame Special Report. Cheyenne: Wyoming Game and Fish Department. 67 p.

Leukering T, Carter MF, Panjabi A, Faulkner D, Levad R. 2003. Monitoring Wyoming's birds: the plan for count-based monitoring. In: Nicholoff SH, compiler. Wyoming bird conservation plan. Version 2.0. Wyoming Partners In Flight. Lander: Wyoming Game and Fish Department. p 575-601. Online: www.blm.gov/wildlife/plan/WY/menu.htm.

NatureServe. 2004. NatureServe explorer: an online encyclopedia of life. Version 1.8. Arlington (VA): NatureServe. Online http://www.natureserve.org/explorer.

Oakleaf B, Cerovski AO, Luce B. 1996. Nongame bird and mammal plan: a plan for inventories and management of nongame birds and mammals in Wyoming. Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Nongame Program. 183 p.

Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)



SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution of the species; heavy black lines indicate outermost boundaries of possible occurrence.