

Sage Thrasher - *Oreoscoptes montanus*

Abundance: Common

Status: NSS4 (Cb)

NatureServe: G5 S5

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 Thrasher breeds from southern British Columbia south through the Great Basin to Arizona and New Mexico. It winters from central California, east to central Texas, and south to central Mexico. During summer, it occurs throughout most of Wyoming where sagebrush is present. The Sage Thrasher is considered a common summer resident in Wyoming.

Habitat

Considered a sagebrush obligate, the Sage Thrasher inhabits prairie and foothills shrubland habitat where sagebrush is present. It prefers shrublands with tall shrubs and low grass cover, where sagebrush is clumped in a patchy landscape.

Problems

- h Impacted by fragmentation and removal of sagebrush habitat.
- h Nest parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds can be locally significant.

Conservation Actions

- 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 Work cooperatively with other agencies to conduct surveys and manage habitat for this species.
- h In areas where Sage Thrashers occur, maintain large (at least 130 ha [50 ac]), unfragmented stands of sagebrush habitat with a mosaic of open (5%) to moderate (25%) shrub cover; a variety of ages and heights; patchy distribution; and a component of tall, older shrubs.
- 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.

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 Thrasher habitat can negatively affect populations.

References

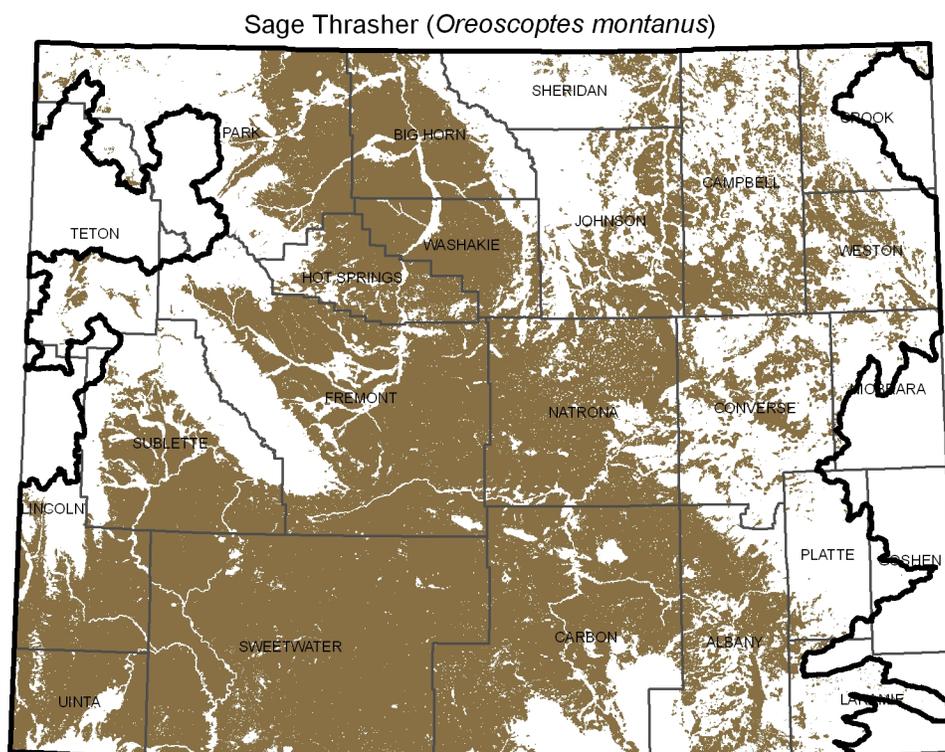
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SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution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