

## Sage Sparrow - *Amphispiza belli*

Abundance: Common

Status: NSS4 (Cb)

NatureServe: G5 S3

Population Status: Populations are stable but vulnerable to impacts from increased industrialization in preferred habitat

Limiting Factor: Habitat - limiting factor is severe

Comment:

### Introduction

The Sage Sparrow breeds from central Washington, east to northwestern Colorado, and south to Baja California and northwestern New Mexico. It winters from central California, east to central New Mexico, and south to northwestern Mexico. During summer, it occurs throughout most of Wyoming where sagebrush is present. The Sage Sparrow is considered a common summer resident in Wyoming.

### Habitat

Considered a sagebrush obligate, the Sage Sparrow inhabits prairie and foothills shrubland habitat where sagebrush is present. It prefers shrublands with tall shrubs (1 to 2 m [3 to 6 ft]) and low grass cover, where sagebrush is clumped in a patchy landscape. Also, it is area-sensitive and requires a large block of unfragmented habitat to successfully breed and survive.

### Problems

- h Human activities have caused the loss of suitable nesting habitat in some areas.
- h Impacted by fragmentation and removal of sagebrush habitat.

### Conservation Actions

- h Maintain large blocks of unfragmented tall, older, dense stands of sagebrush habitat in areas where Sage Sparrows breed. Sage Sparrows are sensitive to shrub-steppe habitat fragmentation and sagebrush removal, and males return to the same territories, so continuous areas should be greater than 130 ha (50 ac).
- h Continue inventory and monitoring efforts and implement the Monitoring Wyoming's Birds grid-based monitoring program to determine density and population trends.
- h Manage habitat for this species to avoid conflicts with range improvement projects and agricultural development, and to reduce the risk of habitat loss to fire.
- h Maintain sagebrush in large, continuous stands composed of a mosaic of open (5%) to moderate (25%) shrub cover and a variety of ages and heights.
- h Work cooperatively with other agencies to conduct surveys and manage habitat for this species.

### Monitoring/Research

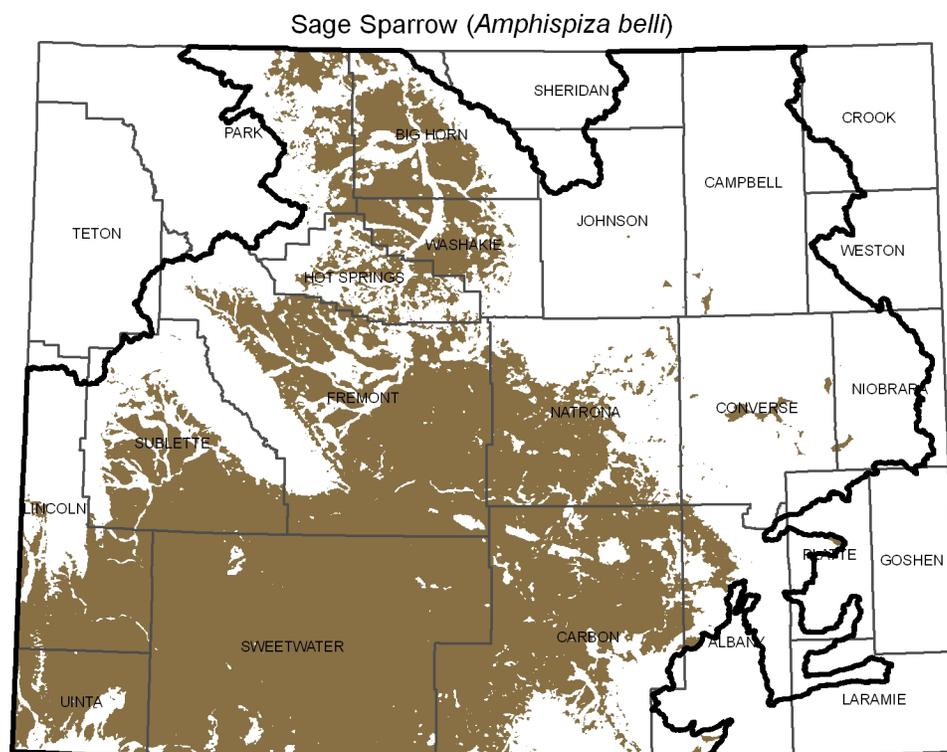
Monitoring data track population density but are not designed to address on-going habitat changes related to increased energy development and climate change. State Wildlife Grants project to conduct a mechanistic study of energy development impacts on sagebrush songbirds. State Wildlife Grants project to evaluate the suitability of Greater Sage-Grouse Core Areas for managing sagebrush obligate and dependent nongame birds. 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

An increase in industrialization in and fragmentation of Sage Sparrow habitat can negatively affect populations.

## References

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- Paige C, Ritter SA. 1999. Birds in a sagebrush sea: managing sagebrush habitats for bird communities. Boise (ID): Partners In Flight, Western Working Group. 47p.
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- Paige C, Koenen M, Kwan D, Mehlman DW. 1999. Sage Sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*): species management abstract. The Nature Conservancy. Online: [www.conserveonline.org](http://www.conserveonline.org).



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.