Western Scrub-Jay - Aphelocoma californica

Abundance: Uncommon

Status: NSS3 (Bb) NatureServe: G5 S1

Population Status: population size and distribution are restricted but extirpation is not imminent; breeding population is restricted to Utah juniper habitat in southwestern Wyoming

Limiting Factor: Habitat: limiting factor is severe; Utah juniper habitat is limited; unlikely ability to increase population size and distribution without adequate information exchange and cooperation with other land management agencies to ensure that habitat remains intact

Comment:

Introduction

The Western Scrub-Jay inhabits southwestern Washington southeast to central Texas, and through the southwestern US to southern Mexico. In Wyoming, it nests only in the southwestern corner of the State, and pairs or family groups remain year-round on a permanent territory. Individuals found elsewhere in the State are probably dispersing juveniles. The Western Scrub-Jay is considered an uncommon resident in Wyoming.

Habitat

The Western Scrub-Jay is an obligate species of Utah juniper in Wyoming and nests only in juniper woodlands. Mature trees and high canopy cover are important to nesting, and large trees also function as sentinel posts. The area around the nest usually has relatively sparse canopy cover and moderate amounts of exposed rock. It forages in open sagebrush-grasslands, as well as the juniper woodlands in which it nests.

Problems

- Population status and trends are largely unknown in Wyoming.
- Suitable breeding habitat is restricted to the extreme southwestern portion of the State.
- Sensitive to human activities around the nest and has been known to abandon nests rather quickly.
- Throughout much of the West, resource managers view juniper as an invasive species that should be controlled or replaced with more desirable habitats.

Conservation Actions

- Continue inventory and monitoring efforts and implement the Monitoring Wyoming's Birds grid-based monitoring program to determine density and population trends.
- Maintain mature juniper woodlands with an open canopy, well interspersed with sagebrush and other shrubs, and a mosaic of large trees and snags in areas where this species nests.
- Management or manipulation of juniper in southwestern Wyoming should not favor one of the juniper obligates to the detriment of others. Instead, management should be coordinated to provide a mosaic of juniper woodland conditions.

Monitoring/Research

May need specialized, periodic monitoring to estimate the number of breeding pairs if existing monitoring programs do not detect this species in sufficient numbers to determine population density and trends.

Recent Developments

An increase in industrial development in preferred habitat may negatively affect populations.

References

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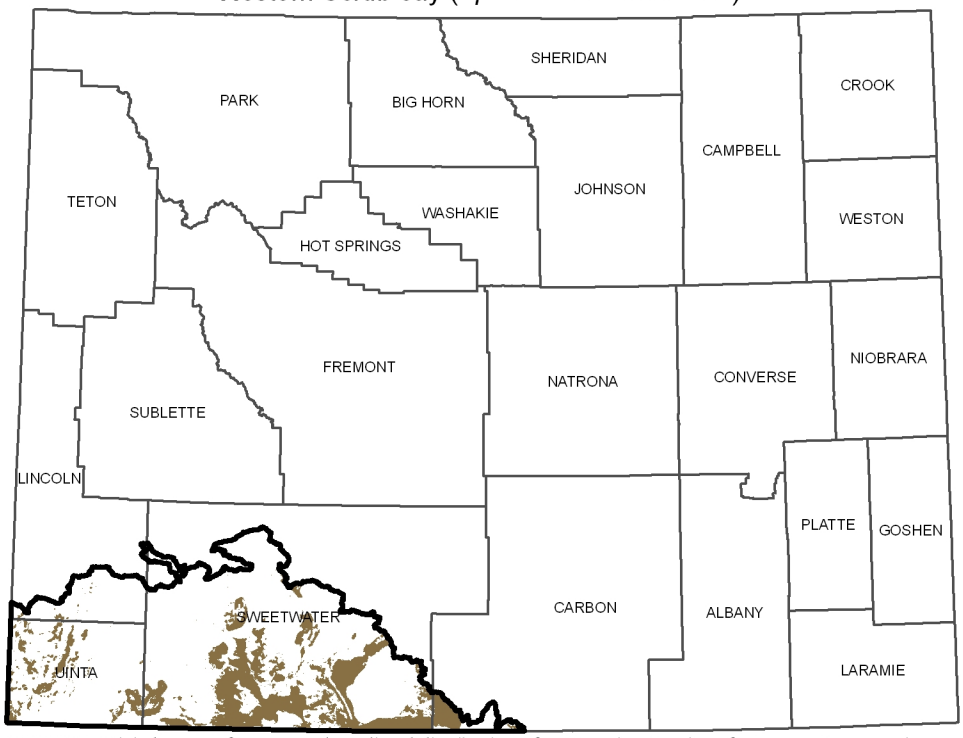

SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution of the species; heavy black lines indicate outermost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