

HABITAT GROUP PRIORITIZATION

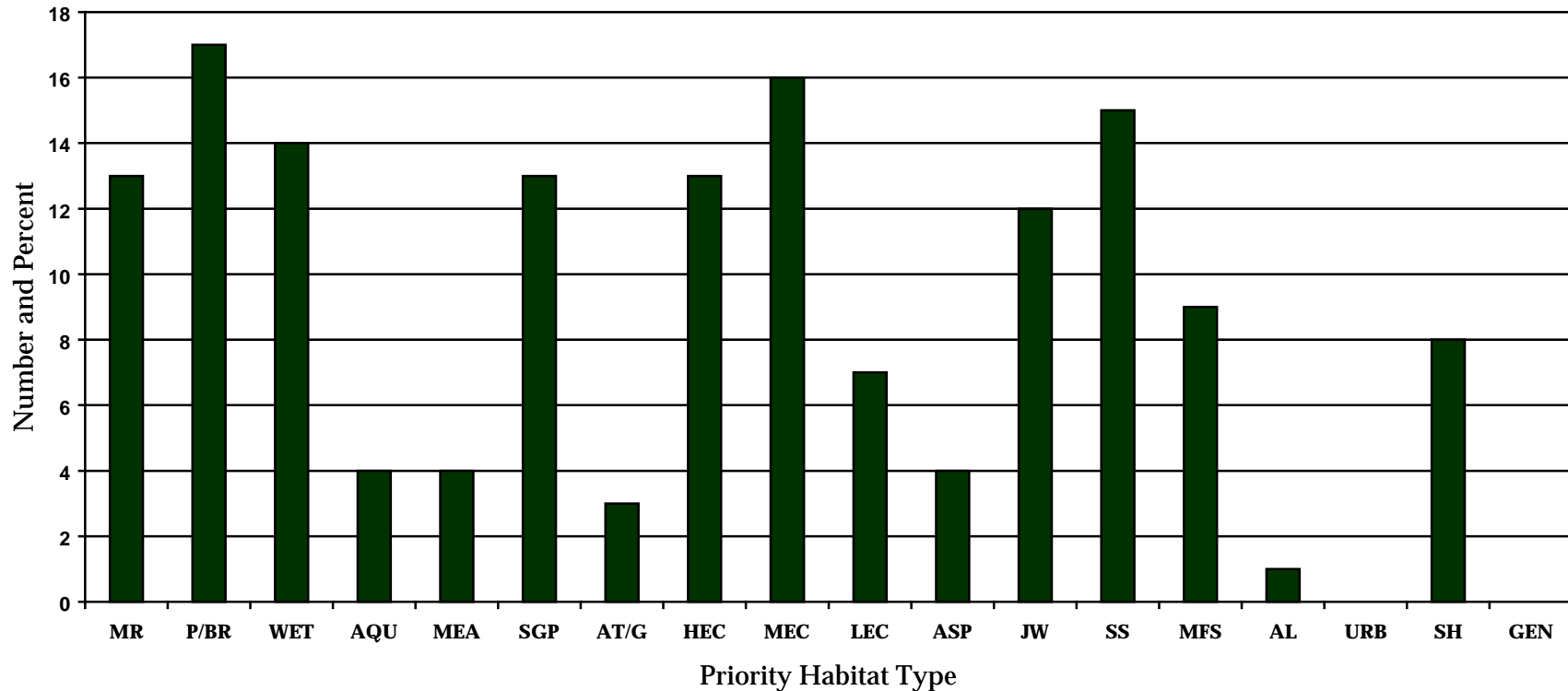
In the West, vegetation associations are mostly uniform within specific habitats and, as most things in nature, do not end at state boundaries. Many of the states within the Western Working Group (WWG) region of Partners In Flight have habitats in common, with the exception of Alaska and California. To coordinate bird conservation planning across boundaries and strive for similar biological objectives for shared species, WY-PIF participants developed a common, general nomenclature for habitat types. Each state in the WWG defined habitat types with the specific differences in their state, but based their hierarchies on the WWG habitat group headings (riparian, grassland, forest, and shrubland) (Table 11).

During the draft planning phase, we determined the highest priority habitats on which to focus initial efforts based on the needs of the highest priority avian species and the number of species that occur in each habitat type. (This initial prioritization of habitat types was based on primary habitats used for breeding, but when determining biological objectives—both population and habitat objectives—habitats used during migration and winter were also considered.) When converted to graph form, it becomes clear that the highest priority habitat types for breeding birds in Wyoming are Montane Riparian, Plains/Basin Riparian, Wetlands, Shortgrass Prairie, High Elevation Conifer, Mid Elevation Conifer, Juniper Woodland, Shrub-steppe, and Mountain-foothills Shrub based on both the number and percent of priority breeding bird species that require that habitat type (Figure 4). The habitat types that Version 2.0 of this Plan addresses include: Montane Riparian, Plains/Basin Riparian, Wetlands, Aquatic, Meadows, Shortgrass Prairie, Alpine Tundra/Grassland, High Elevation Conifer, Mid Elevation Conifer, Low Elevation Conifer, Aspen, Juniper Woodland, Shrub-steppe, Mountain-foothills Shrub, and Specialized Habitats (Cliffs, Rock Outcrops, and Canyons) (Table 11).

Table 11. Wyoming Partners In Flight habitat groups, habitat types, and descriptions. (The five highest priority habitat types for Wyoming are in italics.)

Habitat Group Habitat Type	General Habitat Type Description
Riparian	
<i>Montane Riparian</i>	Dominated by willows, alder, dogwood, Rocky Mountain maple, and water birch; can include narrowleaf cottonwood, spruce, and sedges/rushes; occurs in a mountain setting.
<i>Plains/Basin Riparian</i>	Dominated by cottonwoods, elderberry, buffaloberry, introduced Russian olive, boxelder, willows, green ash, American elm, snowberry, chokecherry, Virginia creeper, and/or grasses/ rushes/sedges; occurs in a lower elevation setting.
Wetlands	Areas where water is present most of the time; includes marshes, shallow water, and areas with water-saturated soil; vegetation includes cattails, rushes, sedges, bulrushes, and willows.
Aquatic	Dominated by open, deep water; includes lakes, ponds, and reservoirs.
Meadows	Includes wet-moist meadows and wet-moist meadow grasslands. Dominated by forbs and non-wetland grasses.
Grassland	
<i>Shortgrass Prairie</i>	Includes but may not be limited to blue grama, buffalo grass, wheatgrass, bluestem, and needle-and-thread grass; includes mixed grass species in localized areas.
Alpine Tundra/Grassland	Tundra, alpine meadows, boulder fields, above 11,000 feet.
Forest	
High Elevation Conifer	Dominated by Engelmann spruce/subalpine fir; can include lodgepole pine, whitebark pine, limber pine, and aspen.
<i>Mid Elevation Conifer</i>	Mixed conifer; pure or mixed stands that can include limber pine, Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, blue spruce, and/or ponderosa pine; can include aspen.
Low Elevation Conifer	Dominated by ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir.
Aspen	Dominated by aspen; can include meadows or conifers.
Shrubland	
Juniper Woodland	Dominated by juniper, but may include other species.
<i>Shrub-steppe</i>	Dominated by sagebrush, greasewood, saltbush, and rabbitbrush; can include a grass component.
Mountain-foothills Shrub	Pure or mixed shrub stands that can include but are not limited to mountain mahogany, serviceberry, Gambel oak, bitterbrush, skunkbush sumac, snowberry, hawthorn, wild plum, chokecherry, and boxelder.
Other Habitat Groups	
Agricultural Lands	Includes pasture, croplands, irrigated native meadows, shelterbelts, and Conservation Reserve Program lands.
Urban	Human settlement.
Specialized Habitats	Areas having unique characteristics such as rock outcrops, cliffs, caves, shorelines, banks, burns, buildings, mines, roadsides, logging, etc.
Generalist	Species that breed in any habitat type.

Figure 4. Number and percent of priority breeding bird species in Wyoming in each priority habitat type. (Because there are 100 priority species, the number and percent are the same.)



Priority Habitat Types:

MR	Montane Riparian	LEC	Low Elevation Conifer
P/BR	Plains/Basin Riparian	ASP	Aspen
WET	Wetlands	JW	Juniper Woodland
AQU	Aquatic	SS	Shrub-steppe
MEA	Meadows	MFS	Mountain-foothills Shrub
SGP	Shortgrass Prairie	AL	Agricultural Lands
AT/G	Alpine Tundra/Grassland	URB	Urban
HEC	High Elevation Conifer	SH	Specialized Habitats
MEC	Mid Elevation Conifer	GEN	Generalist