

American Pika - *Ochotona princeps*

Abundance: Common

Status: NSSU

NatureServe: G3 S3

Population Status: distribution is restricted but status is unknown; new data suggest that populations are disappearing from other parts of its range; The IUCN considers the rangewide population to be declining.

Limiting Factor: limiting factors are poorly understood and population losses are thought to be due to causes associated with climate change

Comment:

Introduction

The American pika inhabits most mountainous regions in the western North America, however distribution is largely discontinuous. It is largely heat intolerant and is commonly found at higher elevations, although populations are known from sea level up to 3,000 m (Smith and Weston 1990). American pika forage for vegetation during the summer months and build cache reserves, called haypiles, to feed on during the winter. It is a year-round resident, found throughout the state, and is considered common in Wyoming (Orabona et al. 2009).

Habitat

The American pika occupies talus slopes or rock outcrops juxtaposed near suitable consummable vegetation (Smith and Weston 1990). It occasionally occupies man-made substrates, mine tailings, and is commonly found near the meadow-talus interface. The American pika exploits various alpine and sub-alpine plants, grasses, forbs, etc., in conjunction with their availability (Huntly et al. 1986).

Problems

- h Although suitable habitat in Wyoming is widely distributed, it is naturally fragmented and very limited. Geographical isolation of existing populations may leave them vulnerable to demographic and genetic stochasticity.
- h Habitat specialist that occurs in a disjunct pattern within a limited portion of the state.
- h Natural history of the species make surveys difficult and costly to implement.
- h Population densities and trends are not well known.
- h Species is vulnerable to population declines resulting in loss of habitat due to climate change (e.g., mountain pine beetle kill).

Conservation Actions

- h Conduct inventories for species in all suitable habitats in the state.
- h Delineate important habitats and work cooperatively with land management agencies to maintain these within the designated areas
- h Improve survey methodology (e.g., capture, detection, etc.).

Monitoring/Research

No on-going monitoring.

Recent Developments

UW COOP unit initiated a project during the spring of 2010 to delineate important habitat components for the pika in Wyoming. Project funded by various sources including the Governor's Big Game License Coalition.

Petition for listing under the Endangered Species Act in 2007 and ruled "unwarranted" in 2010 by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

References

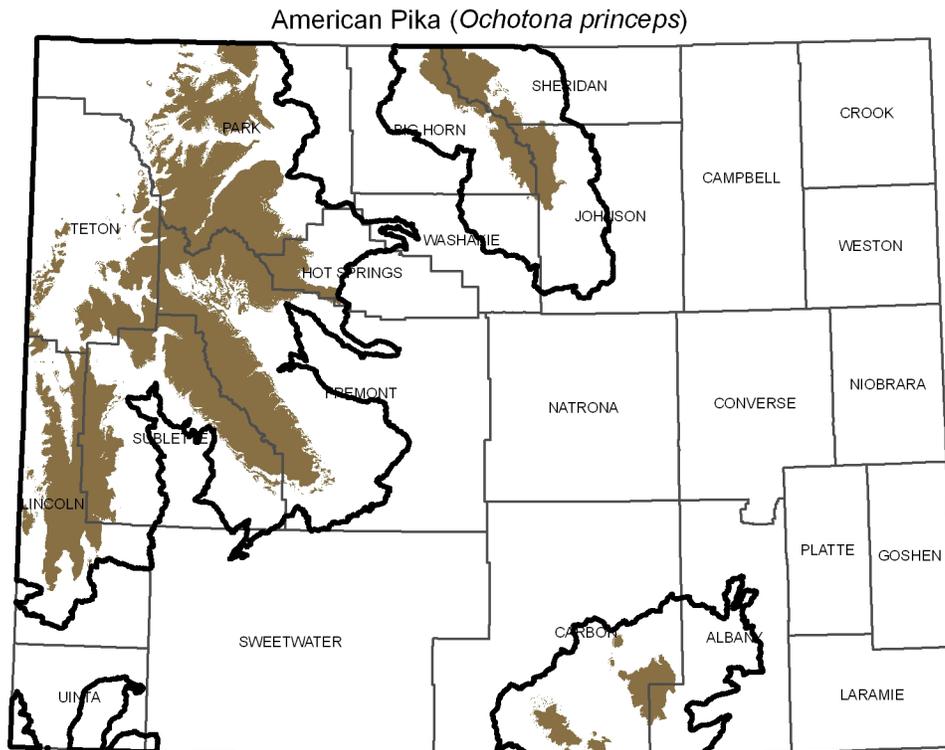
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SOURCE: Digital maps of ranges and predicted distributions for Wyoming Species of Greatest Conservation Need: April 2010. Wyoming Natural Diversity Database. University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. Note that brown indicates the predicted distribution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