Black Tern - Chlidonias niger

Abundance: Common

Status: NSS3 (Bb) NatureServe: G4 S1

Population Status: population size is restricted but extirpation is not imminent; only 3 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; sensitive to human disturbance during nesting

Comment:

Introduction

The Black Tern breeds locally in Canada, the northern two-thirds of the US, and Eurasia. The North American population winters along both coasts from Panama south to Peru. It is scattered across most of Wyoming and although confirmed or suspected breeding has only been recorded in seven general regions. The Black Tern is considered a common summer resident in Wyoming. It was documented nesting at six different sites in Wyoming from 1982 through 1994.

Habitat

The Black Tern inhabits biologically rich marshes and aquatic areas, and usually prefers marshes or marsh complexes greater than 20 ha (50 ac). It nests in small, loose colonies, generally in areas of still water, with 25% to 75% of the surface covered by emergent vegetation, and well-interspersed with open water.

Problems

- The availability and suitability of breeding sites can be unstable between years as a result of fluctuating water levels and changes in land use practices. Most of the historical breeding areas in Wyoming are not reliable breeding sites during years of drought or high water conditions.
- This species is sensitive to human disturbance during nesting.
- Breeding habitat in Wyoming is disjunct and secure breeding sites are limited in distribution.

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 three Black Tern breeding locations and 50 breeding pairs of Black Terns in Wyoming.
- Manage Black Tern nesting areas to maintain wetland complexes at least 20 ha (50 ac) in size with approximately 50:50 emergent vegetation cover to open water ratio, and with a good interspersion of vegetation and water.
- Maintain stable water levels throughout the nesting season in wetlands where this species is breeding.
- Manage nesting areas to minimize human disturbance during the breeding season.

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.

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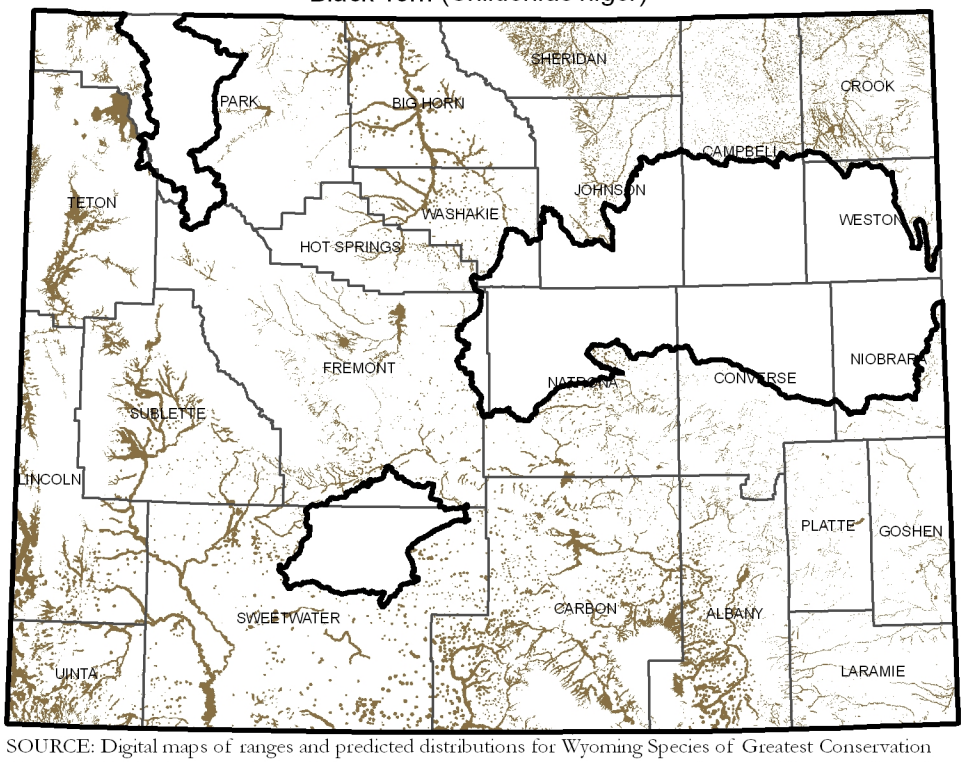
Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)



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.