

Short-eared Owl - *Asio flammeus*

Abundance: Common

Status: NSS4 (Bc)

NatureServe: G5 S2

Population Status: distribution is restricted but extirpation is not imminent; existing Breeding Bird Survey routes and Monitoring Wyoming's Birds survey transects may not adequately track population trends

Limiting Factor: Habitat (and Human Activity): limiting factors are moderate; on-going habitat loss and degradation due to human activity are likely to increase and negatively affect population status and trends

Comment:

Introduction

The Short-eared Owl occurs on all continents except Australia and Antarctica. In North America, it breeds from Alaska and continental Canada south to central California, and east to Maryland. It winters from southern Canada south to southern Mexico. It occurs year-round in Wyoming and is scattered across most of the state in open habitats. The Short-eared Owl is considered a common resident in Wyoming.

Habitat

The Short-eared Owl occupies broad expanses of open habitat with dense, low vegetation, including prairies, grasslands, meadows, marshes, and open sagebrush shrublands. It is strongly associated with ungrazed and undisturbed native grasslands and wetlands that support dense small mammal populations. It is dependent on the meadow vole, which comprises at least 90% of its diet.

Problems

- h Habitat fragmentation can accentuate the impacts of fluctuations of prey populations.
- h This species is impacted by the loss or degradation of both breeding and wintering habitats, including urbanization, industrialization, intensive agriculture, overgrazing, and human disturbance.

Conservation Actions

- h Continue inventory and monitoring efforts and implement the Monitoring Wyoming's Birds grid-based monitoring program to determine density and population trends.
- h Encourage landowners to avoid potentially negative impacts to nesting areas through the use of financial incentives.
- h Manage nesting areas to minimize human disturbance during the breeding season.
- h 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.
- 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.
- h Avoid using pesticides for rodent, insect, and grasshopper control in areas where this species nests and forages.

Monitoring/Research

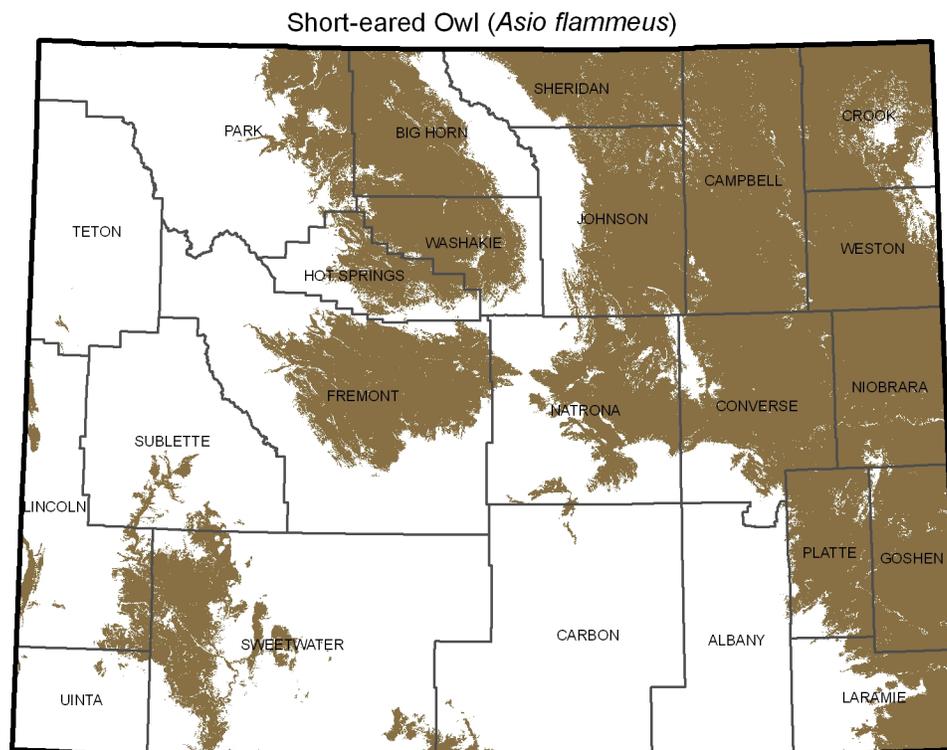
In addition to the Monitoring Wyoming's Birds program, ensure that Breeding Bird Survey routes in grassland habitats are conducted to determine population density and trends. State Wildlife Grants project to develop essential datasets and a plan for minimizing wildlife and community conflicts with wind 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.

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.