

---

## Black Rosy-Finch

*Leucosticte atrata*

---

Aves — Passeriformes — Fringillidae

### CONSERVATION STATUS / CLASSIFICATION

Rangewide:	Apparently secure (G4)
Statewide:	Vulnerable (S3)
ESA:	No status
USFS:	Region 1: No status; Region 4: No status
BLM:	No status
IDFG:	Protected nongame

### BASIS FOR INCLUSION

Lack of population estimates and trend data.

### TAXONOMY

Despite some evidence of variation in bill size and shape between mountain ranges, no subspecies are currently recognized (Johnson 2002). Of the 3 species of rosy-finch that occur in North America (an additional 4 species also occur in Asia), the black rosy-finch is by far the darkest in color and in the middle position geographically between the gray-crowned rosy-finch (*L. tephrocotis*) to the north and west, and the brown-capped rosy-finch (*L. australis*) to the south and east. Hybridization between the black rosy-finch and 1 of the 6 subspecies of the gray-crowned rosy-finch (*L. t. tephrocotis*) was first discovered in the Bitterroot Range along the Montana-Idaho border (Mewaldt 1950), and subsequently in the Seven Devils Mountains (French 1959).

### DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

The black rosy-finch is found breeding above treeline in suitable habitat from central Idaho and west-central Montana southward through southeastern Oregon, northern and eastern Nevada to southern Utah and western and north-central Wyoming (Johnson 2002). Winter range for this species includes its breeding range, either on alpine tundra and open slopes just below treeline when snow levels are high, or lower in intermountain valleys and east slopes of mountains when snow levels are lower and higher slopes are snowbound (Johnson 2002). In Idaho, the black rosy-finch is known to breed in the Seven Devils Mountains (French 1959), Salmon River Range (Johnson 2002), White Cloud Peaks (Rogers 1984), Sawtooth Range (French 1959), Boulder Range (Burleigh 1972), Pioneer Mountains (French 1959), Lost River Range (Svingen 1997), and Lemhi Range (Johnson 2002). Northernmost winter records from Challis and Sun Valley are well within the breeding range for the state (Johnson 2002); winter range in Idaho extends southward throughout southern Idaho with records existing for both Boise and Pocatello (Trochlell and Svingen 1998). No population estimates exist for the black rosy-finch (Rosenberg 2004), primarily because of the lack of Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data for this species.

## **POPULATION TREND**

There are no BBS data available for the black rosy-finch because of the remoteness (high elevation) of breeding sites for this species. Winter population estimates also are lacking due to the nomadic behavior of winter flocks in response to changing weather and snow depth (Johnson 2002). As a result, there is currently no information on population trend for this species, either throughout its range in general or in Idaho specifically.

## **HABITAT AND ECOLOGY**

Nests above timberline throughout its range, wherever cliffs and rock slides provide nest sites with protection from falling rocks and hail, and where there are adequate feeding grounds on tundra, fellfields, rock slides, snowfields, and glaciers within flying distance of nests (Johnson 2002). In Idaho, nests have been found at 2620 m (8600 ft) in the Seven Devils Mountains, typically on north-facing cliffs overlooking snowfields (Johnson 2002). During migration and in winter, also found in open situations, fields, cultivated lands, brushy areas, and around human habitation (Groves et al. 1997a). Eats seeds in winter and seeds and insects on breeding grounds (Groves et al. 1997a, Johnson 2002). Is 1 of only 2 species known to nest exclusively in alpine habitats in Idaho; the other is the gray-crowned rosy-finch for which there is circumstantial evidence of breeding in the Bitterroot Range along the Idaho-Montana border (Stephens and Sturts 1997).

## **ISSUES**

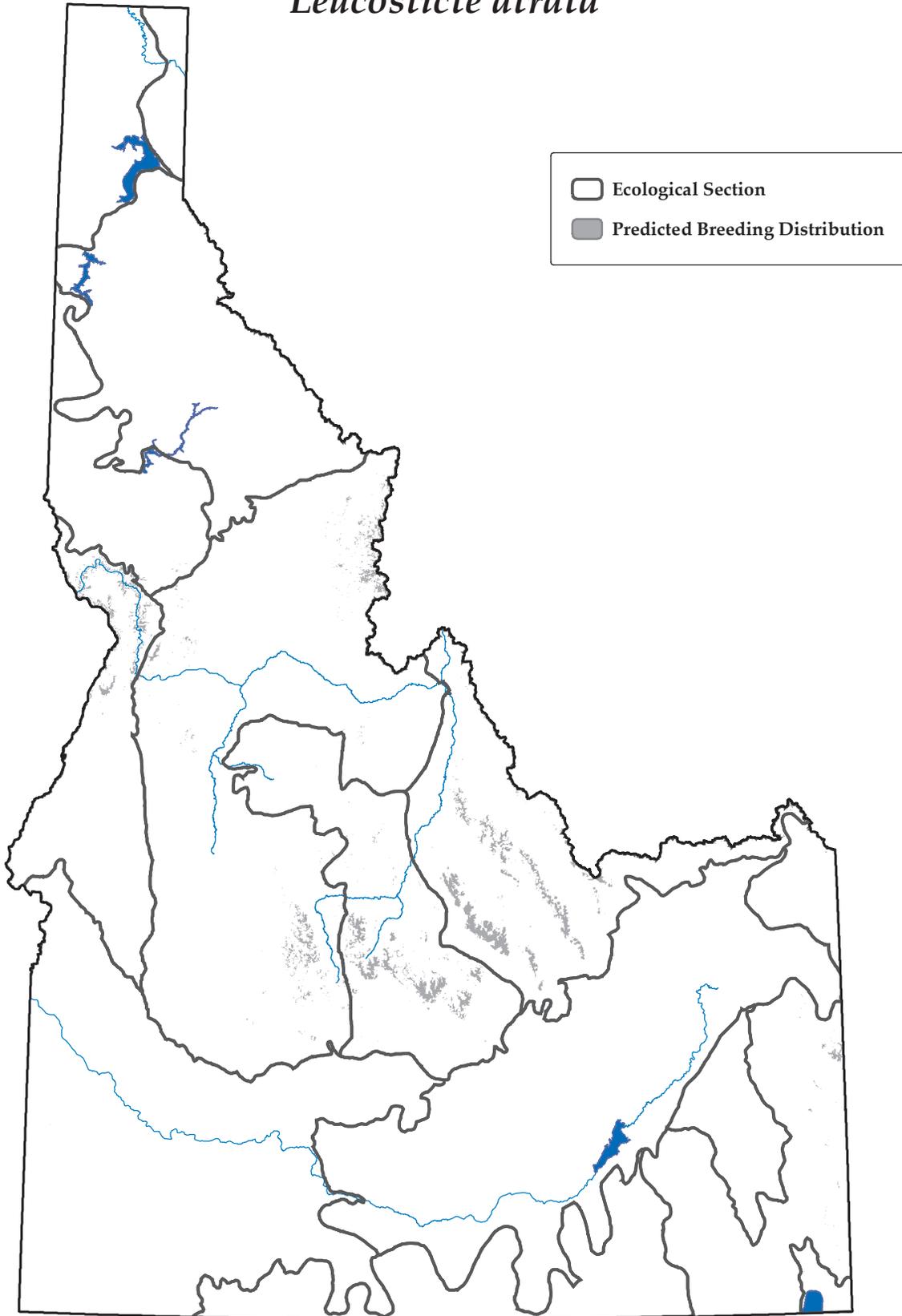
Remoteness of breeding habitat minimizes threats from management and other human activity; also known to tolerate nest visits by researchers and therefore unlikely to be disturbed by recreational activity (hiking, rock-climbing, etc.) (Johnson 2002). Indirectly, however, recreational activity may be detrimental to the black rosy-finch if road development and vehicle use increases in key breeding areas. Long-term changes in habitat, including snow depth and snowline, as a result of global warming (e.g., Reiners 2003) are potentially the single-most important concerns related to this species.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

Road-building to provide access for recreational use above treeline should be minimized, especially in areas known to be key breeding sites for the black rosy-finch. Primarily, however, better monitoring data are needed for this species, especially that designed to provide a long-term assessment of the potential effects of global warming. Off-road line transect surveys are recommended and could be incorporated into Idaho's statewide, coordinated bird monitoring program, the Idaho Bird Inventory and Survey (IBIS). Habitat data collected in association with line transect surveys also could be used to track changes in site conditions over time.

# Black Rosy-Finch

*Leucosticte atrata*



Map created on September 22, 2005  
and prepared by Idaho Conservation Data Center.  
Sources: Predicted distribution is from the Wildlife Habitat  
Relationships Models (WHR), A Gap Analysis of Idaho:  
Final Report. Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research  
Unit, Moscow, ID (Scott et al. 2002). Predicted distribution  
is approximate (for more information, go to  
[http://www.wildlife.uidaho.edu/idgap/idgap\\_report.asp](http://www.wildlife.uidaho.edu/idgap/idgap_report.asp)).

