



Grasslands Conservation Council
of British Columbia

Conservation Data Centre

Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum*

Physical Description:

Length: 12 cm.

Unstreaked breast is buff colour. Yellow spot at bend of wing and between eye and base of bill. Tail is very short and narrow.

Status:

Global: G5
Subnational: S2B
COSEWIC:
Provincial: Red List

Habitat:

Birds prefer native shrub-grasslands composed of short to middle height (20 to 60 cm) grass cover with 25 percent cover as bare ground. Breeding occurs in areas with lower grass cover, less litter and greater forb height and variability in dispersion than areas occupied during non-breeding season. Sparrows forage in open unvegetated areas.



Habitat Atlas

Range within BC:

In British Columbia, this bird breeds in the Okanagan and Lower Similkameen valleys.

Nine known breeding sites in British Columbia; only 2 of which are regularly used-Goose Lake near Vernon and the West Bench grasslands on the Penticton Indian Reserve.

Elevational range is 275 to 945 metres.

Breeding habits:

Sparrows arrive at breeding sites in May.

Birds nest on the ground, in clumps of dense grass.

Lay 3-6 eggs in early June; normally 2 broods per summer.

Ecological Significance:

Special Significance

This secretive bird occurs in British Columbia in very low numbers in dry grassland habitats that are being lost to agriculture and urban development. The remaining bunchgrass rangelands must be properly managed and maintained to provide the habitat these birds require. Improving the condition of rangeland to provide tall, healthy bunchgrasses and low shrub density should be a priority for habitat preservation.

Food Habits

Diet consists of seeds, forbs and insects.

Agricultural Significance:

Avoid development or cultivation of remaining low elevation dry shrub-grasslands. Employ land management practices which encourage the growth of healthy indigenous grassland communities.

Seed rangelands with native grasses whenever possible.

Carefully monitor and reduce use of pesticides.

Why the species is at risk:

Habitat loss due to agriculture and urban development in low elevation shrub/grasslands.

Moderate to heavy grazing in most remaining shrub-grassland areas which decreases grass cover and height and increases shrub density.

Use of insecticides and herbicides could be directly harmful or reduce prey and habitat.

Seeding ranges with non-native grasses.

Quirky Unique Anecdote:

High-pitched song sounds like the long buzz of an insect; often sings at night.

First Nations belief about/use of the species:

References:

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