Bobolink - Dolichonyx oryzivorus

Abundance: Uncommon

Status: NSS4 (Bc) NatureServe: G5 S2

Population Status: population size is restricted but extirpation is not imminent

Limiting Factor: Habitat (and Human Activity): limiting factors are moderate, but on-going habitat loss and degradation due to human activity are likely to increase and negatively affect population status and trends

Comment:

Introduction

The Bobolink breeds from southern British Columbia across southern Canada to Nova Scotia, and south to eastern Oregon, central Colorado, central Illinois, and western North Carolina. It winters in central and southern South America. During summer, it is scattered across the grasslands of Wyoming. The Bobolink is considered an uncommon summer resident in Wyoming.

Habitat

The Bobolink inhabits grasslands and requires large expanses of grass or forb cover. It prefers large, open areas of tall grass, alfalfa, clover, or grain crops; it also inhabits native and introduced wet meadows, ungrazed to lightly -grazed mixed-grass prairies, and fallow fields.

Problems

- This species is impacted by a variety of actions that reduce the availability of grassland and hayfield breeding habitat. This is especially significant when alterations occur during incubation and early nestling stages.

Conservation Actions

- Continue inventory and monitoring efforts and implement the Monitoring Wyoming's Birds grid-based monitoring program to determine density and population trends.
- In areas where this species nests, manage for large areas (>30 ha [75 ac]) of grasslands of moderate height and density and adequate litter.
- Manage nesting areas to minimize disturbance (including haying, burning, and moderate to heavy grazing) during the breeding season.
- In areas where this species nests, conduct prescribed burns in the fall to avoid loss of nesting cover. Burns should be relatively small so a portion of the area contains nesting cover at all times and adequate residual cover for nesting is retained for the following spring.
- Avoid or minimize pesticide use in habitats where this species nests to ensure a food source is maintained. If possible, all pesticide use should be postponed until this species has completed its breeding cycle.
- Conserve grassland habitats by minimizing the conversion of native prairie to croplands, fragmentation, roads, urban development, exotic plants, and a shift in community ecology characteristics.
- Develop and maintain a positive relationship with landowners on whose property this species nests. Educate and cultivate a feeling of participation in landowners to promote beneficial land use practices and management for this species on private land.
- Encourage landowners to avoid potentially negative impacts to nesting areas through the use of financial incentives.
- Manage nesting areas to minimize conflicts with natural resources extraction, wind power development, and recreational activities during the breeding season.

Monitoring/Research

In addition to the Monitoring Wyoming's Birds program, ensure that Breeding Bird Survey routes in grassland habitats are conducted to determine population density and trends. State Wildlife Grants project to develop essential datasets and a plan for minimizing wildlife and community conflicts with wind development in southeastern Wyoming.

Recent Developments

Populations of grassland birds have declined rangewide more than any other group of birds due to habitat degradation, fragmentation, and loss from industrial developments, urbanization, and conversion to croplands.

References

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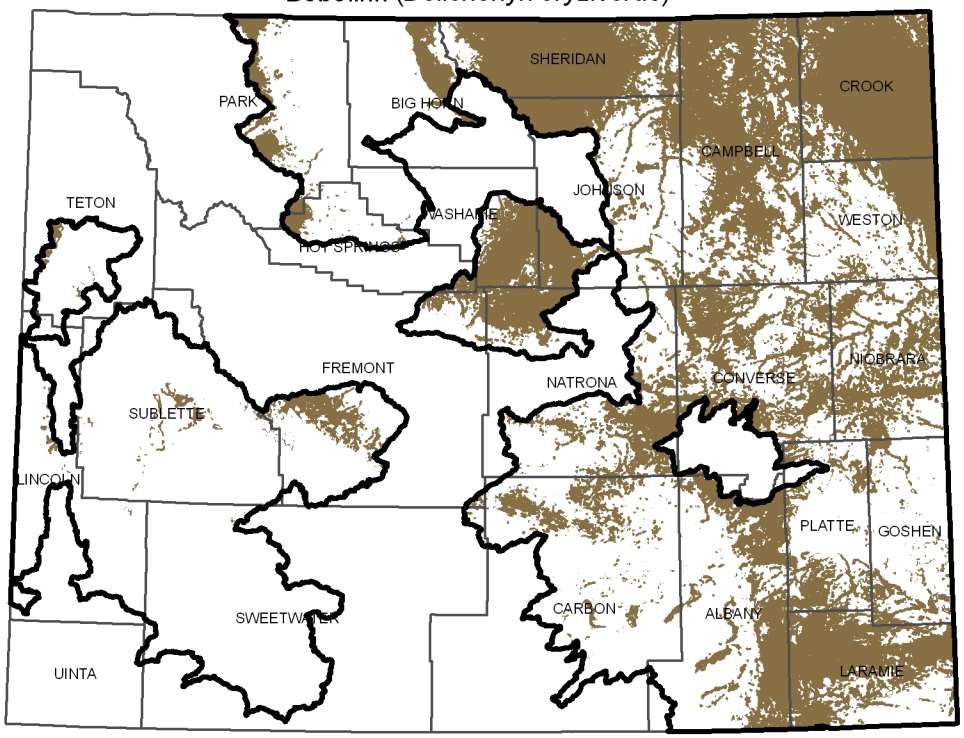
Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)



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.