

Yellow-billed Cuckoo - *Coccyzus americanus*

Abundance: Uncommon

Status: NSSU

NatureServe: G5 S1

Population Status: population status and trends are unknown; an extremely limited number of Yellow-billed Cuckoos were detected during recent surveys

Limiting Factor: Habitat (and Invasive Species): limiting factors are severe; cottonwood gallery habitat in parts of Wyoming continues to decline due to the encroachment of invasive species and water management in riparian zones

Comment: change is attributed to unknown population status and trends; moved from NSS2 to NSSU

Introduction

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo is found from southern Canada to South America, breeding across most of the United States (except Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana) and wintering in South America. It is found mainly along the eastern edge of Wyoming, with a few scattered reports from elsewhere in the state. The only areas that currently support the large cottonwood-riparian stands that are required by this species occur in isolated stands along the Bighorn, Powder, and North Platte rivers. The Yellow-billed Cuckoo is considered an uncommon summer resident in Wyoming. The population of Yellow-billed Cuckoos that occupies areas west of the Continental Divide in Wyoming is included within a distinct population that is a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Habitat

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo nests primarily in large stands of cottonwood-riparian habitat below 2100 m (7000 ft). It is a riparian obligate species that prefers extensive areas of dense thickets and mature, deciduous, cottonwood gallery forests near water, and requires low, dense, shrubby vegetation for nest sites. Each nesting pair requires a minimum of 10 ha (25 ac) [prefers 40 ha (100 ac) or more] of broad-leafed forest at least 100 m (330 ft).

Problems

- 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 Breeding habitat in Wyoming is disjunct and secure breeding sites are limited in distribution.
- h Breeding habitat is restricted in Wyoming and may be declining.
- h Human activities have caused the loss of suitable nesting habitat in some areas.
- h Narrow nesting habitat requirements makes species susceptible to habitat degradation and loss.
- h Population status and trends are largely unknown in Wyoming.
- h The availability of large, contiguous stands of cottonwood-riparian habitat required for nesting is restricted and vulnerable to human disturbance, development, changing land use practices, and lack of or extremely limited regeneration, particularly in drainages downstream from dams where seasonal flooding of riparian areas can no longer occur.
- h Insecticide use greatly reduces caterpillar prey base.

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.
- h Delineate crucial range and work cooperatively with land management agencies to maintain habitat within the designated area.
- 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 Encourage landowners to avoid potentially negative impacts to nesting areas through the use of financial incentives.
- h Ensure cottonwood regeneration for multi-storied canopy in riparian habitat, as well as suitable upland sites such as old homesteads and shelterbelts.
- h Identify and survey additional potential breeding sites where this species has not been documented before to avoid focusing management on only a portion of the population.
- h Implement monitoring in suitable habitat where it is presently not being conducted, and continue monitoring in areas where it is currently in place.
- h Increase monitoring efforts to document population trends and identify needed management.
- h Maintain a minimum of three breeding locations in Wyoming.
- h Manage nesting areas to minimize the potential for degradation and conflicts with recreation, grazing, and forest management.
- h Work cooperatively with other agencies to conduct surveys and manage habitat for this species.
- h Work with private landowners to conserve habitat for this species by seeking financial incentives from various sources and providing assistance and expertise with management activities.

Monitoring/Research

The Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory has expressed interest in conducting monitoring in western Wyoming, but the feasibility depends on securing funding.

Recent Developments

The encroachment of invasive species, particularly Russian olive, is replacing native habitat in areas where this species may occur.

References

- Hughes JM. 1999. Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). In: Poole A, Gill F, eds. The birds of North America. Nr 418. Philadelphia: Academy of Natural Sciences; Washington: American Ornithologists' Union.
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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.