



Baird's Sparrow

Baird's Sparrow Factsheet

The Baird's sparrow is a small, short-tailed finch endemic to the northern Great Plains. It has a tan, buff, or tinged yellowish (ochre) face, with a prominent dark spot on the upper rear of the ear coverts. Its behavior and ecology have been shaped by the historical conditions of the Great Plains and the health of its populations dependent on the conditions of native prairie.

Baird's sparrow has suffered population declines due to habitat loss mainly from the conversion of native prairie and grasslands to agriculture and heavy levels of grazing,

Range: The Baird's sparrow nests in the Dakotas, Montana, and Minnesota, and the Canadian provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.

It winters primarily in northern Mexico, although some may be found in southwestern Texas, southwestern New Mexico, and southeastern Arizona.

Status: Although the Baird's sparrow has experienced population declines, the species currently appears stable. Surveys for the last 15 years estimate the number of Baird's sparrow in North Dakota at approximately 279,000 breeding pairs, and in Canada at between 500,000 and 2 million breeding pairs. Canada removed the Baird's sparrow from its list of threatened species in 1997.

Conservation Measures: The Partners for Wildlife program in North Dakota has many programs aimed at keeping cattle producers on the land and thus reducing the threat of conversion of native prairie to croplands.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently purchasing grassland easements in the Dakotas to protect native prairie. This program will ensure habitat for the Baird's sparrow is maintained. .

Baird's Sparrow and Other Prairie Species

How can the Baird's sparrow population remain stable while other prairie species such as the mountain plover and the black-tailed prairie dog remain in decline?

Habitat preferences:

Baird's sparrow: prefer taller to mixed-grass prairie. Available habitat in North Dakota is 5 to 8 million acres.

Mountain Plover: prefer sparse cover or very short grass including prairie dog towns. With a great number of prairie dogs eliminated throughout their range, mountain plover habitat has also been severely restricted.

- Summer range: Mostly in Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming.
- Winter range: Approximately 90 percent of the mountain plovers winter in California.
- Mountain plover strongholds are in northeastern Colorado and northeastern Montana.

Black-tailed Prairie Dog: has experienced at least a 95 percent reduction in available habitat since the turn of the century. The range of the black-tailed prairie dog extends from southern Canada to northern Mexico and from approximately the 98th meridian west to the Rocky Mountains. They occur in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas, and have been extirpated in Arizona since the 1960's. Recently, occupied acreage for black-tailed prairie dogs was estimated to be less than one million acres.

Population Status:

Baird's sparrow: Approximately 279,000 breeding pairs in North Dakota. The Baird's sparrow also has a significant and stable population in Canada estimated between 500,000 and 2 million breeding pairs.

Mountain Plover: Less than 10,000 individuals. Breeding Bird Surveys indicate a 50% decline since 1966.

Black-tailed Prairie Dog: Estimating numbers of prairie dogs is very difficult; the range of the species is vast and much of it is remote. Populations in different locales are periodically expanding and/or decreasing, and all available census techniques are subject to considerable variability.

Monitoring Species of Concern:

The Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to monitor the Baird's sparrow, mountain plover, and prairie dogs with the assistance of our partners.

[Return to the FWS Baird's Sparrow Home Page](#)

[Return to the FWS Mountain-Prairie Region Home Page](#)

[Privacy](#) • [Department of the Interior](#) • [FirstGov](#) •

[Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#)

[Who We Are](#) • [Questions/Contact Us](#)