

## Caspian Tern - *Sterna caspia*

Abundance: Uncommon

Status: NSS3 (Bb)

NatureServe: G5 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 Caspian Tern breeds locally from central Canada south through most of the US to Baja California and Florida, and winters mainly in coastal areas in the southern US south to Mexico. It also occurs in Africa, Eurasia, and Australia. It is scattered across most of Wyoming although confirmed or probable breeding has only been recorded in four general areas. The Caspian Tern is considered an uncommon summer resident in Wyoming. It was documented nesting at four different sites between 1983 and 1994.

### Habitat

The Caspian Tern inhabits marshes and aquatic areas and prefers open areas with sparse vegetation. It nests on the ground in small colonies on sandy or gravelly beaches along lakes, rivers, and marshes. Nests consist of scrapes in rocks or sand, are often exposed and close to water, and are usually on an island or peninsula. It generally forages in shallow water with enough clarity to reveal fish from above.

### Problems

- h Breeding habitat in Wyoming is disjunct and secure breeding sites are limited in distribution.
- h 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.
- h This species is sensitive to human disturbance during nesting.

### Conservation Actions

- h Continue inventory and monitoring efforts and implement the Monitoring Wyoming's Birds grid-based monitoring program to determine density and population trends.
- h Maintain a minimum of three Caspian Tern breeding locations and 35 breeding pairs of Caspian Terns in Wyoming.
- h Maintain stable water levels throughout the nesting season in areas where this species breeds.
- h Minimize human disturbance at nesting sites 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 states produced in 2012.

## References

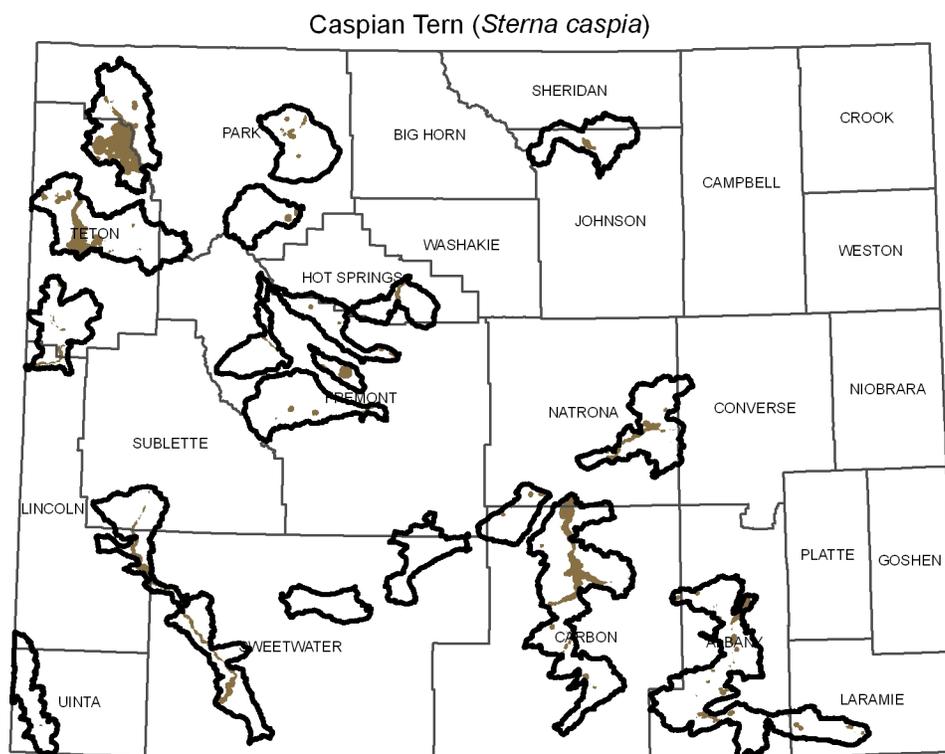
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SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution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