

## **Attachment 2.8-4 MBHFT in Wyoming**

Because attachment is comprehensive, it may be used for both coal and non-coal projects (WDEQ Guideline 5).

## **Migratory Bird of High Federal Interest in Wyoming COAL MINE LIST**

Based on Wyoming Bird Conservation Plan, 1 May 2000 (Cerovski et al. 2000)

May 2, 2002

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wyoming Field Office,  
4000 Airport Parkway, Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001

The Wyoming Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has compiled the following list from the ongoing work among State and Federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the interested public that produced the Wyoming Bird Conservation Plan. This list will now serve as the Service's list of Migratory Birds of High Federal Interest (also known as the Migratory Bird Species of Management Concern in Wyoming) to be used exclusively for reviews concerning existing or proposed coal mine leased land. The Wyoming Bird Conservation Plan identified "priority species" based on a number of criteria (see below) using the best information available for these generally un-studied species. In many cases, this list reflects identified threats to habitat because no information is available on the species population trends. In some cases it reflects identified population declines though no causal factors have been identified.

Partners in Flight (PIF) is the name given to the coalition of groups that produced the Wyoming Bird Conservation Plan. PIF developed a scoring system to rank species in order of conservation priority. A species' PIF score is the sum of seven sub scores rating the following biological criteria: relative abundance (RA), breeding distribution (BD), non-breeding distribution (ND), threats on breeding grounds (TB), threats on non-breeding grounds (TN), population trends (PT), and area of importance (AI). These criteria are more fully described the end of this document. AI, PT and total PIF scores are listed for each species in Tables 1 and 2. Species with a PIF score of 18 or above, an AI score of 3 or above, and/or PT score of 3 or above were identified as the highest priority species. For more information on the listing process, refer to the Wyoming Bird Conservation Plan, available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4000 Airport Parkway, Cheyenne, Wyoming 82001; or Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Nongame Branch, 260 Buena Vista, Lander, Wyoming 82520.

**Table 1. Level I Species (Conservation Action).** Species clearly needs conservation action. Includes species of which Wyoming has a high percentage of and responsibility for the breeding population, and the need for additional knowledge through monitoring and research into basic natural history, distribution, etc.

Species	PIF Score <sup>a</sup>	AI <sup>b</sup>	PT <sup>c</sup>	Primary Habitat Type(s)
Mountain Plover <sup>d</sup>	28	4	3	Shortgrass Prairie, Shrub-steppe
Sage Grouse	26	5	3	Shrub-steppe
McCown's Longspur	26	3	2	Shortgrass Prairie, Shrub-steppe
Baird's Sparrow	26	2	3	Shortgrass Prairie
Ferruginous Hawk	23	4	3	Shrub-steppe, Shortgrass Prairie
Brewer's Sparrow	23	5	5	Shrub-steppe, Mountain-foothills Shrub
Sage Sparrow	22	5	2	Shrub-steppe, Mountain-foothills Shrub
Swainson's Hawk	21	3	3	Plains/Basin Riparian
Long-billed Curlew	21	2	3	Shortgrass Prairie
Short-eared Owl	20	3	3	Shortgrass Prairie
Peregrine Falcon	19	3	3	Specialized (cliffs)
Burrowing Owl	19	3	4	Shortgrass Prairie
Bald Eagle	18	3	3	Montane Riparian, Plains/Basin Riparian
Upland Sandpiper	18	2	2	Shortgrass Prairie

<sup>a</sup> From the PIF Priority Database (Carter et al. 1997).

<sup>b</sup> AI = Area Importance (from the PIF Priority Database, Carter et al. 1997).

<sup>c</sup> PT = Population Trend (from the PIF Priority Database, Carter et al. 1997).

<sup>d</sup> Species previously appeared on the Service's 1995 list.

Table 2. **Level II Species (Monitoring)**. The action and focus for the species is monitoring. Includes species of which Wyoming has a high percentage of and responsibility for the breeding population, species whose population trend is unknown, species that are peripheral for breeding in the habitat or state, or species for which additional knowledge is needed.

Species	PIF Score <sup>a</sup>	AI <sup>b</sup>	PT <sup>c</sup>	Primary Habitat Type(s)
Cassin's Kingbird	22	3	3	Juniper Woodland, Plains/Basin Riparian
Lark Bunting	22	4	4	Shortgrass Prairie, Shrub-steppe
Dickcissel	21	3	3	Shortgrass Prairie
Chestnut-collared Longspur	21	2	3	Shortgrass Prairie
Black-chinned Hummingbird	20	2	3	Plains/Basin Riparian, Shrub-steppe
Pygmy Nuthatch	20	3	3	Low Elevation Conifer
Marsh Wren	20	3	4	Wetlands
Western Bluebird	19	3	3	Juniper Woodland, Low Elevation Conifer
Sage Thrasher	19	5	2	Shrub-steppe
Grasshopper Sparrow	19	3	5	Shortgrass Prairie, Shrub-steppe
Bobolink	19	2	3	Shortgrass Prairie, Shrub-steppe
Common Loon	18	3	3	Wetlands
Black-billed Cuckoo	18	2	3	Plains/Basin Riparian
Red-headed Woodpecker	18	2	3	Plains/Basin Riparian, Low Elevation Conifer
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	18	3	3	Plains/Basin Riparian
Eastern Screech-Owl	18	3	3	Plains/Basin Riparian
Western Screech-Owl	18	3	3	Plains/Basin Riparian
Western Scrub-Jay <sup>d</sup>	18	3	3	Juniper Woodland
Loggerhead Shrike	18	3	3	Shrub-steppe
Vesper Sparrow	18	5	4	Shrub-steppe
Lark Sparrow	18	3	4	Shrub-steppe
Ash-throated Flycatcher <sup>d</sup>	16	2	3	Juniper Woodland
Bushtit <sup>d</sup>	16	3	3	Juniper Woodland
Merlin	15	3	3	Low Elevation Conifer
Sprague's Pipit	n/a	n/a	n/a	Grassland, Plains/Basin Riparian, Shortgrass Prairie
Barn Owl	n/a	n/a	n/a	Shortgrass Prairie, Urban

<sup>a</sup> From the PIF Priority Database (Carter et al. 1997).

<sup>b</sup> AI = Area Importance (from the PIF Priority Database).

<sup>c</sup> PT = Population Trend (from the PIF Priority Database).

<sup>d</sup> Nicholoff, S. 2002. Wyoming Bird Conservation Plan, Version 1.1. Wyoming Partners In Flight and Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Lander. In press.

### **Wyoming Partners In Flight Process for Prioritizing Species**

Wyoming Partners In Flight participants developed the current list of priority species based on a combination of the seven criteria in the national Partners In Flight Priority Database (Carter et al. 1997). This database serves as a defensible method of prioritizing both species and habitats in need of conservation. The criteria include Wyoming-dependent and Wyoming-independent factors. The Wyoming-independent criteria are constant over a species' range and do not vary for each species. The Wyoming-dependent criteria were the key components used to prioritize species and their conservation action needs. In the absence of any more rigorous statewide surveys, Breeding Bird Survey data dating back to 1968 were used to determine population trends in Wyoming.

#### **Criteria**

Within each criterion below, a species was given a rank score ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least critical rank and 5 the most critical. Each ranked species could potentially receive a low score of 7 and a high score of 35. However, setting conservation goals based only on total score could be misleading; therefore, each total score was reviewed in conjunction with its component parts. In Wyoming, species were initially ranked using total score, area importance, and population trend.

**1. Relative Abundance (RA)** - The abundance of a bird, in appropriate habitat within its entire range, relative to other bird species. This criterion gives an indication of a species' vulnerability to withstand cataclysmic environmental changes. A low score would indicate a higher relative abundance, therefore reducing the risk of complete extirpation from losses in one or more regions. Higher scores indicate a lower relative abundance, thus more vulnerability to drastic losses or population changes.

**2. Breeding Distribution (BD)** - A relative measure of breeding range size as a proportion of North America [defined as the main body of the continent, excluding Greenland, through Panama and the islands of the Caribbean, comprising an area of 22,059,680 km<sup>2</sup> (National Geographic Society 1993)], and as such it provides an index of a species' vulnerability to random environmental events. High scores indicate localized breeding, thus a higher likelihood of serious decline from drastic environmental changes. Low scores indicate wide breeding distribution, therefore less likelihood of extirpation. Used for breeding birds only.

**3. Non-breeding Distribution (ND)** - A relative measure of non-breeding, or winter, range size as a proportion of North America, and as such it provides an index of a species' vulnerability to random environmental events. High scores indicate localized distribution on the non-breeding grounds. Low scores indicate wide distribution on the non-breeding grounds, therefore less likelihood of extirpation. Used for wintering birds only.

**4. Threats on Breeding Grounds (TB)** - The ability of a habitat in an area to support populations of a species in that area. Two factors are considered here: 1) each species' demographic and ecological vulnerability (the potential inability of a species to recover from population loss by normal reproductive effort due to low reproductive rate, high juvenile mortality, or both; and the level of ecological specialization of a species and, hence, its potential inability to withstand environmental change), and 2) habitat loss or disruption (a combination of the amount of habitat or conditions necessary for survival and reproductive success that has been lost since 1945, and the amount that is anticipated to be lost in the future). High scores indicate either a large loss of habitat or a species that is an extreme ecological specialist. Low scores indicate a stable or increasing habitat or a species that is an ecological generalist. Used for both breeding and wintering birds.

**5. Threats on Non-breeding Grounds (TN)** - Range-wide threats on non-breeding, or winter, grounds. This is scored using the same criteria as threats on breeding grounds but reflects non-breeding issues, including migratory habitat. Used for wintering birds only.

**6. Population Trend (PT)** - The overall population trend of each species assigned independently for each state, province, or physiographic area. This criterion must meet two thresholds, reliability and magnitude, to warrant either a very high or very low score. When possible, a score was assigned using BBS data, which incorporated a population trend uncertainty score based on the statistical validity of the BBS data (i.e. a species must be detected on a minimum of 14 BBS routes per state for population trends to have statistical significance). This criterion was chosen to alert managers to species with modest, but certain, population declines.

**7. Area Importance (AI)** - The abundance of a species within a state, province, or physiographic area relative to its abundance throughout its range. This criterion helps direct conservation efforts toward areas that are most important to a species' survival. Area Importance is scored locally; therefore, high scores indicate that a large proportion of the species' breeding or winter range occurs in Wyoming, or a species is using a habitat that is only available in Wyoming. Low scores indicate that a small proportion of the species' range occurs in Wyoming, or the preferred habitat is widespread across its range. Used for both breeding and wintering birds.

### **Priority Species**

Priority bird species in Wyoming were identified from the PIF Priority Database (Carter et al. 1997) and by qualitative, informed decisions. Those species with a total score of 18 or above, Area Importance (AI) of 3 or above, and/or Population Trend (PT) of 3 or above from the database, or with a total score less than 18 but of significant local interest were identified as the highest priority species. However, as more information becomes available, the highest priority species for Wyoming may change, as this is a dynamic database that allows for updated information to be periodically inserted and reviewed. The primary habitat type or types required for breeding were identified for each species to determine the highest priority habitat types for the state.

### Literature Cited

- Carter, M. F., W. C. Hunter, D. N. Pashley, J. S. Bradley, C. S. Aid, J. Price, and G. S. Butcher. 1997. Setting landbird conservation priorities for states, provinces, and physiographic areas of North America. Partners In Flight Priority Database Final Report, Colorado Bird Observatory, Brighton.
- Cerovski, A., M. Gorges, T. Byer, K. Duffy, and D. Felley. 2000. Wyoming Bird Conservation Plan, Version 1.0. Wyoming Partners In Flight, Lander, WY.
- Nicholoff, S. 2002. Wyoming Bird Conservation Plan, Version 1.1. Wyoming Partners In Flight and Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Lander. In press.