

Grasshopper Sparrow - *Ammodramus savannarum*

Abundance: Common

Status: NSS4 (Bc)

NatureServe: G5 S4

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

Limiting Factor: Habitat (and Human Activity): limiting factors are moderate; although 6 years of Monitoring Wyoming's Birds density data (2002-2007) have shown population stability in grassland habitat, on-going habitat loss and degradation due to human activity are likely to increase and negatively affect population status and trends

Comment:

Introduction

The Grasshopper Sparrow breeds from southern British Columbia, east to southern Maine, and south to southern California and central Georgia, although the main population is on the Great Plains. It winters from central California, east to North Carolina, and south to northern South America. During summer, it is scattered across the grasslands of Wyoming, although it breeds mainly in the eastern half of the State. The Grasshopper Sparrow is considered a common summer resident in Wyoming.

Habitat

The Grasshopper Sparrow inhabits shortgrass prairies, mixed grasslands, meadows, open sagebrush-grasslands, and agricultural areas. It requires herbaceous cover and conspicuous perches, and avoids areas containing more than 35% shrubs.

Problems

- 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.
- h Heavy livestock grazing can be detrimental to nests, young, and the availability of prey.

Conservation Actions

- 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 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 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 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.
- h Manage nesting areas to minimize conflicts with natural resources extraction, wind power development, and recreational activities during the breeding season.
- h Manage nesting areas to minimize disturbance (including haying, burning, and moderate to heavy grazing) during the breeding season.
- h In areas where this species nests, provide large areas (>30 ha [75 ac]) of dense grasslands with heavy forb cover, thick litter depth, grass height up to 46 cm (18 in), overall bare ground of 1 to 2%, shrub canopy cover of 5% or less, and conspicuous singing perches.

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. This species performs low aerial displays during courtship; therefore, wind power development in nesting areas may be problematic.

References

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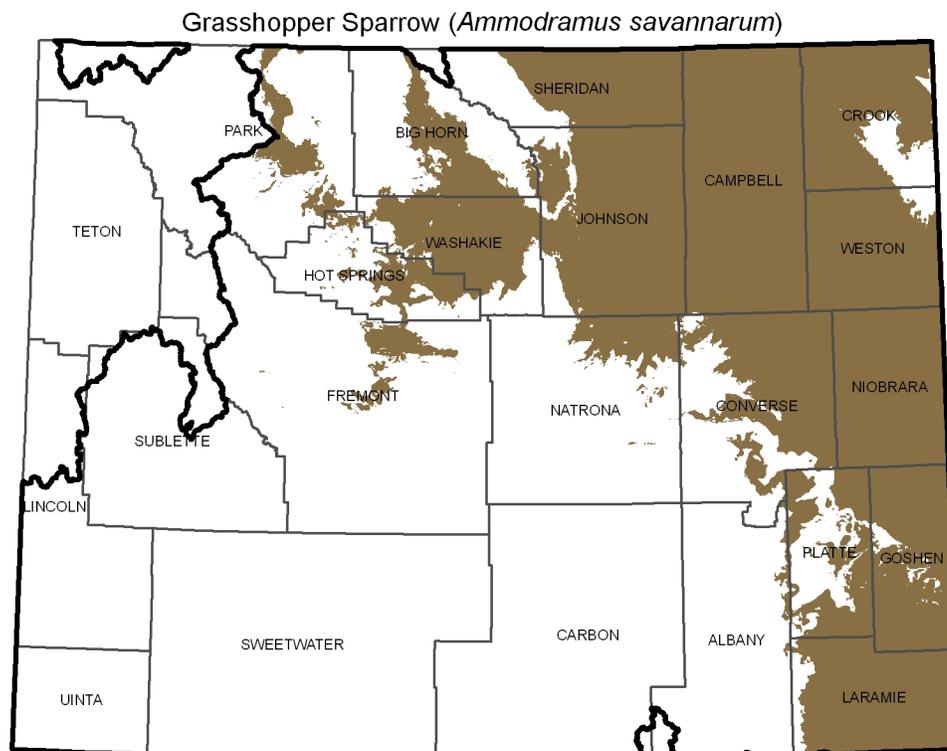
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SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution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