

Swainson's Hawk - *Buteo swainsoni*

Abundance: Common

Status: NSSU

NatureServe: G5 S4B

Population Status: population status and trends are unknown; additional long-term monitoring using aerial nesting surveys are needed to adequately determine population status and trends

Limiting Factor: Other: limiting factor is moderate; this species migrates to South America for the non-breeding season and is exposed to pesticide loads not encountered on the breeding grounds

Comment: change is attributed to unknown population status and trends; moved from NSS4 to NSSU

Introduction

The Swainson's Hawk breeds primarily in western North America from Alaska and western Canada, south into northern Mexico, and east to Oklahoma and Iowa. It winters primarily in southern South America, irregularly north to Costa Rica and Panama, and sometimes north to the southwestern US and southern Florida. During summer, it occurs and breeds throughout most of Wyoming where preferred habitat is present. The Swainson's Hawk is considered a common summer resident in Wyoming.

Habitat

The Swainson's Hawk inhabits semi-open and open areas below 2700 m (9000 ft), including prairies, plains, shrub-steppe, large mountain valleys, savannahs, open pine-juniper woodlands, and cultivated lands with scattered trees. It nests in trees that are either isolated or in riparian areas or shelterbelts. Nesting trees may be almost any species of suitable size—taller than 3 m (10 ft) with a diameter at breast height of at least 5 cm (2 in).

Problems

- h Requires aerial surveys to adequately inventory and monitor nesting sites, which can be costly and time intensive.
- h The Swainson's Hawk is impacted by the loss of native grasslands and nest trees.
- h Although monitoring has been occurring, current efforts are not adequate to document population trends or identify needed management over large areas of the State.
- h Habitat fragmentation can accentuate the impacts of fluctuations of prey populations.
- h Impacted by conversion of native prairie to cropland or other uses, urbanization, industrialization, loss of vegetative cover, poisoning, human disturbance near the nest site, and reduced prey availability.
- h Pesticide contamination is a threat to some populations, especially those that migrate to Latin America where they may accumulate DDT and DDE.

Conservation Actions

- h Implement long-term (minimum 5 to 10 years) population trend monitoring using aerial surveys that determine nest occupancy and productivity in years with normal or high prey availability, and presence/absence (total number) monitoring in years with low prey availability.
- h Develop a cooperative, statewide, interagency/non-governmental organization database of nest sites, with data sensitivity built in.
- h Manage Swainson's Hawk nesting areas to minimize the loss of nesting trees and small wooded areas, the potential for degradation of grassland habitat, and conflicts with development and pesticide use.
- h Maintain native grass and forb habitats for rodent and insect prey.
- 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 Ensure cottonwood regeneration for multi-storied canopy in riparian habitat, as well as suitable upland sites such as old homesteads and shelterbelts.

Monitoring/Research

Cooperative inventory efforts are on-going with other land management agencies.

Recent Developments

Wind power development in nesting areas can be problematic if sited improperly.

References

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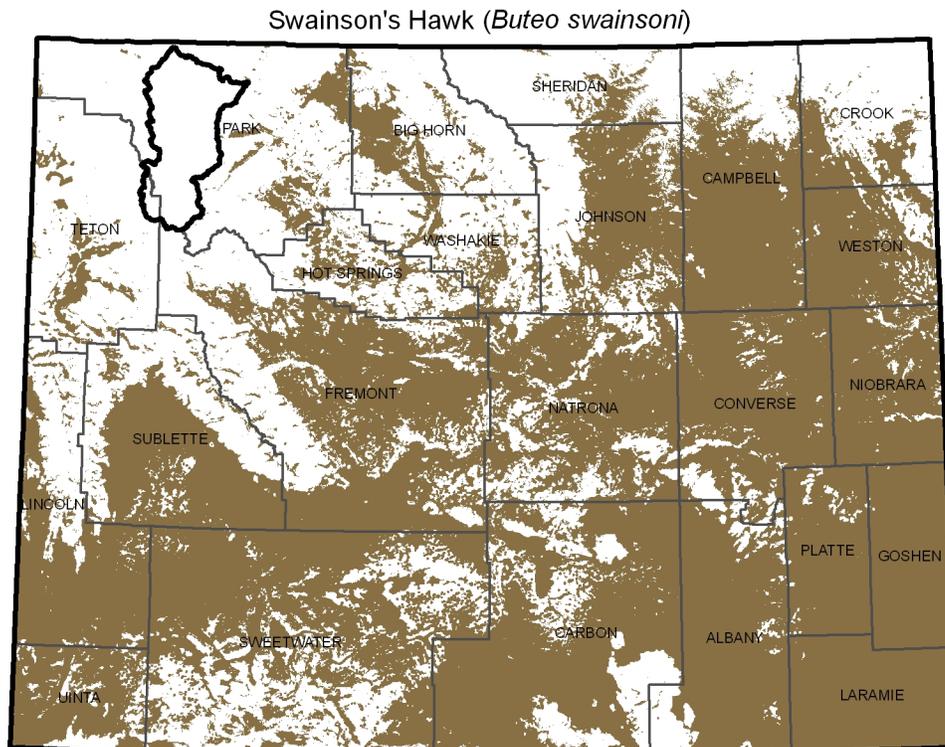
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SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution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