

Brown-headed Cowbird

Molothrus ater

Class: Aves
Order: Passeriformes

Conservation Status

Heritage Agency

G Rank: G5 USFWS/NOAA: BLM: AA:
S Rank: S3B SOA: Species of Greatest Conservation Need USFS: IUCN: Least Concern

Final Rank		
Conservation category: II. Red		
II = high status and either high biological vulnerability or high action need		
<u>Category</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Score</u>
Status:	-20 to 20	6
Biological:	-50 to 50	-23.6
Action:	-40 to 40	24
Higher numerical scores denote greater concern		

Status - variables measure the trend in a taxon's population status or distribution. Higher status scores denote taxa with known declining trends. Status scores range from -20 (increasing) to 20 (decreasing).

	Score
<i>Population Trend (-10 to 10)</i>	6
Survey wide BBS demonstrates a significant decline of -1.1% annually between 1980 and 2006 (P=0.00, n=3601; USGS 2006).	
<i>Distribution Trend (-10 to 10)</i>	0
Unknown	
Status Total:	6

Biological - variables measure aspects of a taxon's distribution, abundance and life history. Higher biological scores suggest greater vulnerability to extirpation. Biological scores range from -50 (least vulnerable) to 50 (most vulnerable).

	Score
<i>Population Size (-10 to 10)</i>	2
1,340 (Rich et al. 2004).	
<i>Range Size (-10 to 10)</i>	-2
Rare breeder in Southeastern Alaska, accidental elsewhere (Armstrong 1995). ~63,805 calculated in ARCMAP.	
<i>Population Concentration (-10 to 10)</i>	-10
Does not concentrate.	
<i>Reproductive Potential</i>	
<u>Age of First Reproduction (-5 to 5)</u>	-5
Females breed at 1yr (Lowther 1993).	
<u>Number of Young (-5 to 5)</u>	1.4
1 to 7 eggs (Scott and Ankney 1980).	
<i>Ecological Specialization</i>	

<u>Dietary (-5 to 5)</u>	-5
Seeds and arthropods (Lowther 1993).	
<u>Habitat (-5 to 5)</u>	-5
Grasslands with low or scattered trees. May occur in woodland edges, shrub thickets, prairies, pastures, orchards, and residential areas (Lowther 1993).	
Biological Total:	-24

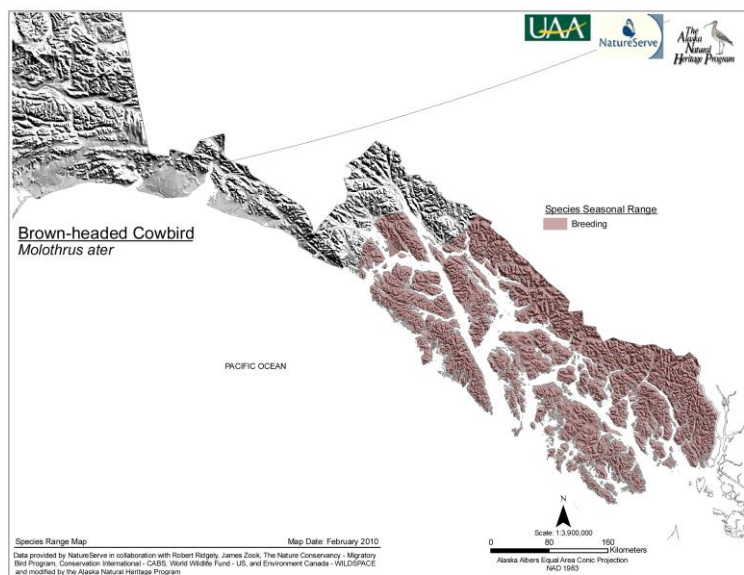
Action - variables measure current state of knowledge or extent of conservation efforts directed toward a given taxon. Higher action scores denote greater information needs due of lack of knowledge or conservation action. Action scores range from -40 (lower needs) to 40 (greater needs).

	Score
<i>Management Needs (-10 to 10)</i>	2
Managed and protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.	
<i>Monitoring Needs (-10 to 10)</i>	10
Not currently monitored.	
<i>Research Needs (-10 to 10)</i>	2
Range has expanded due to habitat fragmentation and clearings (Lowther 1993). Contiguous forests have the potential to limit this species because they depend on openings. Not limited by hosts because a host generalist (Lowther 1993).	
<i>Survey Needs (-10 to 10)</i>	10
No studies specific to this species and not detected by statewide surveys.	
Action Total:	24

Supplemental Information - variables do not receive numerical scores. Instead, they that are used to sort taxa to answer specific biological or managerial questions.

Harvest:	None or Prohibited
Seasonal Occurrence:	Breeding
Taxonomic Significance:	Monotypic species
% Global Range in Alaska:	<10%
% Global Population in Alaska:	<25%
Peripheral:	Yes

Range Map



References

- Armstrong, R. H. 1995. Guide to the birds of Alaska, 4th ed. Alaska Northwest Books, Anchorage, AK. 322 pp.
- Lowther, P. E. 1993. Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*). In: The Birds of North America. Vol. 7, No. 47 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and the American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of July 3, 1918, Ch. 128, 40 Stat. 755 (1918) (current version at 16 U.S.C. §§ 703-712).
- Rich, T. D., C. J. Beardmore, H. Berlanga, P. J. Blancher, M. S. W. Bradstreet, G. S. Butcher, D. W. Demarest, E. H. Dunn, W. C. Hunter, E. E. Inigo-Elias, J. A. Kennedy, A. M. Martell, A. O. Panjabi, D. N. Pashley, K. V. Rosenberg, C. M. Rustay, J. S. We
- Scott, D. M. and C. D. Ankney. 1980. Fecundity of the Brown-headed Cowbirds: passerine chickens? *Auk* 100:583-593.
- U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). 2006. North American Breeding Bird Survey Internet data set. Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. 18 December 2006 (<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/retrieval/>)

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For details on the development of the ASRS and criteria, please see: Gotthardt, T. A., K. M. Walton, and T. L. Fields. 2012. Setting Conservation Priorities for Alaska's Wildlife Action Plan. Alaska Natural Heritage Program, University of Alaska Anchorage, AK.