

Chestnut-collared Longspur - *Calcarius ornatus*

Abundance: Uncommon

Status: NSS4 (Bc)

NatureServe: G5 S1

Population Status: population size and distribution are restricted but extirpation is not imminent; 6 years of Monitoring Wyoming Birds density data (2002-2007) have shown the need to continue monitoring trends in grassland habitat

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 Chestnut-collared Longspur breeds from southern Alberta and Manitoba south to west-central Colorado and east to Minnesota. It winters from Arizona east to Kansas and south to north-central Mexico. During summer, it is scattered across the grasslands of Wyoming, mainly in the eastern half of the state. The Chestnut-collared Longspur is considered an uncommon summer resident in Wyoming.

Habitat

The Chestnut-collared Longspur inhabits shortgrass and open mixed-grass prairies. It avoids excessively shrubby areas, although it uses scattered shrubs and other low elevated perches for singing. Within arid habitats, it often prefers relatively more mesic areas; low, moist areas and wet-meadow zones around wetlands may provide suitable habitat.

Problems

- h The primary factor suspected to be limiting nesting populations of this species is the availability of native grasslands as they will not nest in croplands.
- h Conversion of native grasslands to croplands and habitat loss to urbanization and industrialization have caused a contraction in this species' breeding range and rangewide population declines.

Conservation Actions

- h Manage nesting areas to minimize disturbance (including haying, burning, and moderate to heavy grazing) during the breeding season.
- h 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.
- h Continue inventory and monitoring efforts and implement the Monitoring Wyoming's Birds grid-based monitoring program to determine density and population trends.
- h 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.
- h Encourage landowners to avoid potentially negative impacts to nesting areas through the use of financial incentives.
- h Manage nesting areas to minimize conflicts with natural resources extraction, wind power development, and recreational activities during the breeding season.
- h In areas where this species nests, manage for a required minimum patch size of 46 ha (115 ac) to maintain nesting habitat of high and low grass/forb structure with singing perches, particularly in moist areas.
- h 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.
- h 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.

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. Wind power development in nesting areas can be problematic due to the courtship displays this species exhibits during the breeding season.

References

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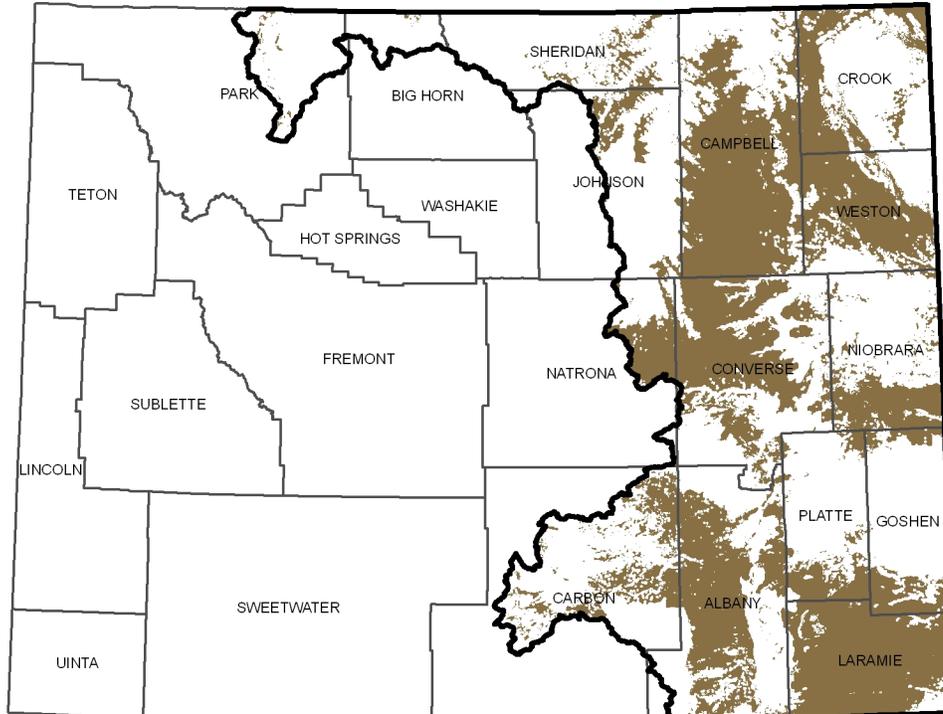
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SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution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