

Sandhill Crane - *Grus canadensis*

Abundance: Common

Status: NSS4 (Bc)

NatureServe: G5
S3B,S5N

Population Status: population size and distribution are restricted but extirpation is not imminent; population is increasing both in Wyoming and throughout the species' range; summer range expansion has been documented in western and central Wyoming.

Limiting Factor: Habitat: habitat availability, the primary limiting factor, is moderate; habitat is decreasing and being fragmented by development; new transmission line corridors and wind farms may pose new challenges for this species as energy development expands in western Wyoming; breeding habitat and migration staging habitat in the traditional range of the species is in western Wyoming; sensitive to human disturbance

Comment:

Introduction

Two populations of sandhill cranes are found in Wyoming, the Rocky Mountain Population (RMP) of greater sandhill cranes and the Mid-Continent Population (MCP) of sandhill cranes. Sandhill cranes can be found about anywhere in Wyoming during the spring, summer or fall. While there is some overlap, cranes found in and west of Big Horn, Washakie, Natrona, and Carbon counties are identified as RMP greater sandhill cranes. Those cranes seen to the east of these counties are identified as from the MCP. Although we would like to encourage management to enhance crane production statewide, the remainder of this species page will focus on the RMP of greater sandhill cranes (*G. c. tabida*). The management objective for this population is 17,000-21,000. A fall survey is done in pre-migration staging areas during September to tract the status of this population. In 2009, 20,321 RMP cranes were recorded with 3,613 (17.8%) in Wyoming. The September staging groups in Wyoming could include birds from Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, and Yellowstone National Park. In Wyoming, RMP greater sandhill cranes are less common during the breeding season than during the fall migration. Sandhill cranes are considered a common summer resident. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department classifies the RMP of greater sandhill cranes as a Species of Special Concern with a Native Species Status of 3 (NSS3) because its breeding population is restricted in number and distribution, habitat is restricted and vulnerable but no recent or on-going significant loss, and the species is sensitive to human disturbance.

Habitat

This species exhibits high fidelity to its breeding sites. Typical nesting habitat occurs in river valleys, marshes, and wet meadows of western and central Wyoming, particularly in ranching country where human populations are low. Omnivorous, sandhill cranes feed on cultivated grains whenever possible, but also eat roots, tubers, seeds, berries, small vertebrates, and invertebrates. Occupies wet-moist meadow grasslands, sedge meadows, irrigated native and introduced meadows, and marshes. Necessary components of fall pre-migration staging habitat are grain or alfalfa fields in close proximity to roosting sites in shallow lakes, marshes, or river bottoms.

Problems

- h Human encroachment of wetlands is impacting this species.
- h Species is susceptible to impacts from energy development and other large-scale projects that destroy or impair suitable habitats.
- h There are no ongoing efforts to delineate important habitats in Wyoming.
- h Breeding population status and distribution are not monitored in Wyoming.

Conservation Actions

- h Identify and delineate important habitats.
- h Integrate habitat management for this species and other wetland obligates to the extent possible.
- 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 Monitor population status and trends.
- h Monitor breeding population status.

Monitoring/Research

A cooperative survey of pre-migration staging areas is conducted each September in Wyoming and surrounding states to monitor this species' status. Monitoring data are maintained and reported annually by the USFWS DMBM.

Recent Developments

None.

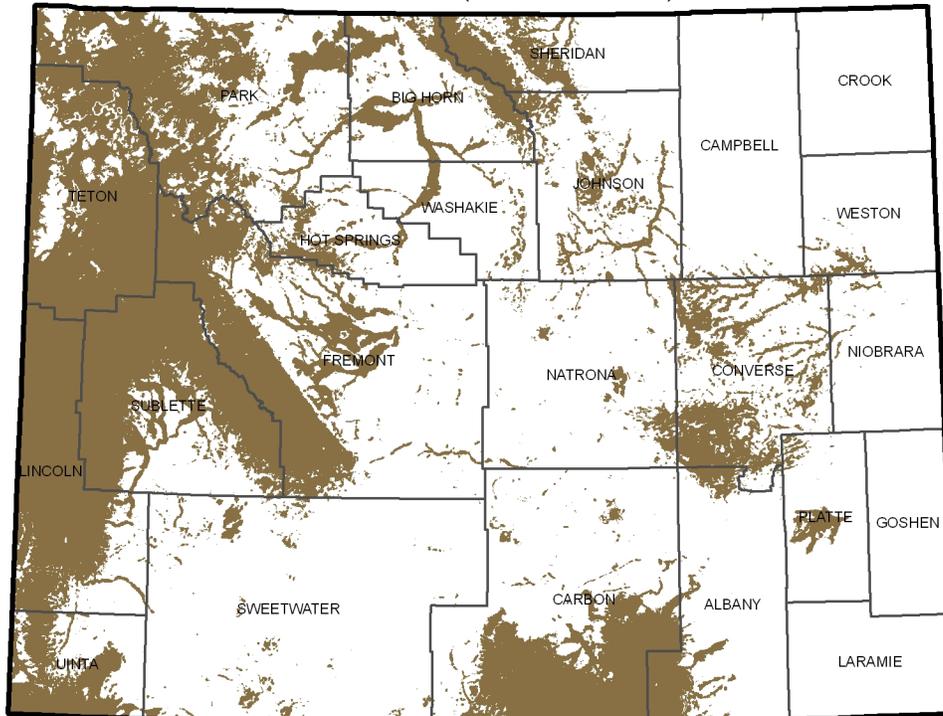
References

Subcommittee on Rocky Mountain Greater Sandhill Cranes. 1997. Management plan of the Pacific and Central Flyways for the Rocky Mountain population of greater sandhill cranes. [Joint] Subcommittee, Rocky Mountain Population Greater Sandhill Cranes, Pacific Flyway Study Committee and Central Flyway Tech. Committee, [c/o USFWS/DMBM], Portland, Oregon. 74pp.

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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.