## Long-billed Curlew - Numenius americanus

Abundance: Uncommon

Status: NSS3 (Bb) NatureServe: G5 S3B

Population Status: distribution is restricted but extirpation is not imminent; limited ability to increase distribution; the only place in Wyoming with high density populations occurs in the Merna Junction area

Limiting Factor: Habitat: limiting factor is severe; habitat is limited but is not decreasing; habitat could be affected by future energy development; continue species-specific monitoring to track population trends

Comment:

### Introduction

The Long-billed Curlew breeds in southern Canada south into portions of most of the western US. It winters in California, Arizona, Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, and South Carolina. It occurs throughout a majority of Wyoming, particularly during migration, but only nests where specific habitat conditions occur. The Long-billed Curlew is considered an uncommon summer resident in Wyoming. Only those populations near Pinedale, Cody, and Lusk can be considered locally common.

### Habitat

The Long-billed Curlew inhabits a variety of grassland types ranging from moist meadow grasslands to agricultural areas to dry prairie uplands, usually near water. It prefers a complex of shortgrass prairies, agricultural fields, wet and dry meadows and prairies, and grazed mixed-grass and scrub communities. It nests on the ground in habitat that usually includes: grass less than 30 cm (12 in) high; bare ground; shade; abundant invertebrate prey; and a minimum of 40 ha (100 ac) of suitable habitat.

### Problems

- Long-billed Curlew populations were impacted by uncontrolled hunting in the late 1800s and early 1900s, widespread conversion of native shortgrass prairie to agricultural fields up to the 1930s, and organochlorine pesticides.
- A variety of anthropogenic and other natural habitat disturbances have prevented recovery in many areas.
- Populations in eastern Wyoming may be declining significantly.
- Breeding habitat characteristics have not been completely quantified and evaluated in portions of the State, precluding adequate monitoring and management.

### Conservation Actions

- Continue to conduct annual Long-billed Curlew surveys to determine population trends.
- Evaluate potential habitat in eastern Wyoming to determine suitability, quantity, location, land ownership, and land use and expand surveying efforts into these areas.
- 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.
- 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.
- Encourage landowners to avoid potentially negative impacts to nesting areas through the use of financial incentives.
- Use rotational burning, mowing, and grazing as tools to create and maintain vegetation diversity and a mosaic of early and late successional stages and open ground within grasslands, meadows, and prairies.
- Manage nesting areas to minimize conflicts with natural resources extraction, wind power development, and recreational activities during the breeding season.
- Maintain a mosaic of short vegetation [10 to 30 cm (4 to 12 in)], bare ground, and low structure for nesting, with 5% of the vegetation in a taller state for shade and chick survival.
- Ensure that 2 ha (5 ac) per breeding pair and abundant invertebrate prey are available for successful nesting.
- 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.
- Protect areas traditionally used by Long-billed Curlews, as many individuals return to the same sites year after year.

### Monitoring/Research

Implement additional survey transects, particularly in eastern Wyoming, to better determine statewide population 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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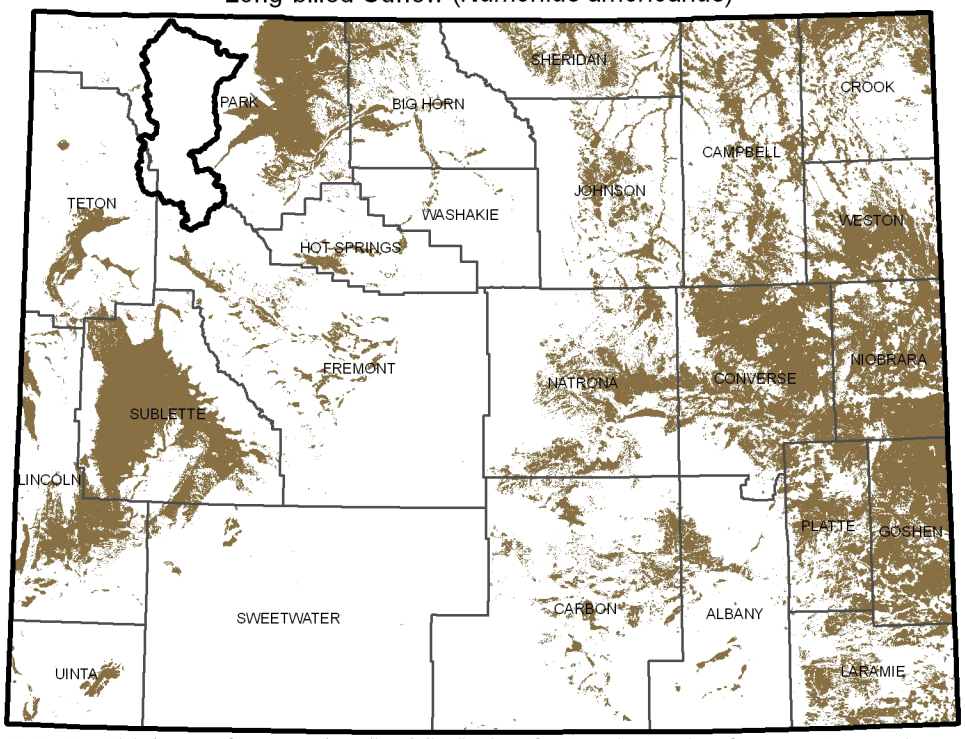


SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution of the species; heavy black lines indicate outermost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