

Northern Pintail - *Anas acuta*

Abundance: Common

Status: NSS3 (Bb)

NatureServe: G4
N5B,N5N

Population Status: The continental population is stable but substantially below the long-term average. The population is stable in Wyoming.

Limiting Factor: Conversion of native grassland to cropland and changes in farming practices have eliminated suitable upland nesting cover.

Wetland loss is also a significant factor impacting this species.

Comment:

Introduction

The Northern Pintail nests on the ground in good vegetative cover, often far from water. Although new pair bonds are formed each winter, these birds are promiscuous during the nesting season. Females incubate the eggs, which all hatch within 24 hours of one another. Ducklings fledge by July or August. The pintail is a dabbling duck and feeds chiefly on vegetation, including seeds, grains and green plants, as well as aquatic invertebrates in shallow water. The Northern Pintail is one of the first duck species to migrate south in the fall, starting in early August. It returns to its breeding grounds in early April.

Habitat

Northern Pintails can be found in marshes and lakes below 8,000 feet in elevation. They nest mainly in Alaska and the Prairie Pothole Region of southern Canada and the northern Great Plains. Favored breeding sites are shallow ephemeral to semi-permanent wetlands with emergent vegetation and low upland cover interspersed throughout prairie grasslands. The continental population of pintails has declined markedly since the 1970s, primarily the result of changing agricultural practices throughout its breeding range. Pintails tend to select sparse upland cover for nest sites and often nest in crop stubble left from the prior fall. Nests are destroyed when fields are plowed in preparation for spring planting. In at least one study, 34% of all pintail nests were destroyed by tillage. Farmers are being encouraged to convert to fall-seeded grains to address this problem.

Problems

- h A large percent of nests are destroyed by spring plowing near wetlands.
- h Human encroachment of wetlands is impacting this species.
- h Population status and trends are not well-known in Wyoming, but the continental population appears to be declining.
- h Species is susceptible to impacts from energy development and other large-scale projects that destroy or impair suitable habitats.
- h Species may be susceptible to impacts caused by climate change.
- h There are no ongoing efforts to delineate important habitats in Wyoming.

Conservation Actions

- h Encourage farmers to plant fall-seeded grains near wetlands where this species nests to avoid destroying nests during spring plowing.
- h Delay haying in locations where this species nests until after July 15.
- h Identify and delineate important habitats.
- h Integrate habitat management for this species and other wetland obligates to the extent possible.
- h Monitor population status and trends.
- h Protect important wetland areas on private lands through conservation easements.
- h Restore and create wetland habitats through available funding and mitigation programs.
- h Work cooperatively with land management agencies and others to protect and manage key habitats.
- 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.

Monitoring/Research

There is no ongoing monitoring or research in Wyoming

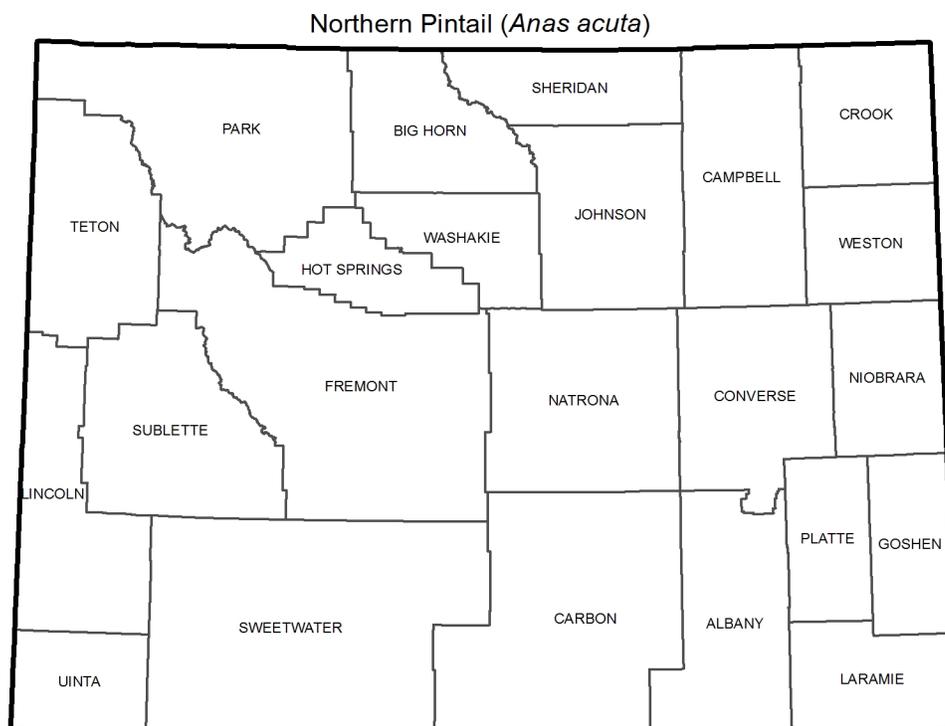
Recent Developments

None.

References

Bellrose, F.C.. 1976. Ducks, geese & swans of North America. Stackpole Books, Harrisburg, PA. 544pp..

Suchy, W.J. and S.H. Anderson. 1987. Habitat suitability index models: northern pintail. USFWS Biol. Rept. 82 (10.145). 23pp..



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 heavy black lines indicate outermost boundaries of possible occurrence. There were too few occurrence points to construct a distribution model. Collection of additional occurrence locations is necessary for assessment of potential distribution in Wyoming.