Long-billed Curlew
Numenius americanus

Aves — Charadriiformes — Scolopacidae

CONSERVATION STATUS / CLASSIFICATION

Rangewide:	Secure (G5)
Statewide:	Imperiled breeding (S2B)
ESA:	No status
USFS:	Region 1: No status; Region 4: No status
BLM:	Watch list (Type 5)
IDFG:	Protected nongame

BASIS FOR INCLUSION
Low breeding populations in Idaho; high continental concern due to declining trends.

TAXONOMY
No taxonomic note of relevance.

DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE
Long-billed curlews breed throughout the Great Basin, Montana, western Wyoming, and the Shortgrass Prairie of North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and northern New Mexico. The total population size is roughly estimated at 20,000, with approximately 11,200 of these along the Pacific flyway (Morrison et al. 2001). As of 1980, there were an estimated 3000–5000 pairs nesting in southern Idaho (Pampush 1980). Current population size of this species in Idaho is unknown.

POPULATION TREND
Rangewide, long-billed curlews are declining, particularly in the Great Plains (Brown et al. 2000). Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data indicate slight declines in the U.S. (-1.9% per year; not statistically significant) during the period 1966–2004, but do not indicate any population changes in the western BBS region (Sauer et al. 2005). During this same analysis period, BBS data indicate an increase of curlews in Idaho of +2.8% per year. However, it has been suggested that BBS data does not cover trends for this species very well (J. Bart, USGS, pers. comm.), and this suggestion, combined with lack of population size information, has resulted in the recent establishment of a region-wide survey for long-billed curlews (Jones et al. 2003).

HABITAT AND ECOLOGY
Long-billed curlews nest in open short-grass or mixed-prairie habitat with level to slightly rolling topography (Dugger and Dugger 2002), and generally avoid areas with trees, high-density shrubs, and tall, dense grasses (Pampush and Anthony 1993). Nests are placed on the ground in areas of notably patchy vegetation (Pampush and Anthony 1993). In Idaho, this species forages predominately in grassland, but may switch to plowed fields and wet pastures if grasslands become too tall or dense after high spring rainfall (Jenni et al. 1981). Long-billed curlews are strictly carnivorous, feeding on

terrestrial insects, benthic invertebrates, and some small vertebrates (Dugger and Dugger 2002).

ISSUES

The largest threat to long-billed curlews in Idaho, and throughout its range, is loss of habitat (Dugger and Dugger 2002). Conversion of grasslands to croplands, development of residential communities, and increasing recreational use have all resulted in the loss of suitable habitat in Idaho (Jenni et al. 1981). Disturbance from excessive vehicle traffic (particularly off-road vehicles) and recreational use can be a substantial problem for nesting long-billed curlews, particularly during brood-rearing (Jenni et al. 1981). Pesticides can have detrimental effects on long-billed curlews, and pesticide poisoning has been documented in neighboring Oregon (Blus et al. 1985). Reliable data on population sizes and trends in Idaho also are lacking.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Protect habitat areas that are >42 ha (104 ac) (enough habitat for at least 1 breeding pair; Redmond et al. 1981, Dechant et al. 2003*b*). Protect nesting areas from detrimental human disturbance (Dechant et al. 2003*b*). Monitor for impacts of pesticides on breeding long-billed curlews. Contribute to regional monitoring effort established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Geological Survey (Jones et al. 2003) to assess population sizes and trends rangewide.

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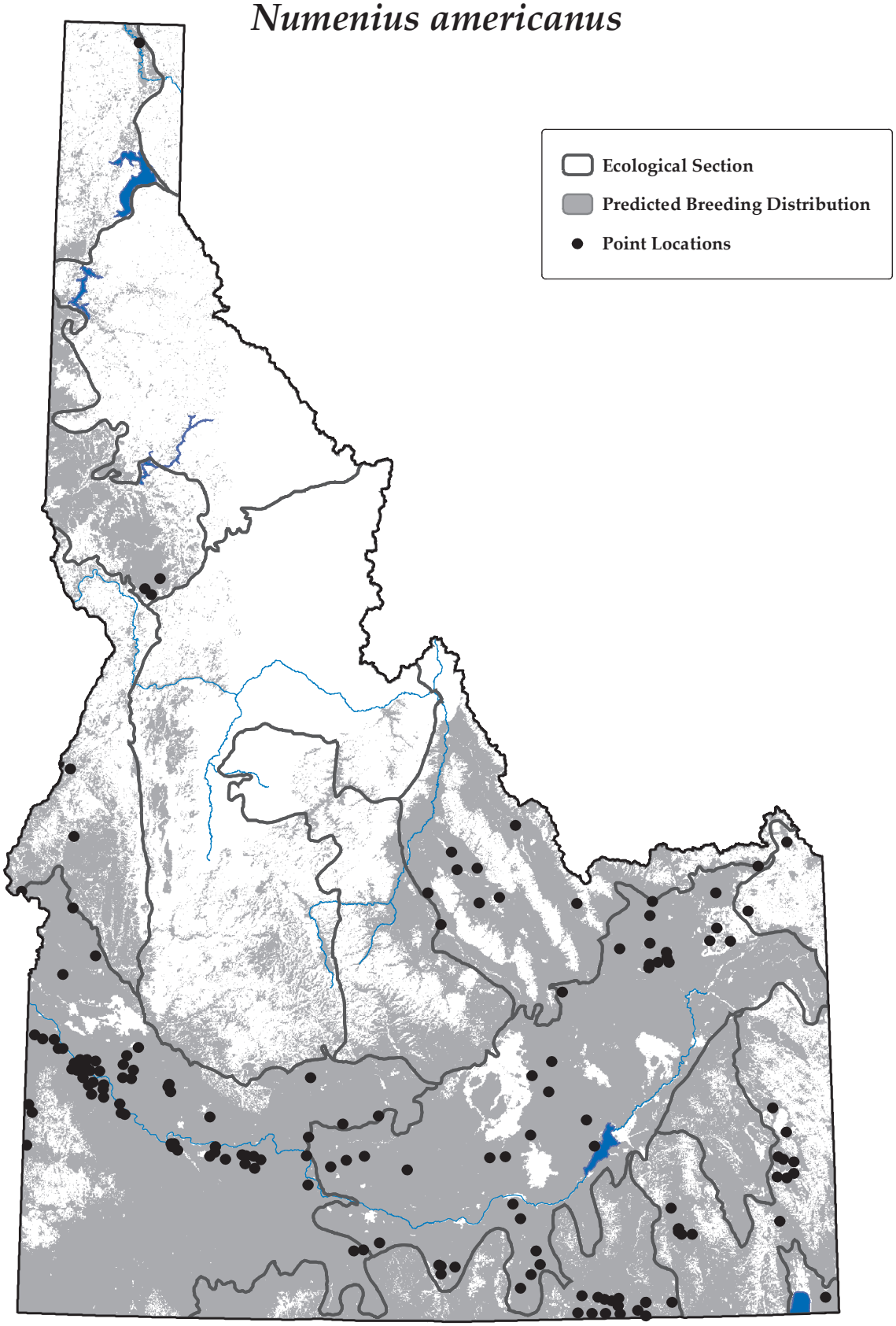

Map created on September 21, 2005
and prepared by Idaho Conservation Data Center.
Sources: Point data are from Idaho Conservation Data Center, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (2005). Predicted distribution is from the Wildlife Habitat Relationships Models (WHR), A Gap Analysis of Idaho: Final Report. 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).

0 20 40 80 Kilometers

0 20 40 80 Miles