

REGION 2 SENSITIVE SPECIES EVALUATION FORM

Species: Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>)			
Criteria	Rank	Rationale	Literature Citations
1 Distribution within R2	B	The merlin occurs in all states of Region 2 but it is uncommon and very local. Wyoming is the southernmost area of its breeding range. Confidence in Rank High or Medium or Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.natureserve.org
2 Distribution outside R2	C	The merlin has a widespread holarctic distribution. BREEDS: from northward tree limit in Alaska, Canada, and Eurasia southward to southern Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, South Dakota, northern Great Lakes region, New York, Maine, Nova Scotia, British Isles, and central Russia. NORTHERN WINTER: southern British Columbia and western and southern U.S. south to Venezuela and Peru, and in Europe, extreme northern Africa, and China. Confidence in Rank High or Medium or Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cade 1982
3 Dispersal Capability	D	No barriers to dispersal are known Confidence in Rank High or Medium or Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
4 Abundance in R2	D	No absolute numbers are known for the merlin in the U.S. Estimated number of breeding pairs in Canada in the early 1990s was 10,000-100,000. Confidence in Rank High or Medium or Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kirk et al. 1995

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<p>5 Population Trend in R2</p>	<p>D</p>	<p>Declined in the 1960s due to the effects of pesticides. In the 1980s, prairie populations in North America were increasing (e.g., see Sodhi et al. 1992). Fall migration counts in the eastern U.S. and Christmas bird counts in Washington indicate increasing abundance in recent decades (Palmer 1988, Titus and Fuller 1990). Increasing in Michigan, in part due to greater availability of nesting sites resulting from increased crow and raven populations (Evers 1992). In Canada, widespread with populations apparently increasing in the mid-1980s (De Smet, 1985 COSEWIC report). Stable or increasing in Canada in the early 1990s (Kirk et al. 1995).</p> <p>Confidence in Rank High or Medium or Low</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see citations in References
<p>6 Habitat Trend in R2</p>	<p>D</p>	<p>Nonbreeding: a wide variety of habitats including marshes, deserts, seacoasts, near coastal lakes and lagoons, open woodlands, fields, etc. May roost in conifers in winter. In southeastern Montana, breeding males appeared to prefer patchy shrub/grassland habitats for hunting. Urban-breeding merlins in Saskatchewan avoided hunting in agricultural areas where prey abundance was low.</p> <p>Nests in conifer woodland or wooded prairie (e.g., groves of deciduous trees along rivers), including planted shelterbelts; often near water; in towns in some areas (e.g. Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan). Nests in trees in abandoned crow, magpie, hawk, or squirrel nest; also in natural tree cavity or abandoned woodpecker hole, on bare cliff ledge, or scrape on ground (arctic, heather moor of U.K.). Not infrequently returns to same nesting area in successive years.</p> <p>There is not information on merlin habitat to assess the trend of such habitat in Region 2.</p> <p>Confidence in Rank High or Medium or Low</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becker and Sieg 1987 • Sodhi and Oliphant 1992
<p>7 Habitat Vulnerability or Modification</p>	<p>D</p>	<p>Moderately threatened range-wide, habitat or community lends itself to alternate use but much is unknown about the extent to which habitat is threatened</p> <p>Confidence in Rank High or Medium or Low</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.natureserve.org

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8 Life History and Demographics		Pesticides contributed to a decline, particularly in Europe, in productivity recorded in a 20-year period prior to the early 1970s. Primary threats include habitat loss and continued use of organochlorine biocides in Central and South America. Confidence in Rank High or Medium or Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trimble 1974
Initial Evaluator(s): John Sidle			Date: 06/26/01

National Forests in the Rocky Mountain Region where species is KNOWN (K) or LIKELY(L)¹ to occur as a breeding bird:

<u>Colorado NF/NG</u>		<u>Kansas NF/NG</u>		<u>Nebraska NF/NG</u>		<u>South Dakota NF/NG</u>		<u>Wyoming NF/NG</u>	
Known	Likely	Known	Likely	Known	Likely	Known	Likely	Known	Likely
		Cimmaron NG		Samuel R.McKelvie NF		Black Hills NF	K	Shoshone NF	L
White River NF				Halsey NF		Buffalo Gap NG		Bighorn NF	L
Routt NF				Nebraska NF	L	Ft. Pierre NG		Black Hills NF	L
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, Gunnison NF				Ogalala NG				Medicine Bow NF	L
San Juan NF								Thunder Basin NG	L
Rio Grande NF									
Pike-San Isabel NF									
Comanche NG									

¹ Likely is defined as more likely to occur than not occur on the National Forest or Grassland. This generally can be thought of as having a 50% chance or greater of appearing on NFS lands.

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